

STUDY

Requested by the CULT Committee



# EU funding instruments for policy fields under the remit of the CULT Committee

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# RESEARCH FOR CULT COMMITTEE

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## EU funding instruments for policy fields under the remit of the CULT Committee

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EU funding for culture, media, education, youth and sport in 2021–27 is wide-ranging, yet instruments directly focused on these areas (Erasmus+, Creative Europe and CERV) represent less than 3% of the MFF 2021–2027. Most support comes from broader programmes such as ESF+ and Horizon. Erasmus+, ESC, Creative Europe and CERV show clear EU added value. Implementing simplification and synergies remain key items on the agenda.

For 2028–2034, the Commission is proposing consolidated instruments such as Erasmus+ and AgoraEU. Compared to the previous programming period, the budget increases, though wider thematic coverage and recent inflation may reduce the impact.

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

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AFCO</b>	Committee on Constitutional Affairs
<b>AFET</b>	Committee on Foreign Affairs
<b>AGRI</b>	Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
<b>AMIF</b>	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence
<b>Bn</b>	Billion
<b>BUDG</b>	Committee on Budgets
<b>CCS GF</b>	Culture and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility
<b>CEF</b>	Connecting Europe Facility
<b>CERV</b>	Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme
<b>CONT</b>	Committee on Budgetary Control
<b>CPR</b>	Common Provisions Regulation
<b>CREA</b>	Creative Europe
<b>CULT</b>	Committee on Culture and Education
<b>DEVE</b>	Committee on Development
<b>DG AGRI</b>	Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
<b>DG CONNECT</b>	Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology
<b>DG EAC</b>	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
<b>DG ECFIN</b>	Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs
<b>DG EMPL</b>	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
<b>DG GROW</b>	Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs
<b>DG HOME</b>	Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs
<b>DG MARE</b>	Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

<b>DG NEAR</b>	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
<b>DG REFORM</b>	Directorate-General for Reform and Investment Task Force
<b>DG REGIO</b>	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
<b>DG RTD</b>	Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
<b>DG SANTE</b>	Directorate-General for Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
<b>EACEA</b>	European Education and Culture Executive Agency
<b>EAGF</b>	European Agricultural Guarantee Fund
<b>EAFRD</b>	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ECON</b>	Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs
<b>EMFAF</b>	European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund
<b>EMPL</b>	Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
<b>ENVI</b>	Committee on Environment, Climate and Food Safety
<b>EP</b>	European Parliament
<b>ERDF</b>	European Regional Development Fund
<b>ESC</b>	European Solidarity Corps
<b>ESF+</b>	European Social Fund Plus
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FEMM</b>	Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
<b>FNLC</b>	Financing Not Linked to Costs
<b>IMCO</b>	Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection
<b>INTA</b>	Committee on International Trade
<b>ITRE</b>	Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
<b>JTF</b>	Just Transition Fund

<b>JURI</b>	Committee on Legal Affairs
<b>LIBE</b>	Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
<b>MEP</b>	Member of the European Parliament
<b>MFF</b>	Multiannual Financial Framework
<b>MI</b>	Million
<b>MS</b>	Member State
<b>NEB</b>	New European Bauhaus
<b>NGEU</b>	NextGenerationEU
<b>PECH</b>	Committee on Fisheries
<b>PETI</b>	Committee on Petitions
<b>REGI</b>	Committee on Regional Development
<b>RRF</b>	Recovery and Resilience Facility
<b>SCOs</b>	Simplified Cost Options
<b>SEDE</b>	Security and Defence Committee
<b>TFEU</b>	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
<b>TSI</b>	Technical Support Instrument
<b>TRAN</b>	Committee on Transport and Tourism

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This study assesses how EU funds have been allocated within the remit of the CULT Committee during the current programming period and provides input for the CULT Committee's legislative resolutions on the new MFF framework and proposed programmes. The five CULT thematic fields cover culture and the creative sector, information and media, education and training, youth and sport.
- The study has reviewed 22 EU funding instruments relevant for CULT. The instrument characteristics are summarised in fiches, including analysis of the logic of intervention, the performance framework and challenges met by the instruments during implementation. The funding instruments are: *Erasmus+*; *European Solidarity Corps (ESC)*; *Creative Europe*; *Citizens, Equality, Rights And Values (CERV) - The citizens' engagement and participation strand*; *New European Bauhaus (NEB)*; *Citizen facing European TV and Video News Portal*; *European public sphere: a new online media offer for young Europeans*; *Multimedia actions*; *Erasmus For Young Entrepreneurs (EYE)*; *European Social Fund+ (ESF+)*; *Digital Europe*; *European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Interreg*; *Horizon Europe*; *InvestEU*; *Technical Support Instrument (TSI)*; *Common Agricultural Policy (European Agricultural Guarantee Fund-EAGF-and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development-EAFRD)*; *European Maritime, Fisheries And Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)*; *Just Transition Fund (JTF)*; *Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) Global Europe*; *Recovery and Resilience Facility (RFF)*.
- The instruments have very diverse intervention logics and relevance for the CULT Committee. Some are sectoral programmes managed directly or indirectly by the Commission, including Erasmus+, Creative Europe, CERV, Digital Europe, the Single Market Programme (Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs) and the Multimedia Actions. Others are cohesion policy funds under shared management with Member States, namely ERDF, Interreg, ESF+ and the Just Transition Fund. Some of the instruments place education, culture, youth, media or sport at the heart of their objectives, while others integrate these as secondary components of wider agendas. Not all instruments contribute in the same way, and they differ significantly by budget size, which strongly influences their impact.
- A direct contribution to the CULT fields comes from Erasmus+ (education, training, youth and sports), ESC, Creative Europe and CERV. Other instruments are not directly designed to contribute to CULT objectives. The programmes with an exclusive contribution (i.e. 100% of funding directed to CULT priorities) total less than 3% of the MFF 2021-2027. Most of the contribution is from programmes with a broader scope (e.g., cohesion, infrastructure, social inclusion or research), allocating an estimated 8% of the MFF to cultural heritage, education and training, media and information, youth and sport. In total, CULT thematic fields receive around 11% of the 2021–2027 MFF.
- The instruments directly contributing to CULT (Erasmus+, ESC, Creative Europe and CERV) are very relevant as their objectives correspond to pressing needs in the EU. Their main weakness lies in the persistent imbalance between needs and resources. Many of these instruments were designed to tackle problems that remain highly salient today, such as social and regional inequalities, skills mismatches, underfunded cultural and creative sectors, as well as the need for more resilient education systems. Very high demand is a recurring feature, leaving many projects underfunded despite strong alignment with programme priorities.

- ESF+, Horizon Europe and Digital Europe are designed for a broader purpose. They remain highly relevant for the budget allocated to education, training and youth interventions. These funds also cover culture and media, though not under their main scope and their direct contribution cannot be always tracked through their expenditure nomenclature. ESIF and CAP funds include ERDF (including the Interreg share), JTF, EMFAF, EAFRD and EAGF. These are cross-sectorial and address a variety of cohesion, agriculture and rural development needs. The budget allocated to these funds represents a large share of the MFF 2021–2027. CULT thematic fields are not the priority for most of these programmes. However, cultural heritage, as well as education and training are embedded within cohesion and rural development policies. As a result, these funds support a variety of CULT-relevant interventions, including investments in cultural heritage, innovation in cultural and creative sectors, the digital transition, cross-border cooperation in education and training, as well as infrastructure and services benefiting young people and local communities. Global Europe and AMIF are also relevant for CULT, covering almost all the thematic fields, while their actions are mainly external and address cross-border, national or multinational needs. Specifically, the geographical scope of NDICI-Global Europe concerns third countries. Other instruments are also relevant for CULT. InvestEU has deployed financial instruments co-managed with the European Investment Bank in CULT-relevant areas, TSI supports technical assistance and reforms in Member States, including education and training, NEB is a cultural initiative with no direct budget lines, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is funded under the Single Market Programme, while the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) is not part of the MFF. The RRF supports similar interventions to the cohesion policy funds and covers all the CULT thematic fields.
- This study analyses potential synergies and complementarities between instruments considering direct or indirect contributions from the instrument to each policy field. The most supported thematic field is 'Education' funded by 17 instruments, of which seven list it as a primary policy field. This is followed by 'Culture and creative sectors', funded by 16 instruments, with seven identifying it as a primary policy field. These two areas are therefore the most fragmented across the instrument landscape, leaving the greatest scope for synergies and complementarities. Furthermore, these policy fields are supported by many instruments which increases the complexity of planning and implementation. Effective and coordinated use of all EU resources in the Culture and creative sectors and Education requires robust coordination to align a wide range of funds with differing rules, objectives and scopes.
- The 'Information and media policy' thematic field is quite fragmented; it appears in 15 of the 22 EU instruments relevant for the CULT Committee; six programmes include it as a primary policy field. The 'Youth' policy field appears in 12 of the 22 EU instruments, while 'Sport' appears in five of the 22 EU instruments.
- On 16 July 2025, the European Commission presented its proposal for the 2028–2034 programming period, amounting to nearly EUR 2 trillion. The proposal marks a substantial reconfiguration of how the EU intends to organise, allocate and monitor its long-term budget. It introduces structural and procedural reforms with some key changes to enhance strategic focus and improve the effectiveness of EU spending. The number of programmes falls from 52 to 16, there is a comprehensive restructuring of the EU budget streamlining the structure from seven headings and two sub-headings into four headings, with significant changes in budgetary nomenclature, increased flexibility and simplified governance, sometimes (e.g., cohesion policy) entailing significant centralisation, unified expenditure-tracking and a performance framework applied to all EU programmes.

- The Commission's proposal for the new Erasmus+ programme proposes to merge the current Erasmus+ with ESC into a single programme. It will continue to support education and training, expand learning mobility for young people as well as promote skill development and shared experiences. The programme will also include measures related to youth, volunteering and sport. The Commission's proposal for the AgoraEU programme proposes to merge the Creative Europe (2021–2027), CERV (2021–2027) and current prerogative lines for multimedia actions. Bringing these elements together under a single framework should provide unified access to funding for culture, media and civil society under more harmonised rules and funding arrangements.
- A key element underpinning the new MFF architecture is the unified expenditure-tracking and performance framework. Central to this is a harmonised list of 543 intervention fields, covering every type of activity eligible for support under the EU budget. These fields were clustered into 18 policy areas. The policy areas that include intervention fields relevant to CULT are: Culture, Tourism and media; Digital technologies and infrastructure; Education and skills; Rights, equality and justice, as well as Agriculture and fisheries if interventions are dedicated to young people.
- The 2028–2034 MFF proposal set a budget of EUR 1 985 894 million in current prices. The Commission published two financial scenarios: nominal terms (i.e. current prices) and using a 2% deflator for 2025 prices. For both scenarios, the MFF increases the budget in some areas of interest to the CULT committee, including a 30% increase for Erasmus+ and a 75% increase for AgoraEU in 2025 prices compared to the last programming period. However, considering inflation in 2018–2025, the increase is smaller than stated by the Commission: around +14% for Erasmus+ and + 65% for AgoraEU.
- The main changes under the proposed Erasmus+ programme for 2028–2034 relate to the integration of past programmes into a unified structure (merging Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps) characterised by 2 pillars (i.e., '*Learning Opportunities for All*' and '*Capacity Building Support*'), the introduction of new areas of intervention (e.g. learning mobility of athletes, volunteering, new tools in the field of cooperation among organisations and institutions to address emerging policy priorities), changes in governance (e.g. financial decisions) and an expected reduction in administrative burden. The restructuring is intended to simplify programme architecture by: merging actions with overlapping objectives (e.g. learning mobility, volunteering and Jean Monnet actions under a single pillar, '*Learning opportunities for all*', grouping similar actions (e.g. bringing cooperation opportunities for organisations or moving support to platforms alongside other tools), removing separate chapters by field, as well as combining cooperation and policy support actions under the same pillar.
- Potential challenges regard integration of ESC into the broader Erasmus+ programme. Key concerns include the need to maintain the ESC's distinct identity and visibility, ensuring that volunteering and solidarity actions retain clear objectives, dedicated resources and separate monitoring. Simpler programme architecture could reduce the visibility of specific sectors, particularly volunteering as mentioned above, which has been merged with learning mobility, but also other actions such as Jean Monnet actions in the field of higher education. The governance of annual work programmes becomes crucial under this model, as these programmes would determine resource distribution in the absence of earmarking. However, the proposed Regulation establishing Erasmus+ for the period 2028–2034 refers only to Article 110 of the Financial Regulation for the adoption of annual work programmes, without providing

for delegated or implementing acts. As a result, the European Parliament and the Council would no longer have formal scrutiny rights over these programmes, which may limit their ability to exercise budgetary oversight.

- The main changes under the proposed AgoraEU programme (culture, media and civil society) relate to the integration of past programmes into a unified structure with three strands (merging Creative Europe and CERV), the introduction of new areas of intervention (e.g. AI, social support for young artists and support for the new media sector), the removal of budget earmarking (e.g. no ceiling assigned to spending on each strand), changes in governance (e.g. financial decisions) and an expected reduction in administrative burden. According to the Commission's Impact Assessment and Explanatory Memorandum, the rationale for the merging is to expand reach and ensure wider access to EU support, simplify programme management through streamlined structures and procedures, strengthen synergies between related policy fields and avoid overlaps in funding across separate instruments.
- The proposed integration of existing cultural, media and citizenship programmes into the broader AgoraEU framework has raised concerns about preserving each programme's identity, visibility and strategic coherence. Although the overarching architecture has broadly been acknowledged as coherent, MEPs and delegations from the Cultural Affairs Committee, the Audiovisual and Media Working Party and the Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens' Rights and Free Movement of Persons of the Council warned that merging distinct instruments risks weakening their individual strengths. MEPs expressed concerns that the proposal grants excessive discretion to the Commission and offers insufficient clarity on how the European Parliament and Member States will participate in programme governance. They called for stronger guarantees on transparency and oversight, cautioning against the centralisation of powers within the Commission, particularly regarding Parliament's role in adopting the annual work programmes. Proposed resources are not deemed sufficient to address demand, particularly when considering inflation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- For the National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPP), the main changes in the Commission's proposal are: 1) single-fund consolidation of several existing pre-allocated funds; 2) a new delivery model based on NRP Plans and an EU Facility/Interreg Plan; 3) a clearly quantified multi-billion-euro budget envelope with earmarks. From a CULT standpoint, the education and skills component are of particular importance. ESF+ is expected to continue complementing the support provided by Erasmus+. Both instruments intervene in closely related areas (i.e., acquisition of new skills, promoting upskilling in response to the needs of the industrial sectors and enhancing digital competences).
- While Horizon Europe remains a standalone research and innovation programme, it is tightly linked with the new European Competitiveness Fund. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) will continue to support research training and career development, with a portion of the budget allocated to these activities. NEB, launched in 2020, is included in the proposed Horizon Europe regulation for the next programming period. The restructuring has reduced visibility of the area 'Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society', funded in 2021–2027 under Pillar II with a clearly allocated budget. In the proposed regulation, although collaborative research is expected to support the development and rapid diffusion of culture and creativity, it is not specified under which component of Pillar II ('Competitiveness and Society') this should be funded and no budget has been pre-allocated. In addition, the instrument, as in 2021–2027, will also address the 'education' policy field.
- The main recommendations are:

- Given the high demand for funding in the current programming period and the recognised added value of EU programmes in national policy contexts where support is lacking, additional funding that is safely earmarked is required throughout the entire period.
- For the key CULT instruments (Erasmus+ and AgoraEU), the new proposal requires a clear demarcation of priorities within each fund and instrument. The basic acts should clearly set out the specific intervention logic for each CULT priority, detailing planned interventions and providing an adequate budget consistent with the needs.
- Implementation rules may specify legislator roles in the entire implementation process, with clear guarantees for Parliament's role (e.g. adoption of annual work programmes through delegated acts).
- Tracking CULT thematic expenditure across programmes and funds is key to understanding where EU funding is going, which sectors and areas it is supporting and who the recipients are. This could support Parliament's scrutiny role and reinforce transparency and accountability in this area of public funding. Guidance for tracking CULT spending should be based on intervention fields detailed in the Annex of the proposal for the 2028–2034 performance Regulation.

## INTRODUCTION

The study 'EU funding instruments for policy fields under the remit of the CULT Committee' supports discussions and preparation of the new MFF package for the period 2028–2034.

The European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) oversees policy across seven key domains, as specified under Annex VI–XVII of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament:

- 1) The cultural aspects of the European Union, and in particular (a) improving the knowledge and dissemination of culture; (b) the protection and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity; (c) the conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage, cultural exchanges and artistic creation.
- 2) The Union's education policy, including the European higher education, promotion of the system of European schools and lifelong learning.
- 3) The audiovisual policy and the cultural and educational aspects of the information society.
- 4) Youth policy.
- 5) The development of a sports and leisure policy.
- 6) Information and media policy.
- 7) Cooperation with third countries in the areas of culture and education and relations with the relevant international organisations and institutions.

For this study, these responsibilities have been clustered into five relevant policy areas in the table below:

Table 1: CULT Remit and Corresponding Policy Fields

Study policy fields	CULT committee responsibility areas
Culture and creative sectors, including audiovisual	1 and 7
Education	2 and 7
Information and media policy	3 and 6
Youth	4
Sport	5

Source: Own elaboration based on Annex VI of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament and the Terms of Reference (ToR).

In the 2021–2027 programming period, the main budgetary instruments in these fields are Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), Creative Europe, and the citizens' engagement strand of the CERV programme. In addition, broader funding instruments such as the ESF+, ERDF, Horizon Europe and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) also contribute with financial resources to CULT-relevant areas. Other instruments are also involved. For the next programming period, the MFF framework has been redesigned: the Commission's recent proposal introduces several innovations

including reducing seven headings and two sub-headings into four headings, as well as grouping of the programmes in single instruments.

This study assesses how EU funds have been allocated within the remit CULT. The study also provides input for the CULT Committee's legislative resolutions on the new MFF framework and proposed programmes.

The research provides:

1. A concise overview of all the EU funding instruments in the current 2021-2027 programming period for the relevant policy fields;
2. A summary analysis of key strengths and weaknesses; as well as synergies of current EU funding instruments in the relevant policy fields;
3. A concise overview of all EU funding instruments for Post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (2028-2034 programming period) planned for the relevant policy fields and an analysis of the Commission's proposals on the Post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework funding in the relevant policy fields;
4. Recommendations for EU policy-makers, first and foremost for Members of the European Parliament, on issues potentially within the remit of the CULT Committee to ensure that culture and creative sectors, education, youth and sport policies are adequately and efficiently funded at EU level.

Chapter 1 of the study describes the methodology, including the tasks and terminology. Chapter 2 covers the programming period 2021-2027, describing characteristics relevant for the CULT instruments, common implementation challenges as well as synergies and complementarities between the instruments. Chapter 3 focuses on the new 2028-2034 MFF proposal and presents the architecture of the approach adopted by the Commission. It also provides a critical analysis of the proposed instruments. Chapter 4 illustrates findings and lessons learnt, as well as final recommendations. Annex 1 includes fiches with details of programmes, funds and facilities.

## 1. METHODOLOGY

The work has been structured in three main activities: instrument mapping, data collection and organisation (task 1), instrument fiche development (task 2), and analysis of the new MFF framework (task 3). These activities were carried out between July and November 2025.

The study started with a review of instruments relevant for CULT, compiling a first list of 26 instruments. In a second step, the list was narrowed, discarding four instruments with neither direct nor indirect relevance for CULT thematic fields (i.e., EU Solidarity Fund, EU4Health, Cohesion Fund, Connecting Europe Facility). For the remaining 22 instruments, a dedicated data collection exercise was carried out. This covered EU regulations and legislative acts, implementation and evaluation reports, as well as studies and articles. Most of the documents originate from the Commission and specialised literature reported in the bibliography.

Table 2: List of instruments under the 2021–2027 MFF relevant for CULT

EU funding instrument	Culture and creative sectors	Information and media policy	Education	Youth	Sport
1. Erasmus+	X		X	X	X
2. European Solidarity Corps (ESC)	X			X	
3. Creative Europe (CREA)	X	X	X	X	
4. Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV) - the Citizens' engagement and participation strand	X	X	X	X	
5. New European Bauhaus (NEB)	X		X		
6. Citizen facing European TV and Video News Portal	X	X	X		
7. A European public sphere: a new online media offer for young Europeans		X		X	
8. Multimedia actions		X			
9. Single Market Programme (Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs)	X	X		X	
10. European Social Fund + (ESF)	X	X	X	X	X

EU funding instrument	Culture and creative sectors	Information and media policy	Education	Youth	Sport
11. Digital Europe Programme		X	X		
12. European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	X	X	X	X	X
13. Horizon Europe	X	X	X		
14. InvestEU	X	X	X		
15. Technical Support Instrument (TSI)			X		
16. European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF)	X			X	
17. European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	X			X	
18. European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)	X				X
19. Just Transition Fund (JTF)			X		
20. Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)			X	X	
21. Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI – Global Europe) – geographic programmes strand	X	X	X	X	X
22. Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)	X	X	X	X	X

Source: Own elaboration.

The documents were reviewed under task 2. The information analysed covers 22 aspects for each instrument, including the normative framework, objectives and scope of the instrument, governance and management type, the role of Parliament, the state of play and performance as at end-2024, as well as strengths and weaknesses of the instruments (see Table 3).

Table 3: Instrument key characteristics analysed in Task 2

1. Name of the EU funding instrument
2. Relevant programming period ( <i>i.e.</i> , 2021-2027, 2028-2034)

3. Relevant CULT Committee policy field(s) (i.e., <i>culture and creative sectors, information and media policy education, youth and sport</i> )
4. Establishing regulation
5. Parliament Committees
6. EC Directorate-General
7. Main objectives of the instrument
8. Time coverage
9. Geographical coverage
10. Overall and thematic budget allocations (where available)
11. Commission/Parliament role
12. Management mode (i.e., direct management, indirect management, shared management)
13. Type of support (e.g., <i>grants, loans</i> )
14. Implementing actors
15. Main typologies of relevant interventions funded (e.g. <i>trainings, infrastructure, capacity building, organisation of events, etc</i> )
16. How to access the fundings (e.g., <i>calls for proposals, applications submitted to specific financial intermediaries</i> )
17. Target group of the interventions ( <i>the intended beneficiaries of the policy's overall goals</i> )
18. Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs) role
19. Project design
20. Monitoring of performance (e.g., <i>indicators used</i> )
21. Budget absorption rate in the different policy areas
22. Communication and dissemination
23. Study and evaluation findings and recommendations for the programming period 2028-34

Source: Own elaboration.

The information is summarised in factsheets (i.e. instrument fiches), which include an analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Some instruments were grouped into single fiches, such as EARDF and EAGF. Synergies and complementarities between instruments are addressed separately. The task involved reviewing MFF proposal-related documents recently published by the Commission. Recent debates in the CULT Committee during autumn 2025 were also used as an information source.

The Commission's proposal published on 16 July 2025 is presented through communications, factsheets summarising the key changes, draft legal acts outlining the new regulations, as well as staff working documents and impact assessment reports.

This study reviewed key legal and analytical documents as below:

Table 4: Key documents consulted in relation the new MFF 2028-2034

Document	Link
Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - A dynamic EU Budget for the priorities of the future - The Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034	<a href="#">Link</a>

Proposal for a Council Regulation laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2028 to 2034	<a href="#">Link</a>
Proposal for an Interinstitutional Agreement between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management	<a href="#">Link</a>
Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a budget expenditure tracking and performance framework and other horizontal rules for the Union programmes and activities	<a href="#">Link</a>
Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Fund for economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture and rural, fisheries and maritime, prosperity and security for the period 2028–2034 and amending Regulation (EU) 2023/955 and Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509	<a href="#">Link</a>
Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the 'AgoraEU' programme for the period 2028–2034, and repealing Regulations (EU) 2021/692 and (EU) 2021/818	<a href="#">Link</a>
Commission Staff Working Document Executive Summary of the Impact Assessment Report Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the 'AgoraEU' programme for the period 2028–2034, and repealing Regulations (EU) 2021/692 and (EU) 2021/818 and Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Erasmus+ programme for the period 2028–2034, and repealing Regulations (EU) 2021/817 and (EU) 2021/888	<a href="#">Link</a>
Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Erasmus+ programme for the period 2028–2034, and repealing Regulations (EU) 2021/817 and (EU) 2021/888	<a href="#">Link</a>
Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Social Fund as part of the National and Regional Partnership Plan	<a href="#">Link</a>
Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing Horizon Europe	<a href="#">Link</a>
Other documents	<a href="#">Link</a>

Source: Own elaboration.

The review of available information for the next programming period has been simplified compared to the review of instruments in the 2021–2027 programming period. However, it covers similar points for the scope, financial coverage and Parliament’s role in the legislative approval process for the instrument. In addition, the study analyses innovations introduced in the Commission proposals as well as challenges and issues for Parliament in defining and preparing its resolutions.

The main challenges faced by the study relate to the demarcation of thematic fields and the extent and relevance of information to be analysed. For example, some instruments lack recent evaluations and studies, while others have many references. There are also issues with the structure of the proposed new package, which is still incomplete, sometimes lacking sufficient detail to enable a full comparison between the two programming periods.

The scope and demarcation between instruments concerning the five CULT thematic fields include:

- **Culture and the creative sector** (CCS) covering creation, realisation and diffusion of culture, *inter alia* in the form of films, series, books, and music. Audiovisual is part of the CCS.
- **Information and media**, with the production and the dissemination of information. However, digital equipment and infrastructure (e.g. satellites and digital networks) are excluded from this study.
- The scope of **education** is broad, including instruments related to education and training for jobs and employment, vocational education and training (VET), and higher education, as well as mobility and lifelong learning targeting workers or disadvantaged groups.
- **Youth:** Instruments targeting young workers, citizens and students. This includes mobility of students, social and cultural opportunities, job creation or a financial contribution to business creation.
- **Sport:** all sport activities and their promotion; sometimes coupled with Youth.

## 2. INSTRUMENT UNDER CULT REMIT: OVERVIEW FROM THE 2021-2027 PROGRAMMING PERIOD

### KEY FINDINGS

- CULT-related thematic fields – culture and creative sector, information and media, education, youth and sport – are covered by a wide range of MFF programmes and initiatives, with varying priorities, intervention types and budgets.
- Beyond core CULT instruments (Erasmus+, ESC, CERV and Creative Europe), the Committee is also co-responsible for NEB and was requested to give an opinion on Horizon, Invest EU, ERDF and Digital Europe as well as ESF+.
- While Erasmus+, ESC, CERV and Creative Europe are fully dedicated to CULT objectives, they account for less than 3% of the 2021–2027 MFF. Most of CULT funding (around 8% of the MFF) comes from broader programmes such as ERDF, ESF+ and CAP.
- Instruments directly contributing to CULT are highly relevant, addressing persistent EU challenges such as skills mismatches, inequalities and underfunded cultural sectors, but demand consistently exceeds available resources.
- Tracking of CULT-related expenditure is not mandatory in many programmes. This absence of monitoring means that information on how funding is allocated across territories, regions and Member States remains limited.
- Culture and creative sectors, together with education, receive the broadest support compared to the other policy fields under analysis and are the most fragmented fields, as they are addressed by the highest number of instruments (16 and 15 respectively out of the 22 analysed). While this creates substantial potential for synergies, it also calls for stronger coordination across instruments with differing rules and governance structures.

### 2.1. Instruments overview

**The 22 instruments analysed in this report illustrate a wide diversity of intervention logics and levels of relevance for the CULT Committee.** Some are sectoral programmes managed directly or indirectly by the Commission, including Erasmus+, Creative Europe, CERV, Digital Europe, the Single Market Programme (Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs) and the Multimedia Actions. Others are cohesion policy funds under shared management with Member States, namely the ERDF, Interreg, ESF+ and the Just Transition Fund. Finally, cross-cutting initiatives like the NEB demonstrate how CULT priorities are embedded in broader EU strategies, notably the European Green Deal and the digital transition. Implementation of horizontal principles and principles from the Charter of Human Rights of the EU is also relevant to the CULT thematic fields of many programmes (e.g. Charter Article 11–Freedom of expression and information; Article 13 – Freedom of the arts and sciences, Article 14 –Right to education).

**This variety also reflects differences in governance and thematic scope.** Cohesion and recovery funds, which mobilise very large financial envelopes, often contribute indirectly to CULT fields, mainly through investments in skills, education infrastructure, cultural heritage, digitalisation, or youth employment. By contrast, smaller sectoral programmes (e.g. Erasmus+, Creative Europe, CERV, Digital Europe Programme, Single Market Programme – Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, Multimedia

Actions) provide more targeted and visible support to learners, educators, artists, cultural operators, media professionals and young people.

In several cases, the analysis has focused on strands or components of broader instruments such as the *Citizens' engagement and participation* strand of CERV, *Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs* under the Single Market Programme to reflect parts most relevant to CULT. Cross-cutting initiatives (notably the NEB) add another layer, integrating CULT-related objectives into environmental, technological and social transitions. Taken together, the 22 instruments highlight the multi-layered nature of EU support for CULT policy fields.

**Some of the instruments place education, culture, youth, media or sport at the heart of their objectives, while others integrate these as secondary components of wider agendas. Not all instruments contribute in the same way, for various reasons. The instruments differ significantly with varying budget sizes, which strongly influence their impact.**

The table below presents the budgets and their share in the total 2021–2027 MFF. Figures in the first column are from the 2021 Commission report 'The EU's 2021–2027 long-term Budget and NextGenerationEU - Facts and Figures'. The contribution to CULT thematic fields is estimated in the third column, based on assumptions in the fourth column.<sup>1</sup> For most of the instruments analysed, unlike the CPR requirement for the climate and gender financial tracking, there is no obligation in the specific regulations to track expenditure under the CULT thematic field. So, the (very raw) estimate in the table has a range of uncertainty, without taking into account 'hidden' contributions not explicitly tracked by the instrument monitoring system. In some cases, over-estimation is also expected.

A direct contribution to the CULT fields comes from Erasmus+ (education, training and youth), ESC, Creative Europe and CERV, which operate in direct or indirect management mode. Many of the instruments are not directly designed to contribute to CULT objectives, particularly those under shared management. **The programmes with an exclusive contribution (i.e. 100% of funding is directed to CULT priorities) represent less than 3% of the MFF 2021–2027. Most of the contribution comes from programmes with a larger scope (e.g., cohesion, infrastructure, social inclusion or research) allocating resources to cultural heritage, education and training, media and information, youth and sport for an estimated 8% of the MFF. In total, the CULT thematic fields receive around 11% of the 2021–2027 MFF.** More details are provided in Annex 1 of this study.

Namely:

- ESF, with half of the budget covering CULT thematic fields. The main contribution comes from three specific objectives related to education, training and skills.
- Horizon with a dedicated action for young researchers and a budget line allocated to 'Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society' (cluster 2).
- ERDF and Interreg programmes, which invest in the digital and education fields through projects and infrastructure (in Policy Objectives 1 and 4), as well as cultural heritage (Policy Objective 5).
- CAP policy (through EAGF and EARDF) supports young farmers and promotes cultural heritage in rural areas, while EMFAF allocates funds to coastal areas for promotion and development.

<sup>1</sup> For the Cohesion Policy programmes, figures are taken from the Cohesion Open Data Platform. [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://data.europa.eu/en/news-events/news/cohesion-open-data-platform&ved=2ahUKEwisj\\_-gIJCRAxXIIPOHHfeUCs0QFnoECB0QAQ&usq=AOvVaw37wTnE0iwdEOms0IHcFQDF](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://data.europa.eu/en/news-events/news/cohesion-open-data-platform&ved=2ahUKEwisj_-gIJCRAxXIIPOHHfeUCs0QFnoECB0QAQ&usq=AOvVaw37wTnE0iwdEOms0IHcFQDF)

- InvestEU invests in digital services and technology, digital connectivity as well as cultural media and the creative sector.
- Digital Europe allocates funds to digital skills and supports the dissemination of digital technology across society.
- JTF programmes support education and training in areas in green transition.
- AMIF allocates resources to help minors and support the integration of migrants through education and language skills.
- Global EU allocates resources to digital development, education and training in countries outside EU borders. Erasmus+ priorities are also supported by EU external actions.

Table 5: Instrument financial contribution to the CULT thematic fields (in current prices)

Instruments	2021-2027 budget (EUR billion)*	% of 2021-2027 MFF	% CULT	Instrument coverage (for more details see annex 1)
<b>MFF 2021-2027</b>	<b>1,210.9</b>	<b>100%</b>	-	
Erasmus+	26.51	2.19%	100%	Education, youth and sport
European Solidarity Corps (ESC)	1.01	0.08%	100%	Youth (volunteering)
Creative Europe (CREA)	2.53	0.21%	100%	Creative and media sector
Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV) – the Citizens' engagement and participation strand	1.56	0.13%	100%	Education, training, youth and communication
New European Bauhaus (NEB)	N/A	.	100%	The budget is allocated through specific MFF programmes budget lines (e.g. ERDF or Horizon)
Citizen facing European TV and Video new Portal	0.0025	0.0002%	100%	Media
A European public sphere: a new online media offer for young Europeans	0.0032	0.0003%	100%	Media

Instruments	2021–2027 budget (EUR billion)*	% of 2021–2027 MFF	% CULT	Instrument coverage (for more details see annex 1)
Multimedia actions	0.102	0.01%	100%	Creative and media sector
Single Market Programme (Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs)	4.212	0.35%	100%	Youth (young entrepreneurs)
European Social Fund + (ESF+)	99.26	8.20%	30–40%	Education, training, development of skills (inc. digitalization) and youth.
Digital Europe Programme	7.59	0.63%	5%	Digital skills and use of digital technologies
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), including Interreg	226.05	18.67%	13%	Culture and creative industry, digital skills, education and youth, cultural heritage. Interreg intervention fields covering culture, education and youth
Horizon Europe	86.12 (+ 5.41 from NGEU)	7.11%	10%	Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society and support to young researchers
InvestEU	4.2 (additional allocation from NGEU +6.07 billion)	0.35%	20%	Digital technologies and services, cultural creative and media
Technical Support Instrument (TSI)	0.86	0.07%	-	Skills, education and training and digital transition.
European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF)	291.09	24%	2%	Support to young farmers
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	87.44 (+8.07 from NGEU)	7.22%	6%	Support to young farmers, education and skills, culture heritage
European Maritime,	6.11	0.5%	8%	Education, skills and culture heritage

Instruments	2021–2027 budget (EUR billion)*	% of 2021–2027 MFF	% CULT	Instrument coverage (for more details see annex 1)
Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)				
Just Transition Fund (JTF)	19.7	1.63%	13%	Education and skills
Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)	9.88	0.82%	8%	Support to minors and language training
NDICI – Global Europe	80.59	6.66%	11%	Digital development, education and training
Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)	2.065	0.17%	-	Digital infrastructure

Source: European Commission, The EU's 2021–2027 long-term Budget and NextGenerationEU – facts and figures, 2021.

## 2.2. Instruments key characteristics

This section provides an overview of the instruments scrutinised under this study. For the sake of clarity, the instruments have been grouped by type and relevance for the CULT Committee. Key characteristics are illustrated in tables. More details about each instrument are provided in the individual programme fiches in Annex 2.

### 2.2.1. CULT main instruments

Erasmus+, Creative Europe, ESC and CERV address EU priorities in the fields of education, culture, media, sport and youth. **A common characteristic of the instruments is direct or indirect management by the DGs, involving EU agencies (e.g. EACEA), organisations and contact points in Members States.** Funding is decided in annual work programmes and disbursed in the form of grants, prizes and procurement.

Table 6: Characteristics – CULT main instruments

Instruments	Objective	Type of project	Target group/recipient
Erasmus+	Promote learning mobility for individuals and groups, along with cooperation, quality, inclusion and equity, excellence, creativity and innovation. The instrument promotes non-formal and informal learning mobility, active	Cooperation, capacity building, learning mobility for learners and staff, networking and policy support for organisations, and reforms in education, training, youth and sport.	Learners and staff, researchers and academics, universities and other organisations working in education in the EU and partner countries.

Instruments	Objective	Type of project	Target group/recipient
	participation in education and sport among young people and learning mobility of sports staff.		
Creative Europe	The programme aims to safeguard, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage, while strengthening the competitiveness of the cultural and creative sectors, in particular the audiovisual sector. It supports transnational cooperation, the creation and circulation of European works, audience development, innovation, gender equality and social inclusion.	The programme supports cooperation projects, networks and platforms in the cultural and creative sectors; the development, production, distribution and promotion of European audiovisual works; and cross-sectoral actions supporting media pluralism, quality journalism and media literacy. Support is provided through grants, prizes, procurement and financial instruments.	Cultural and creative organisations, audiovisual industries, media operators, networks, NGOs and public bodies active in the cultural and creative sectors, as well as professionals and artists participating mainly through supported organisations, within the EU and participating non-EU countries.
ESC	Engage young people in solidarity activities addressing societal challenges through volunteering or by setting up their own solidarity projects. The programme's ambition is not only to be more inclusive but also to be greener and more digital.	Volunteering and solidarity projects (including humanitarian aid).	Individuals aged 18 to 30 (up to 35 for humanitarian aid) and organisations in the EU and the partner countries.
CERV	Protect and promote rights and values as enshrined in the EU treaties and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights to sustain and further	Training, capacity building and exchange of good practices, town twinning, raising people's awareness about their rights and the benefits that EU policies will bring to their daily lives,	Civil society organisations, European networks, public authorities, including equality and human rights bodies, local authorities, academia / research institutes and think tanks.

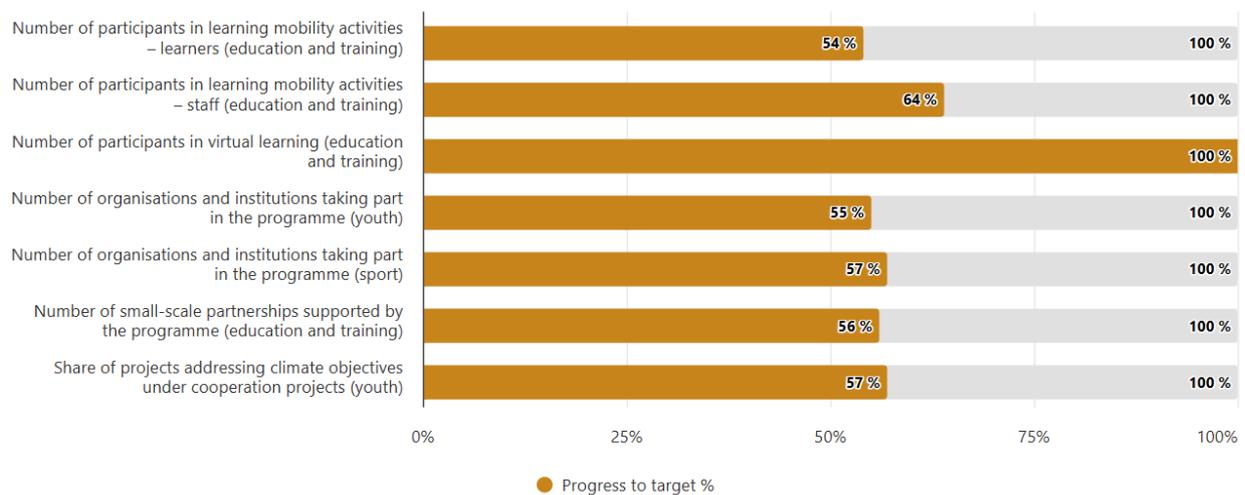
Instruments	Objective	Type of project	Target group/recipient
	develop rights-based, democratic, equal and inclusive societies based on the rule of law.	and supporting the development of knowledge-based EU policies and legislation through surveys, studies and analyses.	

Source: Own elaboration.

### Instrument performance

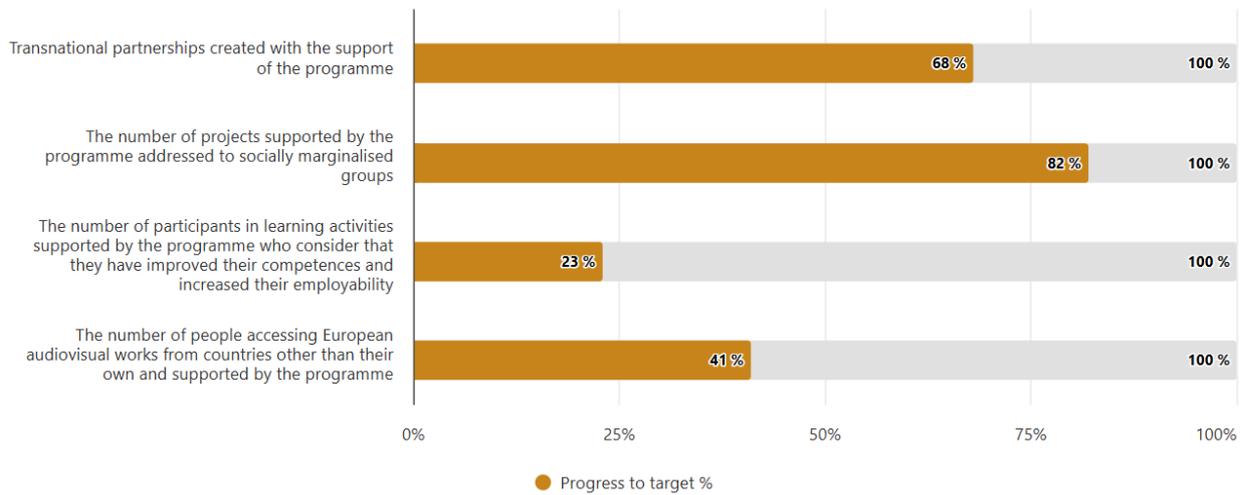
Implementation is measured through indicators and targets set in the instrument performance framework and regularly published by Commission services. At mid-term, financial performances are in line with spending calendars and objectives, with absorption rates (commitments) over 50% for all instruments: 54% for Erasmus, 59% for Creative Europe, 67% for ESC and 55% for CERV. **According to the EC monitoring, programmes outputs and results show good progress at the end of 2024, with some indicators having already met their target.** The performance rates vary across indicators depending on the amounts invested so far, the type of action supported, and/or other factors affecting implementation.

Figure 1: Erasmus+ outputs and results progress at the end of 2024



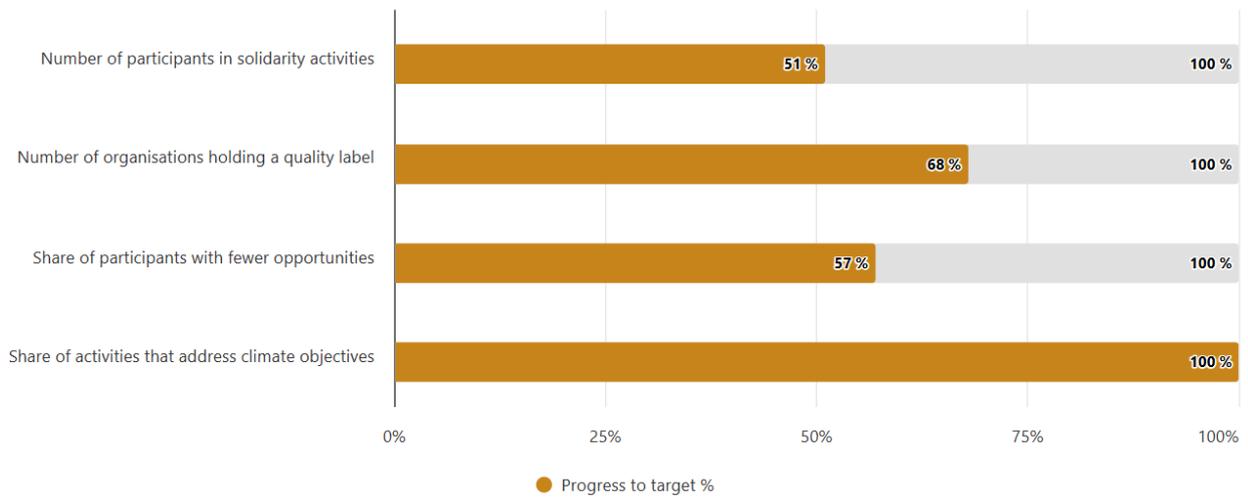
Source: [Erasmus+ - Performance - European Commission](#)

Figure 2: Creative Europe outputs and results progress at the end of 2024



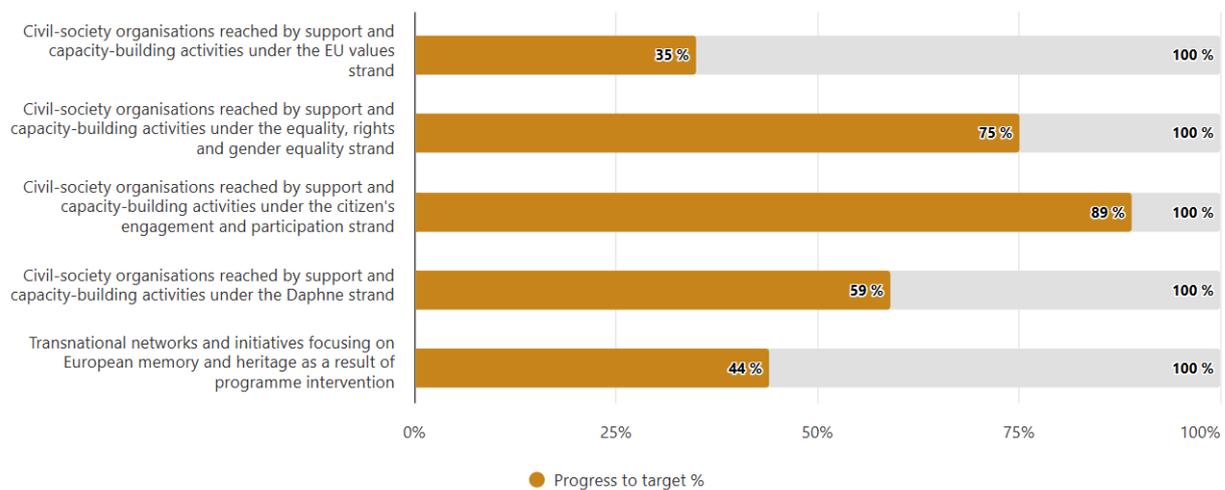
Source: [Creative Europe Programme - Performance - European Commission](#)

Figure 3: European Solidarity Corps outputs and results progress at the end of 2024



Source: [European Solidarity Corps - Performance - European Commission](#)

Figure 4: Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV) outputs and results progress at the end of 2024



Source: [Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme – Performance – European Commission](#)

### Key implementation aspects

The instruments show a high degree of relevance as their objectives correspond to pressing needs in the EU. Many of these instruments were designed to tackle problems that remain highly salient today, such as social and regional inequalities, skills mismatches, underfunded cultural and creative sectors, as well as the need for more resilient education systems. **The main weakness lies in the persistent imbalance between needs and resources. Very high demand is a recurring feature, leaving many projects unfunded despite strong alignment with programme priorities.** The relevance of these instruments can also be assessed against longer-term EU policy priorities. Erasmus+ was created to promote mobility and cooperation in education, training, youth and sport. These priorities are anchored in EU strategies such as the European Education Area, the Digital Education Action Plan and the European Skills Agenda. The programme attracts very high demand, particularly for mobility actions, which shows the continuing relevance of its objectives. Creative Europe continues to safeguard cultural diversity and support competitiveness in the audiovisual sector.

Efficiency varies across the instruments, largely depending on the governance and the degree of administrative simplification. **Erasmus+, for example, has progressively expanded the use of lump sums and simplified grant forms, which reduces handling time for both national agencies and beneficiaries. However, efficiency is constrained by payment delays, high administrative burden for small or new organisations, and management tools that remain complex and not user-friendly.** Sometimes, the only use of English in the call for proposals can be challenging for small organisations.

Studies and evaluations emphasise the added value of European financial support in cultural, education sectors and for young people. **Without this support, it would not have been possible to implement measures designed to improve cultural creation and dissemination, or support public awareness, information and media policy.** This added value can be measured in terms of 'more money' available to target groups, more visibility and more opportunity for beneficiaries or by introducing and disseminating innovation and novelties (e.g. for the use of digital technologies).

**Visibility and transparency are essential to ensuring that EU interventions are not only delivered but also recognised by citizens.** Awareness of EU funding sources varies considerably throughout the

EU.<sup>2</sup> **Erasmus+ is the most widely known (60% of Europeans)**, followed by ERDF (49%), ESF (44%) and the European Solidarity Fund (42%), while Interreg (11%), the CEF (11%) and JTF (13%) are much less visible.

Table 7: Mid-term EC evaluations findings – CULT main instruments

Instruments	Findings
Erasmus+	<p>Erasmus is very relevant in the EU education sphere and the most popular programme among EU citizens. The budget is insufficient to meet demand, despite constantly increasing over time. Big efforts have been made to 'green' the programme and make it more inclusive. Moreover, the programme supports sport and vocational education and training (VET), which remain comparatively under-represented in budgetary terms. However, the Erasmus+ sports sector has very limited funds in some areas, particularly for organising events, thus limiting its scope</p> <p>Simplification has been introduced for management, but the administrative burden remains high (e.g. for small organisations and newcomers). The programme shows synergy and complementarity with ESF+, NDICI-Global Europe and IPA III, Interreg and Horizon programmes. However, synergies are not always fully exploited (also due to different rules and governance systems). Some literature reports the risk of overlap with the ESC programme.</p>
Creative Europe	<p>The programme is an effective and relevant instrument that has quickly adapted to new challenges and sectoral needs. Greening of the Creative Europe programme is a case of good practice, and young artists and creators have been included in the programmes. However, its effectiveness is constrained by limited resources (far less than requested), centralised management, administrative complexity (including difficult-to-use IT tools for applications and reporting), as well as difficulties in supporting applicants and small organisations.</p>
European Solidarity Corps	<p>The EC mid-term evaluation acknowledges the relevance, effectiveness and added value of the instrument, with high EU added value in delivering outcomes beyond national capacity. The programme reinforces EU identity and values (solidarity, democracy, rights) and provides development and labour market benefits and opportunities to youth. The engagement of young people with fewer opportunities has grown over time, while recruitment and integration are still challenging for disadvantaged groups. In addition, there is an uneven geographical reach (between participating countries and urban vs. rural). Improved IT systems and reduced administrative burdens are still needed. Synergy and complementarity with other funds (e.g. Erasmus and Horizon Europe) are effective but can be improved. There is uneven coordination with national programmes.</p>
Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV)	<p>The EC mid-term evaluation identified several strengths and weaknesses. Strengths included strong alignment with EU priorities and</p>

<sup>2</sup> [Citizens' awareness and perception of EU Regional policy - July 2025 - Eurobarometer survey](#)

Instruments	Findings
	<p>stakeholder needs, clear EU added value through support for cross-border and transnational activities. Simplification improved predictability and accessibility, while regranting expanded access for smaller organisations. National Contact Points proved effective in outreach, and the Citizens' engagement and participation strand achieved a high success rate (58%). Beneficiaries reported that CERV funding enhanced their sustainability, visibility and networking capacity. The thematic focus of calls, especially on remembrance and democratic participation, is highly relevant.</p> <p>Weaknesses concerned the application process, seen as burdensome and complex, particularly for small municipalities and grassroots civil society organisations, with guidance often only in English. Administrative workload and technical demands discouraged less experienced organisations, and some Member States remained underrepresented in projects. The programme also suffered from limited visibility compared to its predecessor 'Europe for Citizens'. Finally, synergies with other EU funds such as Erasmus+, AMIF and ESF+ remained underexploited despite clear thematic overlaps.</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

### 2.2.2. ESF+, Horizon and Digital Europe

**ESF+, Horizon and Digital Europe are designed for a broader purpose** than the four CULT instruments examined above. **They remain highly relevant for the financial amounts allocated to education, training and youth interventions.** Culture and media are also topics for these funds, though not in their main scope and not easy to track. For ESF+, CULT-related objectives are:

- Specific Objective (SO) (e): Improve the quality, inclusiveness, effectiveness and labour market relevance of education and training systems.
- SO (f): Promote equal access to and completion of quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups.
- SO (g): Promote lifelong learning and flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities based on labour market needs.

Youth objectives are:

- SO (a): Improving access to employment and activation measures for all jobseekers, in particular young people, especially through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.
- SO (b): Modernising labour-market institutions and services, including public employment services, to provide tailored support for young people and improve school-to-work transitions.

Horizon supports CULT priorities under Pillar 1 (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – MSCAs) and pillar 2 cluster 2 (Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society), while Digital Europe supports advanced digital skills through specialised education programmes.

ESF+ is mainly under shared management as funding priorities are decided in multi-annual programmes at national/regional levels by the 27 Member States, with a small amount (EaSI strand) directly managed by DG EMPL. Horizon and Digital Europe are both under direct management, with centralised tender management.

Table 8: Main characteristics of ESF+, Horizon and Digital Europe

Instruments	Objective	Type of project	Target group/recipients
ESF +	Investing in people, to build a more social and inclusive EU. As part of cohesion policy, ESF+ continues its mission to support economic, territorial and social cohesion in the EU reducing disparities between Member States and regions.	Projects, actions and training aimed at creating and protecting jobs, promoting social inclusion, fighting poverty, and developing the skills needed for the digital and green transitions.	EU public and private organisations, non-governmental organisations, EU citizens, young people and children, and people from vulnerable groups.
Horizon	Horizon Europe promotes excellence in research and provides essential support to researchers and innovators to drive the systemic changes needed to ensure a green, healthy and resilient EU.	Research and innovation projects tackling societal challenges with an emphasis on EU industrial leadership, recovery and the green and digital transitions	Scientists, academics, students, research organisations, universities, industry, SMEs, and other relevant public and private organisations
Digital Europe	Accelerate the recovery and drive the EU's digital transformation, to build the EU's strategic digital capacities and facilitate wide deployment of digital technologies to be used by EU citizens, businesses and public administrations.	Large-scale deployment of high-performance computing and artificial intelligence, setting-up cybersecurity centres, courses on advanced digital technologies, a network of European digital innovation hubs supporting digital transformation in organisations, support for interoperability.	Public and private organisations, industry and SMEs, scientists, academics and universities.

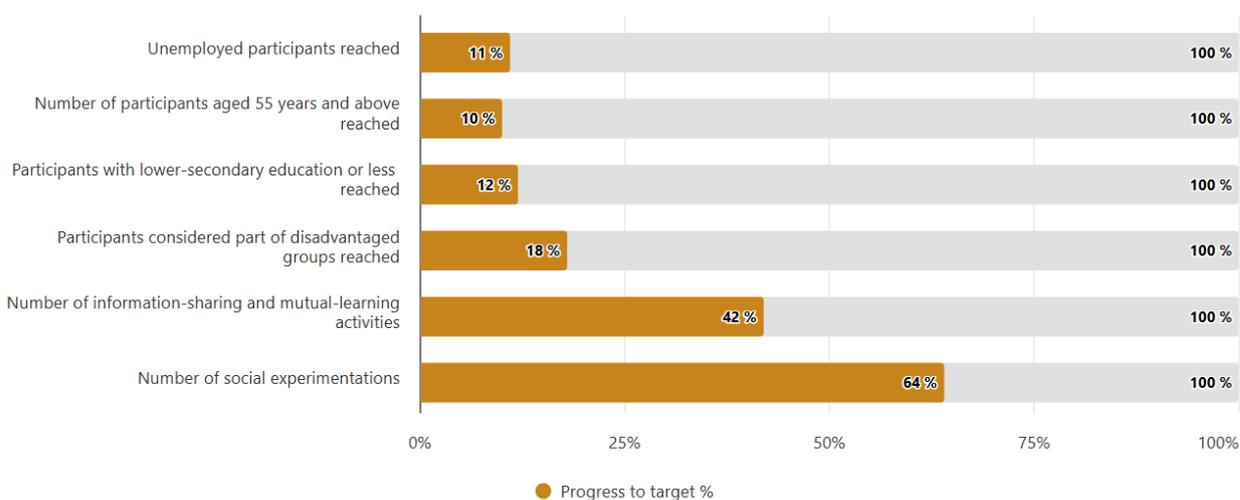
Source: Own elaboration.

### Instrument performance

**ESF+** shows steady budget absorption, with commitments at the end of October 2025 reaching 60% of the 2021–2027 allocation. Despite the late adoption of national and regional programmes, as with all ESIF funds, **performance is advancing, and the core indicators are mostly on track to meet their 2029 targets. Horizon also demonstrates good performance in terms of budget implementation, with 60% of the budget committed by the end of 2024.** However, as most Horizon Europe projects are still ongoing, medium- and long-term indicators will only become measurable later in the

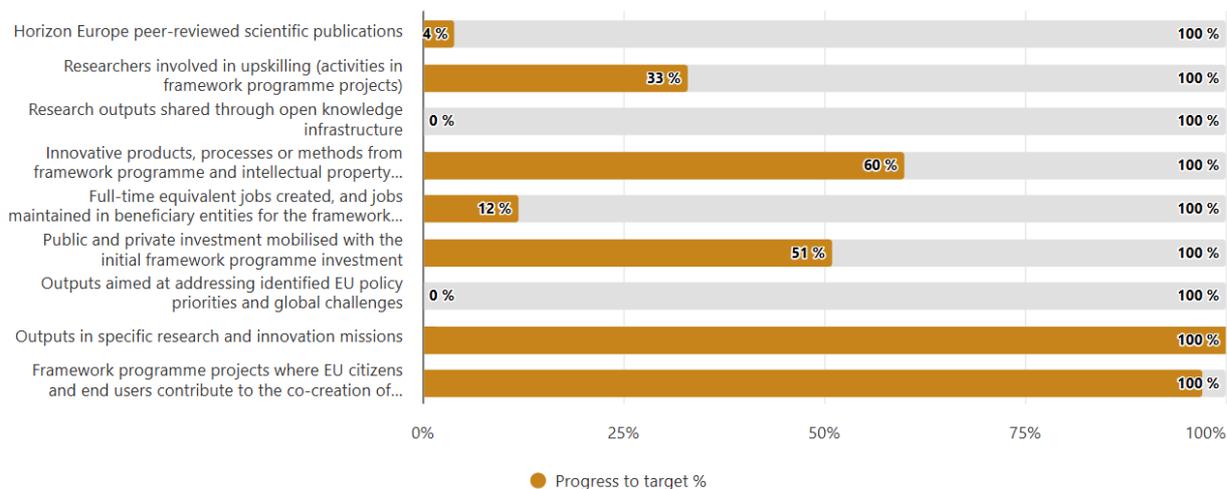
programme cycle. For the **Digital Europe Programme, 2024 performance data show financial commitment reaching 61% of the budget, with significant progress in digital infrastructure, skills, and innovation hubs.** However, progress varies across objectives. The ESF+ indicators for education and learning report on the number of participants and learning activities. The few specific indicators dealing with the CULT thematic fields for Horizon and Digital Europe cover the upskilling of researchers and training to acquire digital skills.

Figure 5: ESF + outputs and results progress at the end of 2024



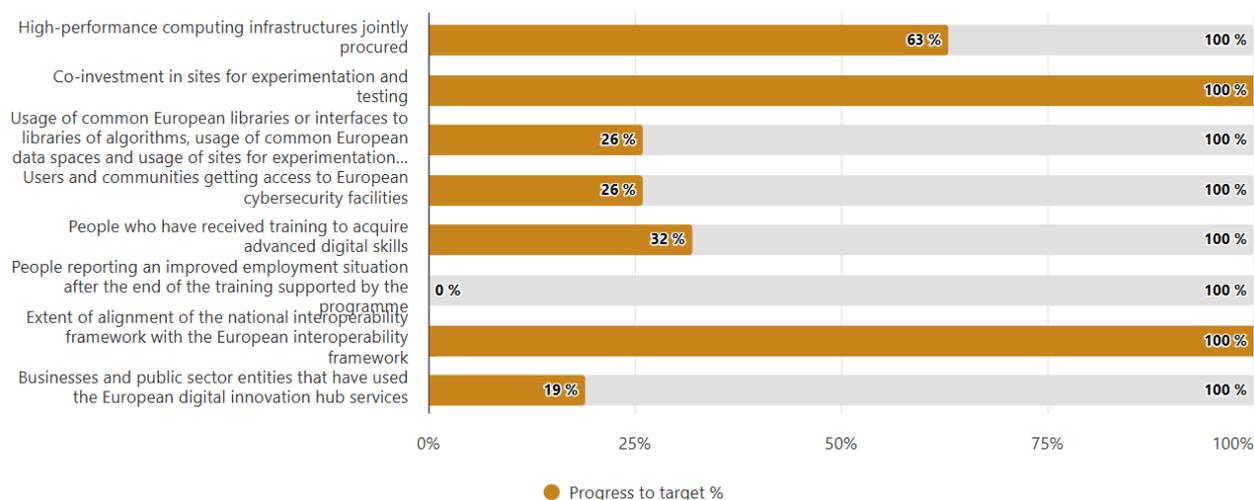
Source: [European Social Fund+ - Performance - European Commission](#)

Figure 6: Horizon outputs and results progress at the end of 2024



Source: [Horizon Europe - Performance - European Commission](#)

Figure 7: Digital Europe outputs and results progress at the end of 2024



Source: [Digital Europe Programme – Performance – European Commission](#)

### Key implementation aspects

**The instruments are generally highly relevant as their objectives correspond to pressing needs and priorities in the EU for education and training, research and the digital transition.** Efficiency differs across instruments due to distinct governance models. ESF+ has expanded the use of Simplify Cost Options (SCOs), improving efficiency, although implementation remains affected by national administrative complexity. Horizon Europe has introduced simplification measures and improved time-to-grant performance, but application and reporting costs remain high for many applicants. Digital Europe benefits from centralised management, supporting faster deployment, while efficiency challenges are linked to complex rules and uneven implementation capacity across Member States.

According to the mid-term EC evaluations findings of the instruments and on the individual programmes' fiches, **the instruments generate clear EU added value by enabling scale, coordination and impact beyond national capacity. ESF+ supports cohesion and convergence across Member States, Horizon Europe pools resources to address transnational research and innovation challenges, while Digital Europe reduces fragmentation by developing strategic digital capacity at EU level.** Together, they strengthen skills, innovation and digital transformation in support of EU policy priorities, including those relevant to the CULT fields.

Table 9: Mid-term EC evaluations findings of ESF+, Horizon and Digital Europe

Instruments	Findings
ESF +	The fund's scale enables results unattainable nationally, though there is very low absorption in outermost and less developed regions. The fund offers strong flexibility and embeds the twin transition effectively, but with uneven results across Member States. SCOs improve efficiency. However, late programme adoption, tight preparation processes and burdensome national rules continue to slow implementation and absorption. High internal and external coherence is recognised, but practical barriers, differing rules and risks of substitution limit synergies and complementarities in practice.

Instruments	Findings
Horizon	<p>The programme delivers scale, excellence and cross-border collaboration impossible to achieve nationally, offering unique infrastructure and cooperation opportunities with no equivalent at Member State level.</p> <p>The programme remains strongly aligned with EU priorities and beneficiary needs, but evolving global challenges and persistent structural gaps in EU R&amp;D limit its capacity to fully address emerging demands. The redesigned architecture improved the programme's internal coherence, yet limited beneficiary awareness, fragmented information and weak cross-pillar links continue to hamper practical synergies. The value for money and time-to-grant performance are strong, but high application and proposal preparation costs, along with incomplete simplification, continue to weigh heavily on beneficiaries. Scientific output, early innovation effects and societal engagement are progressing well, though most impacts are not yet measurable, and implementation challenges remain. The Seal of Excellence quality label relevant or CULT thematic fields can be awarded to eligible proposals under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, it adds value for synergies with other funding instruments.</p>
Digital Europe	<p>The programme strongly focuses on key digital priorities such as HPC, AI, cybersecurity and skills. It effectively bridges research and deployment, and the European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH) model is widely seen as successful and scalable. It complements Erasmus+ and ESF+ on skills development, contributes to EU digital sovereignty and SME competitiveness. However, implementation delays and uneven EDIH network implementation across Member States persist. The budget remains below programme ambitions, and the 50% co-financing rate limits SME and smaller actor participation. Administrative burden and unclear rules create obstacles, there may be overlaps with other EU programmes and limited visibility (including insufficient outreach for women in technology) could hinder overall relevance.</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

### 2.2.3. European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs)/CAP Policy funds

ESIF and CAP funds include ERDF with the Interreg goal, JTF, the EMFAF, EAFRD and EAGF. These are cross-sectorial and address a variety of cohesion, agriculture and rural development needs. **The budget allocated to these funds represents a large share of the MFF 2021-27. CULT thematic fields are not the priority for most of the programmes. However, cultural heritage as well as education and training are embedded within cohesion and rural development policies.** As a result, these funds support a variety of CULT-relevant interventions, including investments in cultural heritage, innovation in cultural and creative sectors, the digital transition, cross-border cooperation in education and training as well as infrastructure and services benefiting young people and local communities.

ERDF and Interreg contribute to CULT-related objectives mainly under Policy Objectives 1, 4 and 5; while CAP supports young farmers and culture heritage in rural areas, notably through the LEADER initiative. Training, upskilling and re-skilling are supported by JTF in transition areas (Objective 2).

**All the programmes under these funds**, except a limited part of EMFAF and CAP under direct management, **have shared management with a key role for national and regional authorities in implementation**. These authorities are responsible for defining the funding priorities, establishing project selection criteria and specific management arrangements (e.g. through Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) or a Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) approach).

Table 10: Instrument characteristics of ERDF and Interreg, JTF, CAP and EMFAF

Instruments	Objective	Type of project	Target group/recipient
ERDF and Interreg	Strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union by reducing economic, social and territorial disparities between regions and supporting the full integration of less-developed regions within the EU's internal market.	Investments in enterprises, infrastructure and public policies across a broad range of topics, including creative sectors, education and training, media and cultural heritage.	EU citizens, public or private organisations, and businesses with special attention paid to disadvantaged regions and areas, notably rural areas, cross-border territories, and areas suffering from natural or demographic handicaps and outermost regions.
JTF	Support the transition towards climate neutrality by alleviating socioeconomic impacts in the regions most affected.	Actions aimed at economic diversification and reconversion of the territories, including new firms, R&I, cultural heritage rehabilitation, up- and reskilling of workers, job-search assistance and active inclusion of affected workers in jobseeker programmes	National and local authorities, businesses and start-ups in regions suffering most from the climate transition.
CAP (EAGF and EAFRD)	Support viable farm income and resilience across the EU to enhance food security.	EAGF supports EU farmers through a basic payment scheme, payment for sustainable farming methods and payment for young farmers. EAFRD provides assistance to farmers and inhabitants of rural areas to increase sustainability and	EU farmers, including young farmers, rural organisations, stakeholders and inhabitants in rural areas.

Instruments	Objective	Type of project	Target group/recipient
		competitiveness, including boosting the use of digital and technological tools, actions to improve the attractiveness of rural areas for living and for job creation, support for innovation and diversification of on-farm activities and village revitalisation.	
EMFAF	EMFAF supports the common fisheries policy, EU maritime policy and the EU agenda for international ocean governance	Under priority 3, it may support actions enabling sustainable blue economies in coastal, island and inland areas and to fostering the sustainable development of fishing and aquaculture communities (including investment in cultural heritage, education and training).	Stakeholders in the exploitation and management of marine resources, in particular fishers, aquaculture farmers, coastal communities, civil society organisations, marine scientists and public authorities.

Source: Own elaboration.

### Instrument performance

ERDF and JTF implementation faced delays mainly due to external factors (including Covid), with low indicator achievements, though commitments and spending accelerated by end-2025. As reported by the Commission at end 2024, the implementation rate (commitments) was 57% for EMFAF, but payments were delayed, while for CAP policy funds 58% of the budget was committed with almost all that paid.

For indirect contributions, e.g. ERDF for the creative sector, it is **not always clear how much funding was allocated to each field. A lack of specific measures, indicators or rules for tracking CULT objectives prevent a clear picture.** This is why the contribution of ESIF to culture and to young people is often underestimated. The situation is similar for CAP policy instruments and EMFAF. Current CAP reporting at EU level does not capture cultural or creative activities supported through cooperation or the LEADER initiative. Young farmers, the only EU-level CAP indicator relevant for CULT, shows progress close to target.

**Key implementation aspects<sup>3</sup>**

Large instruments such as ERDF and EAFRD which pursue multiple objectives covering a wide range of investment areas are exposed to a risk of fragmentation or dilution of funding. In general, shared-management instruments (e.g. ERDF, Interreg, JTF) entail higher coordination and reporting costs, as programmes must be negotiated and implemented with multiple authorities at national and regional level. **Funding interventions under the CULT thematic fields are left to Member States, with no specific earmark for culture and education.** The 2021-2027 CPR consolidated and extended the single regulation and simplification toolbox (e.g. SCOs, flat rates, programme flexibility). However, a recurring weakness is that simplification has not been delivered uniformly and small organisations in funds under shared management still face complex application portals, demanding reporting obligations and lengthy payment cycles. External factors, such as unequal administrative capacity among Member States, further influence administrative costs, contributing to delays and increasing the burden of procedures in general.

Table 11: Mid-term EC evaluations findings of ERDF

Instruments	Findings
ERDF	The fund has a strong territorial focus and uses development tools that are tailored to local needs (e.g. ITI or urban sustainable development strategies). EU added value is through investments and territorial cooperation that exceed national capabilities. Its relevance is confirmed by the alignment of interventions with basic and emerging territorial needs. Some stakeholders point to gaps between the top-down approach and actual implementation capacities of regional and local administration. Programme efficiency has improved through simplification measures and enabling conditions. However, it is still constrained by heavy reporting and auditing requirements, inconsistent interpretation of rules, and uneven uptake of simplification measures across Member States. Coherence is reinforced through coordination.

Source: Own elaboration.

**2.2.4. Global Europe and AMIF**

AMIF and Digital Europe are managed under direct and indirect management, with a part of shared management for AMIF. Funding is disbursed mainly in the form of grants and procurement through national programmes and under a thematic facility for specific AMIF actions, while Global Europe also provides budgetary support to partner countries.

<sup>3</sup> The Mid-term evaluation of CAP policy funds is planned for publication end-2026, while the JTF evaluation has been carried out end-2025 as sub-package of the ERDF mid-term evaluation.

Table 12: Instrument characteristics of Global Europe and AMIF

Instruments	Objective	Type of project	Target group/recipient
Global Europe	Promote EU values, principles and fundamental interests worldwide to pursue the objectives and principles of its external action. Specific objectives include the eradication of poverty, consolidating, supporting and promoting peace, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights as well as sustainable development and the fight against climate change.	Geographic and thematic actions focusing on human rights and democracy, civil society, stability and peace, as well as on global challenges such as health, education and training, women and children, work, social protection, culture, migration and climate change. The programme also contributes to ERASMUS+ mobility and cooperation actions in third countries.	Non-EU countries and beneficiaries around the world, with a focus on least-developed countries, international organisations and private bodies.
AMIF	Contribute to the efficient management of migration and to the implementation, strengthening and development of the common policy on asylum and the common immigration policy.	A wide range of initiatives, such as improved accommodation and reception services for asylum seekers, information measures and campaigns in non-EU countries on legal migration channels, education and language training for non-EU nationals, specialised support for vulnerable persons, unaccompanied children and victims of trafficking, information exchange and cooperation between Member States.	State and federal authorities, local public bodies, NGOs, humanitarian organisations, private and public law companies, and education and research organisations.

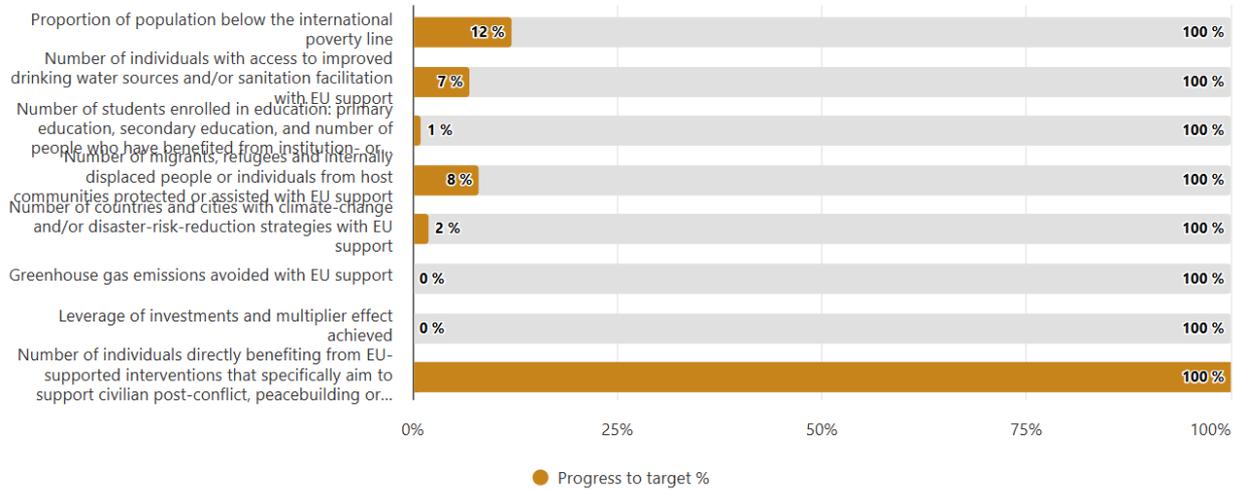
Source: Own elaboration.

### Instrument performance

AMIF shows steady implementation despite the late approval of national programmes, with 45% of the 2021–2027 budget committed by 2024. **CULT-relevant dimensions are mainly education- and youth-related measures under SO1, SO2 and SO3 such as large-scale training, early integration support (notably language learning and basic services), and targeted actions for children and unaccompanied minors.** Global Europe end-2024 data reported commitment of 63% of the budget. However, programme monitoring encompasses a limited number of indicators which reflect investments in education and training. No indicators are specific for culture and creative sectors,

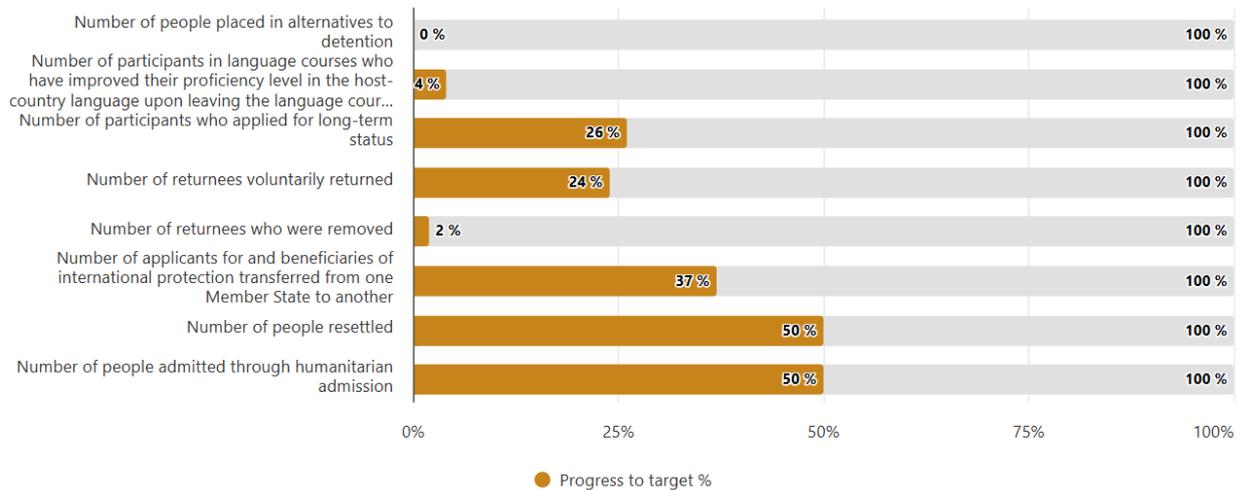
information and media, youth or sport, which constrains the ability to assess performance in these fields at mid-term.

Figure 8: Global Europe outputs and results progress at the end of 2024



Source: [Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe – Performance – European Commission](#)

Figure 9: AMIF outputs and results progress at the end of 2024



Source: [Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund – Performance – European Commission](#)

### Key implementation aspects

Table 13: Mid-term EC evaluations findings of Global Europe and AMIF

Instruments	Main evaluation findings
Global Europe	NDICI–Global Europe benefits from a more coherent architecture, improved coordination between the Commission, EEAS and Member States, and strong alignment with EU external policy priorities. Its flexible mechanisms enable rapid crisis response while supporting major EU strategies such as Global Gateway and integrates cross-cutting principles like human rights, gender equality and good

Instruments	Main evaluation findings
	governance across interventions. It also strengthens joint approaches and leverages investment through EFSD+. The instrument remains difficult to access for local actors, while coordination and information-sharing between EU institutions and Member States could improve. Monitoring and evaluation capacities are limited, with insufficient qualitative analysis and disaggregated data. Private-sector engagement remains low, guidance on flexibility mechanisms is not always clear, and institutional capacity constraints persist.
AMIF	AMIF is very relevant thanks to its alignment with the Regulation's four specific objectives, Member State flexibility to adapt interventions, and its ability to address key needs in reception, integration and capacity-building. Coherence is generally positive, with solid coordination, complementarity with other EU funds, and interventions tailored to target groups. Efficiency improved through SCOs and strengthened administrative capacities, while effectiveness is supported by rapid progress after initial delays. There are strong results under SO1, SO2 and SO4 and well-performing Thematic Facility and Union Actions. EU added value is visible in the expansion of services, innovation in interventions, strengthened professional training, and improved asylum and integration management. Some weaknesses relate to unclear target group definitions and administrative constraints that reduce flexibility, uneven use of SCOs, high administrative burden and duplicate reporting. EU added value is constrained by the limited involvement of local community actors and uneven outreach to certain target groups.

Source: Own elaboration.

### 2.2.5. Citizen facing European TV and Video Portal; A European public sphere and Multimedia actions

The 'Citizen facing European TV and Video Portal' and the 'A European public sphere' are implemented as **Pilot Projects (PPs) and Preparatory Actions (PAs) which are experimental initiatives designed to test the feasibility of new actions and prepare new programmes**. The two initiatives have a relatively high budget, compared to other PP/PAs (see below), are active instruments with a long-term view. Multimedia actions are implemented under direct management by the European Commission which adopts annual financing decisions, publishes calls for proposals or tenders and directly oversees the grants, procurement and contribution agreements without delegation to Member States or other intermediaries.

Table 14: Characteristics of Citizen facing European TV and Video Portal; A European public sphere and Multimedia actions

Instruments	Objective	Type of project	Target group/recipient
Citizen facing European TV and Video Portal	The Citizen facing European TV and Video Portal supports two pilot projects aimed at improving access to TV and video news and political documentaries across Member States. The first develops a multilingual platform for searching, streaming and subtitle translation, together with a cooperation framework among media stakeholders. The second funds AI-based services and a prototype platform offering tools for new approaches to content creation, personalisation and advanced content discovery.		Legal entities (public or private bodies) from an EU Member State, by any of the following or combinations of broadcasting stations / online news and information/content platforms, media and entertainment/infotainment companies, technology companies, news services and education service providers.
A European public sphere	'The European public sphere: a new online media offer for young Europeans' is a pilot project that supports the New EU Youth Strategy and the New EU Agenda for Culture, i.e., to bring the EU closer to youngsters.		The action aims to engage with young Europeans by creating curated online spaces that gather thought-provoking journalistic content around current affairs, empowering them to compare national, regional and local perspectives from across Europe, discuss and discover how their interests link to interests of young Europeans in other Member States and to EU initiatives.
Multimedia actions	Multimedia Actions fund general EU information, news and programmes for the public. This is intended to increase the visibility of EU institutions' work, decisions and the steps involved in building the EU. The activities should allow citizens to make full use of their right to be informed about EU policies,	Pan-European reporting, Pan-European audiovisual reporting, EU audio reporting, EU digital reporting, European media hubs / Media hubs, Media networks, Multilingual EU affairs using a European media platform, Partnerships with EU information channels – Euronews, studies and data in the news	Funding is accessible mainly to media organisations and networks through annual calls. In addition, Euronews received direct grants under a three year partnership agreement for 2021, 2022 and 2023 to produce and disseminate multilingual coverage of EU affairs, while specialised consultancies and experts may be contracted through procurement for studies, evaluations and audits.

Instruments	Objective	Type of project	Target group/recipient
	get them involved and contribute to a better European public sphere.	media, evaluations and audits.	

Source: Authors elaboration.

### Key implementation aspects

CETVVP published, at the end of 2023, a call for proposal for pilot projects and preparatory actions in the field of 'Communications Networks, Content and Technology'. The call addressed projects related to 'the creation of a European portal platform' and 'The prototypical implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools'. The European public sphere initiative launched a call for proposal at the end of 2024 for pilot projects and preparatory actions. The call was open to a consortium of at least five entities, which could include media organisations and non-profit organisations (including youth organisations). Multimedia actions have launched seven calls for proposal since 2021, granting approximately EUR 56.4 million.

#### 2.2.6. Further instruments and initiatives

**Further instruments are relevant for CULT. InvestEU deployed financial instruments co-managed with the European Investment Bank, TSI supports technical assistance and reforms in Member States, including education and training, NEB is a cultural initiative with no direct budget lines, Erasmus for young employers is a strand of the Single Market Programme, as well as the PPs and the PAs tools that operates under a different framework.** While the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) is not part of the MFF, it supports similar interventions to those in the Cohesion Fund, covering all the CULT policy fields.

Table 15: Further instrument characteristics

Instruments	Objective	Type of project	Target group/recipient
Invest EU	Mobilise public and private investment to support EU policy priorities by addressing market failures and suboptimal investment situations, with a focus on competitiveness, innovation and digitisation, SMEs, sustainable infrastructure and social investment	Financial Instruments, in the form of loan and guarantee mainly.	SMEs and all organisations, public and private, with investment objectives in the sphere of public goods and services

Instruments	Objective	Type of project	Target group/recipient
	including education, training and skills.		
Technical support instrument (TSI)	Support Member States in the design and implementation of structural reforms aimed at strengthening resilience, competitiveness and sustainable economic and social convergence, including reforms in education, skills, digital and green transitions.	Technical support actions such as studies, expertise, roadmaps, strategies, legislative and organisational reforms, delivered through direct or indirect management.	National, regional and local public administrations in EU Member States.
NEB	Promote sustainability, inclusion and aesthetics by linking the Green Deal with culture, creativity and innovation.	Cross-cutting projects funded through multiple EU programmes, including research and innovation, cultural and creative projects, education and training, urban and territorial development, and community-based initiatives, NEB Facility as a multiannual funding tool.	Local and regional authorities, cultural and creative sectors, research and education institutions, civil society organisations, SMEs, start-ups and local communities.
Erasmus for young entrepreneurs	Strengthen entrepreneurship and SME competitiveness by enabling aspiring and new entrepreneurs to acquire skills, knowledge and international experience through cross-border exchanges with experienced entrepreneurs.	Mobility and mentoring exchanges, networking and capacity-building activities, and support actions implemented via intermediary organisations.	New and aspiring entrepreneurs, host entrepreneurs, intermediary organisations; indirect benefits for SMEs and entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Instruments	Objective	Type of project	Target group/recipient
RRF	Support reforms and investments to enhance economic, social and institutional resilience after the COVID-19 crisis.	Performance-based reforms and investments implemented through NRRPs, financed via grants and loans.	Member States as beneficiaries; final recipients include public authorities, enterprises (including SMEs), organisations and citizens.
PPs and Pas	According to Article 58 of the Financial Regulation 'Basic act and exceptions' <sup>4</sup> , PPs are of an experimental nature and are meant to test 'the feasibility of an action and its usefulness'. PAs, meanwhile, are designed to 'prepare proposals with a view to the adoption of future actions' according to the publication 'Pilot projects and preparatory actions in the annual EU budgetary procedure' <sup>5</sup> of the European Parliament Research Service (EPRS), PPs and PAs constitute exceptions to two fundamental EU budgetary rules. They allow EU budgetary commitments to be made in the absence of a dedicated legal basis and derogate from the European Commission's exclusive right of legislative initiative. As such, PPs and PAs provide MEPs with a key instrument to translate political priorities into potential EU policies. While the European Parliament is not the only institution entitled to propose PPs and PAs—the Council and the Commission may also do so—this possibility is rarely used by the latter.		

Source: Own elaboration.

## Instrument performance

Table 16: Performance of other instruments

Instruments	Instrument performance
Invest EU	Performance is monitored through indicators set out in Annex III of the Regulation. No indicators are specific to culture, media or youth. CULT-relevant information is mainly captured indirectly under the Social Investment and Skills window (education, skills, social infrastructure). According to the InvestEU official website, signed operations in cultural and creative sectors and media remain limited (around EUR 111.9 million as of April 2025).
Technical support instrument (TSI)	Monitoring focuses on outputs, results and impacts (number of cooperation and support plans, technical support activities, deliverables, adoption of strategies, laws or procedures). For 2021–2023, 611 projects were supported by EUR 359 million, with over 500 contributing to NRRPS. About 113 projects fall under the "Labour market, education, health & social services". No CULT-specific indicators are available.

<sup>4</sup> [Regulation – EU, Euratom – 2024/2509 – EN – EUR-Lex](#)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/640130/EPRS\\_ATA\(2019\)640130\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/640130/EPRS_ATA(2019)640130_EN.pdf)

Instruments	Instrument performance
New European Bauhaus (NEB)	No single performance framework or harmonised indicators. Monitoring follows the rules of the programmes financing NEB actions.
Erasmus for young entrepreneurs	Performance is tracked under the Single Market Programme indicator "number of entrepreneurs benefitting from mentoring and mobility schemes". By 2024, 3 032 beneficiaries were reported against a 2027 target of 22 000 (14% progress), indicating moderate implementation at mid-period.
Resilience and Recovery Facility (RRF)	Performance is monitored via the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard and 14 common indicators. CULT-relevant dimensions are captured mainly through education and youth indicators: by 2024, 29 million participants in education or training and 10.7 million young people (15–29) receiving support. Implementation progresses with milestones and targets being met.
PPs and PAs	Overall, since May 2021, 30 calls for proposals for Preparatory Actions (PAs) and Pilot Projects (PPs) have been launched <sup>6</sup> . The distribution across policy fields shows a strong concentration in Sport, which accounts for eight calls. This is followed by Information and Media Policy (five calls) and Education (three calls), while Culture and Creative Sectors are only marginally covered, with a single call. Overall, this indicates that PPs and PAs launched during the period under review have largely contributed to the Sport policy field.

Source: Own elaboration.

### Key implementation aspects

Table 17: Mid-term EC evaluations findings of other instruments

Instruments	Findings
Invest EU	Relevance and EU added value are high, notably through risk-sharing and mobilisation of private investment aligned with EU priorities. Effectiveness is generally positive, but the impact of the Advisory Hub and Portal remains difficult to assess. Efficiency is constrained by administrative complexity, coordination challenges under the open architecture model and demanding reporting requirements. Coherence is broad, though uptake varies across Member States.
Technical support instrument (TSI)	Relevance is very strong, as the instrument responds directly to Member State reform needs and is widely used. Effectiveness is high, with clear improvements in administrative capacity and strong beneficiary satisfaction. Efficiency is generally positive, although monitoring and national coordination remain uneven. Coherence with EU priorities is strong, while

<sup>6</sup> [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#)

Instruments	Findings
	EU added value is in cross-country learning, expertise pooling and enhanced credibility of reforms.
New European Bauhaus (NEB)	No evaluation is available.
Erasmus for young entrepreneurs	Effectiveness in skills development, business growth and internationalisation mean high participant satisfaction, though long-term impacts are less documented. Efficiency from a well-established intermediary network is impacted by administrative complexity and uneven quality across intermediaries. Coherence with EU policy priorities is strong. EU added value is clear, as it is the only EU-wide cross-border entrepreneur exchange scheme, although in there is limited outreach and awareness.
Resilience and Recovery Facility (RRF)	Relevance and EU added value are very high given the scale, common borrowing and role in stabilising the EU economy. Effectiveness is visible in milestone and target achievement, though uneven across pillars and Member States. Efficiency is mixed. The performance-based model increases accountability but entails significant administrative burden. Coherence with the European Semester is strong, while synergies with other funds vary in practice.

Source: Own elaboration.

### 2.3. Synergies and complementarities

This section presents five thematic fiches examining potential synergies and complementarities between EU funding instruments active during the 2021–2027 programming period in policy areas falling under the remit of the CULT Committee: (i) Culture and Creative Sectors, (ii) Information and Media Policy, (iii) Education, (iv) Youth and (v) Sport. The purpose is to offer an overview of how the main instruments currently in these fields relate to one another and where interactions may occur.

The approach follows the conceptual framework of the DG REGIO Study ‘Strategic coordination and financial complementarity of CPR funds with other EU instruments’ (DG REGIO, 2025). The definitions are provided in the box below.

#### Box 1: Definitions

**Policy overlaps** when two funds/programmes/instruments act in the same policy areas and target the same type of beneficiaries.

**Coordination:** institutional arrangements/administrative mechanisms or procedures that align implementation of the programmes/funds/instruments. Policy overlap without coordination may lead to unclarity and risk of double funding.

**Synergy:** financial or intervention-level interactions, which are concurrent (at the same time through coordinated support from multiple sources), phased (in successive stages, where one programme builds on or follows another), demarcation (with a clear division of responsibilities between

programmes), or transfer (moving from one CPR fund to another, or to other EU instruments, within defined ceilings).

**Complementarity:** when both coordination and synergies are present, at strategic and financial level.

Source: European Commission: Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, Oxford Research, OïR, Spatial Foresight and t33, Strategic coordination and financial complementarity of CPR funds with other EU instruments – Final report, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025. The report is available [here](#).

The study offers more specific information about the different instruments. The thematic fiches broadly mirror the approach used there. They identify which instruments address the thematic area most explicitly, map the management modes that shape their delivery and examine the extent their target groups or communities overlap. This enables us to highlight areas where interaction, synergies or complementarities may emerge, while focusing on instruments within the scope of this exercise.

Given the broad scope of several CULT-related policy areas—particularly education, which cuts across a wide range of instruments—this exercise is deliberately ring-fenced. It provides a structured but high-level analysis to inform reflection rather than to map all existing or emerging interfaces between instruments.

For this study, potential synergies and complementarities between instruments have been analysed considering the direct or indirect contributions from the instrument to each policy field. The relevance for the CULT committee policy fields can be established based on the following categories:

- **Primary policy field:** The instrument is designed to address the policy field with clear objectives, measures, indicators and relevant budget. The financial contribution from the instrument is 100% CULT relevant.
- **Secondary policy field:** the instrument covers the policy field to some extent, e.g. in terms of target groups (e.g. young farmers) or type of investment (e.g. digital infrastructure), complementing other interventions intended to achieve the instrument objectives (e.g. ERDF investment in cultural heritage for territorial cohesion).
- **Not in the scope:** CULT fields are outside the scope of the instrument.

The table below summarises the primary and secondary contributions of the instruments for each CULT policy field, using a colour code.

Table 18: CULT relevant policy fields

Instruments	Culture and creative sectors	Information and media policy	Education	Youth	Sport
1. Erasmus+	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope	Primary policy field	Primary policy field	Primary policy field
2. European Solidarity Corps (ESC)	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope	Secondary policy field	Primary policy field	Not in the scope

Instruments	Culture and creative sectors	Information and media policy	Education	Youth	Sport
3. Creative Europe (CREA)	Primary policy field	Primary policy field	Secondary policy field	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope
4. Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV) - the Citizens' engagement and participation strand	Primary policy field	Primary policy field	Primary policy field	Primary policy field	Not in the scope
5. European Regional Development Fund + Interreg (ERDF)	Secondary policy field	Secondary policy field	Secondary policy field	Secondary policy field	Secondary policy field
6. European Social Fund + (ESF+)	Secondary policy field	Secondary policy field	Primary policy field	Primary policy field	Secondary policy field
7. Horizon Europe	Primary policy field	Secondary policy field	Primary policy field	Not in the scope	Not in the scope
8. Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)	Secondary policy field	Secondary policy field	Secondary policy field	Secondary policy field	Secondary policy field
9. InvestEU	Primary policy field	Secondary policy field	Primary policy field	Not in the scope	Not in the scope
10. Technical Support Instrument (TSI)	Not in the scope	Not in the scope	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope	Not in the scope
11. Digital Europe Programme	Not in the scope	Secondary policy field	Primary policy field	Not in the scope	Not in the scope
12. European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF)	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope	Not in the scope	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope
13. European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope	Not in the scope	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope

Instruments	Culture and creative sectors	Information and media policy	Education	Youth	Sport
14. European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope	Not in the scope
15. Just Transition Fund (JTF)	Not in the scope	Not in the scope	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope	Not in the scope
16. Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)	Not in the scope	Not in the scope	Secondary policy field	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope
17. New European Bauhaus	Primary policy field	Not in the scope	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope	Not in the scope
18. Citizen facing European TV and Video new Portal	Primary policy field	Primary policy field	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope	Not in the scope
19. A European public sphere: a new online media offer for young Europeans	Not in the scope	Primary policy field	Not in the scope	Not in the scope	Not in the scope
20. Multimedia actions	Not in the scope	Primary policy field	Not in the scope	Not in the scope	Not in the scope
21. Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI – Global Europe) – geographic programmes strand <sup>7</sup>	Primary policy field	Primary policy field	Primary policy field	Primary policy field	Primary policy field
22. Single Market Programme (Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs)	Secondary policy field	Secondary policy field	Not in the scope	Primary policy field	Not in the scope

Source: Own elaboration.

The thematic fiches follow a two-step analysis:

<sup>7</sup> The NDICI Global Europe.

1. **Institutional and delivery features:** the fiche first considers the management mode and the type of implementing actors (e.g. Directorates General, executive agencies, national/regional authorities).
  - Instruments with similar management modes or involving the same implementing bodies are flagged as having a *potentially higher likelihood* of interaction.
  - Conversely, contrasting modes (e.g. direct vs shared management) suggest a more limited or indirect relationship.

This stage does not attempt to assess real coordination practices; it merely highlights **structural conditions** that may favour or limit interaction.

2. **Beneficiaries and target groups<sup>8</sup>:** the second stage compares the main target groups across instruments.
  - Instruments supporting similar groups (e.g. cultural organisations, local authorities, young people, SMEs) are identified as having **potential areas of overlap**.
  - Where target groups differ, but the similar management modes or involving the same implementing bodies are flagged as having a higher potential for complementarities.

The information used for this analysis are reported in the table below.

**From an initial overview, the thematic field supported by the most instruments is 'Education' funded by 17 instruments, of which 7 list it as they primary policy field. This is followed by 'Culture and creative sectors', funded by 16 instruments, with 7 identifying it as a primary policy field.**

These two areas are therefore the most fragmented across the instrument landscape, leaving the greatest scope for synergies and complementarities. At the same time, the fact that these policy fields are supported by many instruments increases the complexity of planning and implementation. Effective and coordinated use of all EU resources in the Culture and creative sectors and Education requires robust coordination mechanisms to align a wide range of funds with differing rules, objectives and scopes.

All CULT thematic areas were classified as 'Primary policy fields' under NDICI–Global Europe. The programme is not designed around these themes—its core purpose is to support EU external action, with a focus on geographical regions (i.e., EU Neighbourhood, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas and the Caribbean). However, because it finances activities across these sectors as reflected in its objectives, the methodology used for this study identifies links with all thematic fields. This apparent relevance should therefore be interpreted with caution, as NDICI–Global Europe is intended to address international cooperation first. Furthermore, the completely different geographical scope probably may lead to complementarity with all the other instruments.

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<sup>8</sup> Beneficiaries and target groups are presented as a general indication of the scope of the instrument. The information provided reflects a broad list of subjects impacted by the instrument, without making a detailed distinction between beneficiaries, final recipients, and target groups, nor aiming to describe these categories in a precise or exhaustive manner.

Table 19: Different instruments management mode, implementing actors, beneficiaries and target groups

Instruments	Management mode	Implementing actors	Beneficiaries and target groups (beneficiaries and final recipients)
1. Erasmus+	Direct and indirect management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG EAC</li> <li>• DG EMPL</li> <li>• European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)</li> <li>• National agencies/offices</li> </ul>	Learners, educators, youth, organisations, national agencies.
2. European Solidarity Corps (ESC)	Direct and indirect management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG EAC</li> <li>• EACEA</li> <li>• National agencies/offices</li> </ul>	Young people and participating organisations.
3. Creative Europe (CREA)	Direct and indirect management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG EAC</li> <li>• DG CONNECT</li> <li>• DG ECFIN</li> <li>• DG COMM</li> <li>• EACEA</li> </ul>	Cultural and creative organisations and professionals (e.g. architecture, heritage, design, publishing, music, performing arts); includes European Capitals of Culture (ECOC).
4. Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV) - the Citizens' engagement and participation strand	Direct and indirect management (very small share)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG JUST</li> <li>• EACEA</li> <li>• International organisations</li> </ul>	EU citizens; municipalities and local authorities.
5. European Regional Development Fund + Interreg ERDF)	Shared management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG REGIO</li> <li>• National and regional authorities of the MS</li> </ul>	Project beneficiaries and wider populations benefiting from territorial investment.
6. European Social Fund + (ESF+)	Shared management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG EMPL</li> </ul>	Jobseekers, NEETs, learners of all ages, people at risk of exclusion, persons with disabilities; workers

Instruments	Management mode	Implementing actors	Beneficiaries and target groups (beneficiaries and final recipients)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National and regional authorities of the MS</li> </ul>	needing up-/reskilling; public employment services, training providers, social partners and civil-society organisations.
7. Horizon Europe	Direct and indirect management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DG RTD</li> <li>European Research Executive Agency (REA)</li> <li>European Research Council Executive Agency (ERCEA)</li> <li>European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA),</li> <li>European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA)</li> <li>European Climate, Infrastructure and - Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)</li> </ul>	Researchers, cultural and creative communities, civil-society actors, educators, learners, media users, citizens engaged in democratic participation.
8. Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)	Direct management	Member States are the beneficiaries and implementing actors	As a crisis instrument, the RRF has a different structure regarding beneficiaries who are Member States, while the final recipients are mainly public authorities, but can include private entities and SMEs, particularly for digitalisation and skills development. Ultimately, all citizens can benefit from investments supported by the RRF.
9. InvestEU	Indirect management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Steering Board (European Commission (Chair), EIB Group, other implementing partners, non-voting expert designated by the European Parliament)</li> </ul>	Private entities (SPVs, project companies, corporates, midcaps, SMEs); public authorities; public-private partnerships; non-profit organisations.

Instruments	Management mode	Implementing actors	Beneficiaries and target groups (beneficiaries and final recipients)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment Committee (independent external experts appointed by the Commission)</li> <li>• Advisory Hub (European Commission (Chair), EIB Group, Member States, experts designated by the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee)</li> </ul>	
10. Technical Support Instrument (TSI)	Direct and indirect management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG REFORM</li> <li>• National coordinating authorities</li> </ul>	Public administrations at national, regional and local level.
11. Digital Europe Programme	Direct and indirect management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG CONNECT</li> <li>• EuroHPC Joint Undertaking</li> <li>• European Cybersecurity Competence Centre (ECCC),</li> <li>• Chips Joint Undertaking (Chips JU)</li> </ul>	Public sector entities, businesses (especially SMEs), research organizations, and NGOs. Natural persons are not eligible.
12. European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF)	Shared and direct management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG AGRI</li> <li>• National and regional authorities</li> </ul>	Farmers, including young farmers.
13. European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development	Shared management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG AGRI</li> <li>• National and regional authorities</li> </ul>	Farmers, rural communities, local and regional authorities, rural SMEs.

Instruments	Management mode	Implementing actors	Beneficiaries and target groups (beneficiaries and final recipients)
14. European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)	Shared and direct management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG MARE</li> <li>• National authorities</li> </ul>	Fisheries, aquaculture and maritime operators; coastal communities; national authorities.
15. Just Transition Fund (JTF)	Shared management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG REGIO</li> <li>• National and regional authorities of the MS</li> </ul>	Project beneficiaries and wider populations benefiting from territorial investment, including vulnerable groups.
16. Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)	Shared management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG HOME</li> <li>• National authorities</li> </ul>	Beneficiaries are mostly public authorities at different levels and no-profit organisations. The target groups of AMIF interventions are primarily third-country nationals along the asylum, migration and return continuum. This includes applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection, legally residing third-country nationals, unaccompanied minors and other children in migration, as well as vulnerable groups such as victims of trafficking or persons with specific needs.
17. New European Bauhaus	Direct and indirect management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG GROW</li> </ul>	Local and regional authorities, universities and research centres, stakeholder in the cultural and creative sectors, civil-society groups, local communities, SMEs and start-ups; youth and individual creators via linked programmes.
18. Citizen facing European TV and Video new Portal	Direct management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG CNENCT</li> </ul>	Online news and information/content platforms, media and entertainment/infotainment companies,

Instruments	Management mode	Implementing actors	Beneficiaries and target groups (beneficiaries and final recipients)
			technology companies, news service providers, education service providers.
19. A European public sphere: a new online media offer for young Europeans	Direct management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG CNENCT</li> </ul>	Media organisations and non-profit organisations (including youth organisations). Natural persons are not eligible except self-employed persons or equivalent (i.e. sole traders).
20. Multimedia actions	Direct management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG CONNECT</li> </ul>	Media organisations and networks.
21. Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI – Global Europe) – geographic programmes strand <sup>9</sup>	Direct and indirect management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG INTPA</li> <li>• DG NEAR</li> <li>• FPI</li> <li>• EEAS</li> </ul>	Partner countries, Member States, developing countries/territories (as per OECD DAC lists), international organisations, and entities eligible through reciprocal access.
22. Single Market Programme (Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs)	Direct management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG GROW</li> <li>• EISMEA</li> </ul>	New entrepreneurs, host entrepreneurs, intermediary organisations, SMEs and business ecosystems.

Source: Own elaboration.

<sup>9</sup> The NDICI Global Europe.

### 2.3.1. Culture and creative sectors

The culture and creative sectors thematic field appears in 16 of the instruments and initiatives. Among these, **seven treat it as a primary policy field: Creative Europe, CERV (Citizens' Engagement and Participation strand), Horizon Europe, InvestEU, the NEB, the citizen-facing European TV and Video Portal initiative, and NDICI–Global Europe.** These instruments constitute the core group with explicit cultural and creative sector objectives or with substantial intervention in this domain.

Figure 10: Instruments addressing the 'Culture and creative sectors' field



Source: Own elaboration.

Across these seven primary instruments, direct or indirect management is used in all of them. This creates a homogeneous delivery landscape in which the Commission and executive agencies play a central role.

Although no detailed coordination arrangements are assessed, the general convergence in management modes (particularly the concentration around direct/indirect management and the recurrent involvement of executive agencies such as EACEA and thematic executive agencies under Horizon Europe) may facilitate interaction or alignment at operational level, at least where there are common actors or communities.

Secondary instruments (e.g., Erasmus+, ERDF, ESF+, RRF, EAGF, EAFRD, EMFAF, Single Market Programme - Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs) contribute to the sector only indirectly. Their mixed management modes - mostly shared or direct - suggest more dispersed governance requiring more structural conditions for interaction with the core cultural instruments.

Looking across target groups, the primary cultural instruments display several shared or adjacent communities of beneficiaries:

- **Cultural and creative operators** feature prominently in Creative Europe and the New European Bauhaus, and are also addressed indirectly through Horizon Europe clusters and EIT KIC Culture & Creativity (researchers, cultural communities) and InvestEU (CCIs-related SMEs and project entities).
- **Local and regional authorities** are supported across multiple instruments (CERV, ERDF, NEB, NDICI–Global Europe), which creates broad thematic overlap at territorial level.
- **Citizens and civil-society actors**, present in CERV, Horizon Europe and NDICI–Global Europe, form another cross-cutting group.

This produces several indicative areas of potential overlap, especially among instruments addressing cultural actors (Creative Europe, Horizon Europe, NEB).

**Secondary instruments also intersect with the cultural and creative sectors through broader target groups** such as learners (Erasmus+), youth (ESC), jobseekers and vulnerable groups (ESF+), rural communities (EAFRD), coastal communities (EMFAF), and SMEs (Single Market Programme - Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs). While these connections are indirect, they expand the pool of potential beneficiaries, creating possible overlaps.

Horizon Europe shows strong potential for synergies with Creative Europe due to its direct thematic connection to cultural and creative sectors and its direct management landscape, including the involvement of executive agencies as in Creative Europe. It has a broad beneficiary base, ranging from researchers and cultural communities to civil-society actors and audiences. This creates multiple points of intersection with Creative Europe's cooperation, innovation and capacity-building objectives. In the next programming period, the NEB should be more firmly included in the Horizon programme, providing an important opportunity to foster synergies between these instruments (i.e., other intervention funded under Horizon Europe and Creative Europe).

The NEB likewise offers substantial synergy potential, as it is anchored in cultural and creative disciplines, including design, architecture, arts and community-led transformation. Its target groups are creative actors, local authorities, universities and cultural organisations which align closely with those of Creative Europe.

Medialvest offers a clear example of synergies between EU instruments. Launched under the InvestEU window for cultural and creative sectors, it was designed by the Commission, is operated by the EIF and financed through both InvestEU and Creative Europe's MEDIA strand. It provides equity to financial intermediaries, who then invest in companies across the audiovisual value chain. While intermediaries are the direct recipients, the ultimate beneficiaries are producers and distributors of audiovisual content. In its resolution of 16 January 2024 on the implementation of Creative Europe, the European Parliament noted the strong demand for Medialvest and called for reinforced budgetary synergies with InvestEU, as well as improved promotion of the facility within the audiovisual sector.

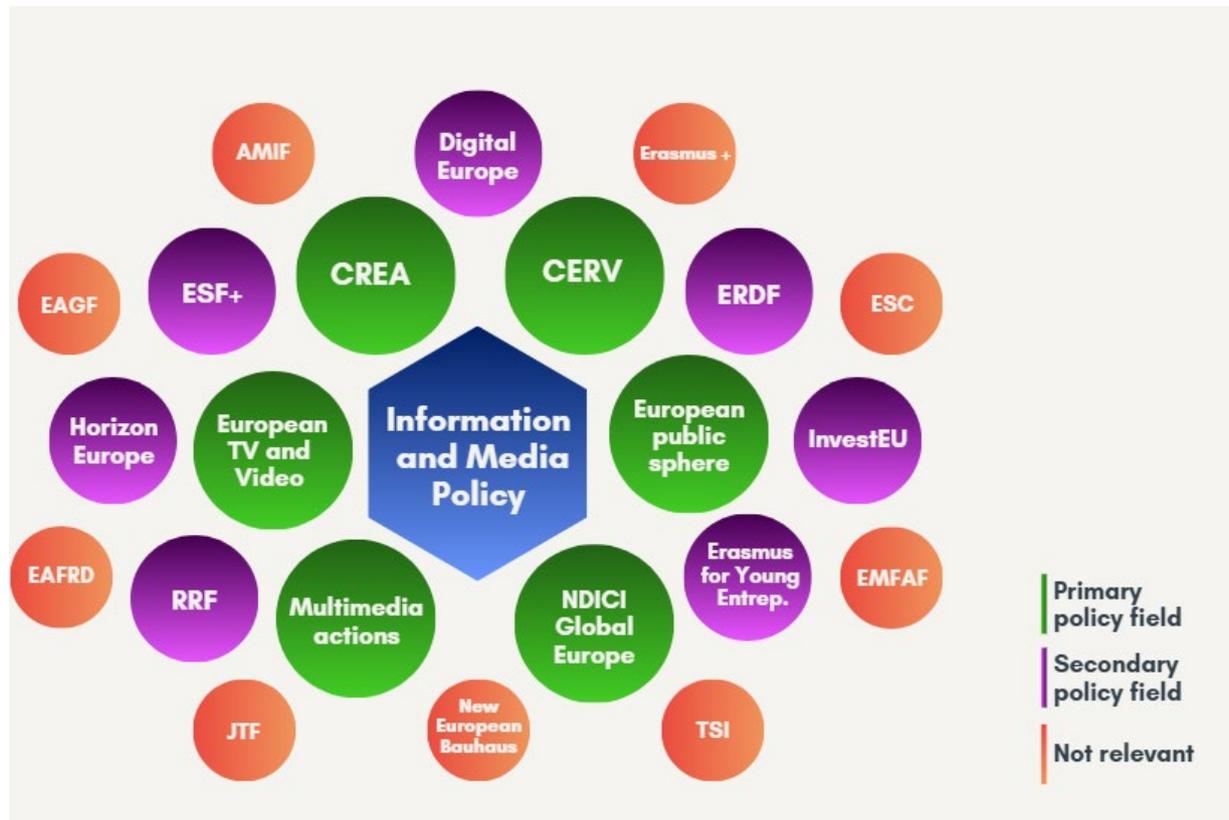
Another example is the Cultural and Creative Portfolio Guarantee Product, one of the six InvestEU portfolio guarantee products and the successor to the Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility (CCS GF). It supports small businesses across the EU in the cultural and creative sectors. The CCS GF was funded under Creative Europe until 2020 and under InvestEU since 2021. It is implemented through an effective collaboration between the Commission and the European Investment Fund.

### 2.3.2. Information and Media policy

The information and media policy thematic field appears in 13 of the 22 EU instruments relevant for the CULT Committee. **Six programmes include it as a primary policy field: Creative Europe (notably its**

**MEDIA strand), the citizen-facing European TV and Video Portal, the new online media offer for young Europeans (through pilot projects and preparatory actions), Multimedia Actions and NDICI–Global Europe.** These all have explicit objectives for media pluralism, news production, information accessibility, communication outreach and democratic participation through media.

Figure 11: Instruments relevant for the 'Information and media policy' field



Source: Own elaboration.

Among these primary instruments, direct management predominates, reflecting delivery centred on the Commission and specialised agencies, particularly DG CONNECT (i.e., Multimedia Actions). This creates relatively coherent implementation, with smoother coordination between EU-level actors and aligned initiatives targeting media organisations, content providers and transnational information flows.

Secondary instruments (e.g., ERDF, ESF+, Horizon Europe, RRF, InvestEU, the Digital Europe Programme and the Single Market Programme - Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs) contribute more indirectly. Their varied management modes, especially the shared management of ERDF and ESF+, result in more fragmented governance. However, their broader intervention scope (e.g. digitalisation, skills development, infrastructure, SMEs, innovation, entrepreneurship) opens up thematic entry points relevant to the media ecosystem.

Across target groups, the primary information and media instruments clearly converge on media organisations, news providers, online platforms, technology firms and, for NDICI–Global Europe, international communication and partner-country actors.

Secondary instruments intersect with media through broader or adjacent communities - researchers and media users (Horizon Europe), SMEs (InvestEU, Single Market Programme - Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs), public authorities (RRF, ERDF), digital actors and cybersecurity stakeholders (Digital

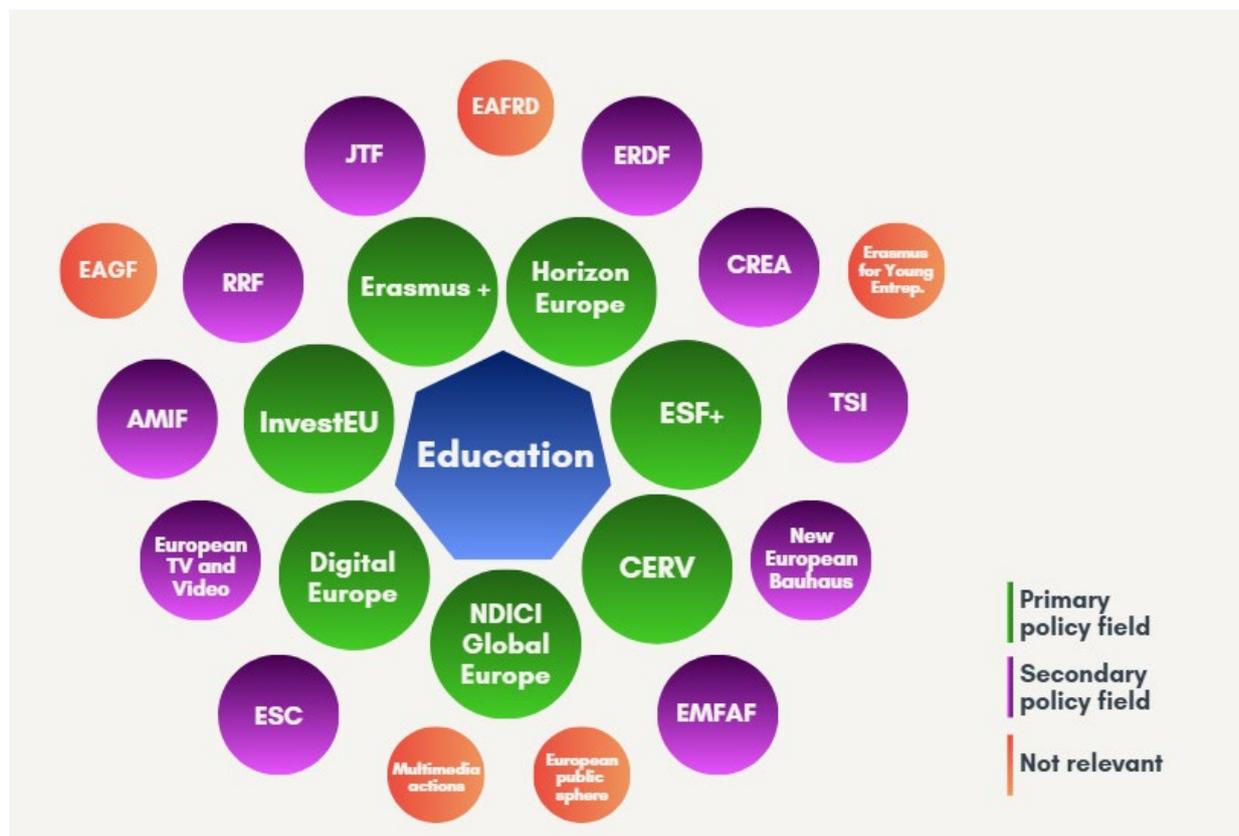
Europe Programme). While these interfaces are indirect, they extend the potential network of complementary interventions, particularly in innovation, capacity-building, skills development and digital transformation.

Creative Europe is central to this landscape. Its MEDIA strand is closely aligned with several major information and media initiatives, particularly those managed by DG CONNECT. This thematic proximity, combined with similar management modalities, creates strong potential for complementarity with instruments such as the citizen-facing media portal, the online media offer for young Europeans and Multimedia Actions. In this context, the Commission has proposed integrating Multimedia Actions into the MEDIA+ strand of the new AgoraEU programme, which would bring Creative Europe and CERV together in the next programming period. Enhanced coherence and complementarity of this new architecture will depend on implementation.

### 2.3.3. Education

The education field is covered by 17 of the instruments with **seven programmes identifying education as a primary policy area: Erasmus+, CERV (Citizens' Engagement and Participation), ESF+, Horizon Europe, InvestEU, the Digital Europe Programme and NDICI–Global Europe**. These directly support learning mobility, educational innovation, skills development, civic participation, digital capacities and global cooperation in education. Erasmus+ is the flagship, covering learners, educators, youth and organisations through direct and indirect management, including national agencies. The theme is very important also under ESF+.

Figure 12: Instruments relevant for the 'Education' field



Source: Own elaboration.

Among the primary instruments management modes vary, creating a mixed governance landscape. Erasmus+, CERV, Horizon Europe, InvestEU and Digital Europe rely mainly on direct or indirect

management, involving executive agencies such as EACEA, REA, ERCEA and national agencies. By contrast, ESF+ and NDICI–Global Europe combine shared management or external implementation.

Secondary instruments (i.e., Creative Europe, ERDF, RRF, TSI, JTF, AMIF, EMFAF, ESC and NEB) contribute to education indirectly. Their mandates in cultural participation, regional development, public sector reform, territorial transition or community transformation provide entry points relevant for educational infrastructure, capacity-building, inclusion and skills.

Shared management programmes, particularly ERDF, ESF+ and JTF, involve national and regional authorities creating a diffuse implementation environment compared with directly and indirectly managed education-specific instruments.

Across the target groups, the primary programmes converge, particularly around learners, educators, training providers, researchers, youth groups, civil-society actors and public authorities.

Erasmus+, ESF+ and Horizon Europe share a large pool of beneficiaries involved in mobility, research, innovation and skills development. An assessment of the ESF+ legal framework shows that its objectives are coherent with other EU education-related funding instruments, including Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe. However, the Erasmus+ Regulation makes only limited reference to coherence with ESF+, notably in relation to the Seal of Excellence. The study supporting the 2025 ESF+ mid-term evaluation finds that complementarities in national implementation remain limited among these instruments, as navigating different funding procedures continues to be challenging, particularly for less experienced beneficiaries. Despite reinforced opportunities for synergies in the 2021–2027 period, these remain underutilised, as confirmed by the Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation. Stakeholders for the ESF+ mid-term evaluation also reported limited awareness of the Seal of Excellence quality label and its opportunities.

An example of potential synergies between ESF+ and Erasmus+ is the JUVENTUS approach to mobility schemes for NEETs. Building on the positive experience of the German ESF-funded Integration through Exchange programme – IdA (2007–2013), JUVENTUS addressed financial, administrative and pedagogical barriers faced by disadvantaged young people in accessing Erasmus+ mobility. By using ESF-funded support to prepare and accompany vulnerable participants, JUVENTUS explores complementarities with Erasmus+ to improve the inclusion of NEETs in EU mobility programmes.<sup>10</sup>

Digital Europe intersects through its focus on digital skills, public authorities, SMEs and research organisations. NDICI–Global Europe adds a global education dimension, covering partner countries and international organisations. Secondary programmes widen the beneficiary landscape. Creative Europe funds training for young artists and supports audience development and engagement, with an emphasis on film education. On the other hand, ERDF, JTF and AMIF reach vulnerable groups and wider populations through territorial and social investments while RRF and TSI support administrations undertaking reforms, including in education and skills.

The Digital Education Action Plan provides a coordinated EU-level approach to strengthen the quality and inclusiveness of digital education. It is implemented through 14 actions supported by strong synergies with EU programmes and instruments including Erasmus+, Digital Europe, Horizon Europe, ESF, ERDF, smart specialisation policies and resources under NextGenerationEU. To enhance the impact, coherence and effectiveness of EU action in this field, the European Digital Education Hub supports cooperation and stakeholder engagement and contributes to implementation of the Action Plan.

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<sup>10</sup> [JUVENTUS | European Social Fund Plus](#)

Overall, the education field has a dense core of specialised instruments supported by a broader ecosystem that addresses enabling conditions such as digital transformation, infrastructure, social inclusion, skills upgrading and community participation. The widespread involvement of executive agencies and national authorities, combined with overlapping beneficiary groups, creates a solid foundation for potential complementarities particularly between Erasmus+, ESF+, Horizon Europe, Digital Europe. The adjacent programmes offer additional opportunities to reinforce innovation, inclusion and capacity-building across the education landscape.

Erasmus+ would benefit from pursuing stronger complementarities with ERDF and ESF+. ERDF can provide infrastructure and territorial conditions that underpin education and training environments, while ESF+ supports inclusion, employability and skills development. These programmes address different yet interconnected aspects of the education and skills ecosystem creating potential for more integrated approaches in which Erasmus+ mobility and learning actions are reinforced by ERDF and ESF+ investments.

### 2.3.4. Youth

The youth policy field appears across 12 of the 22 EU instruments. Six programmes identify it as a primary policy field: Erasmus+, ESC, CERV -Citizens' engagement and participation strand, NDICI-Global Europe, geographic programmes strand, ESF+, and the Single Market Programme (Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs). This core group has explicit objectives for youth education, mobility, skills development, civic engagement, solidarity and support to new entrepreneurs. The flagship instruments in this policy field are Erasmus+ and ESC.

Figure 13: Instruments relevant for the 'Youth' policy field



Source: Own elaboration.

Among these primary instruments, direct and indirect management predominates, with delivery centred on the Commission and its specialised agencies, notably DG EAC and EACEA and national agencies, particularly for Erasmus+ and the ESC. On the other hand, ESF+ is implemented under shared management, with regional and local authorities playing a more prominent role. This combination ensures a coherent landscape, enabling coordination between EU-level actors and aligned initiatives targeting young people, youth organisations, educators, learners, and entrepreneurs.

Secondary instruments, such as CREA, ERDF, RRF, EAGF/EAFRD and AMIF, contribute indirectly. Their varied management modes, especially shared management, result in more fragmented governance. However, these instruments extend thematic entry points for youth policy, including innovation, digitalisation, skills development, employment, social inclusion, territorial cohesion and cultural participation.

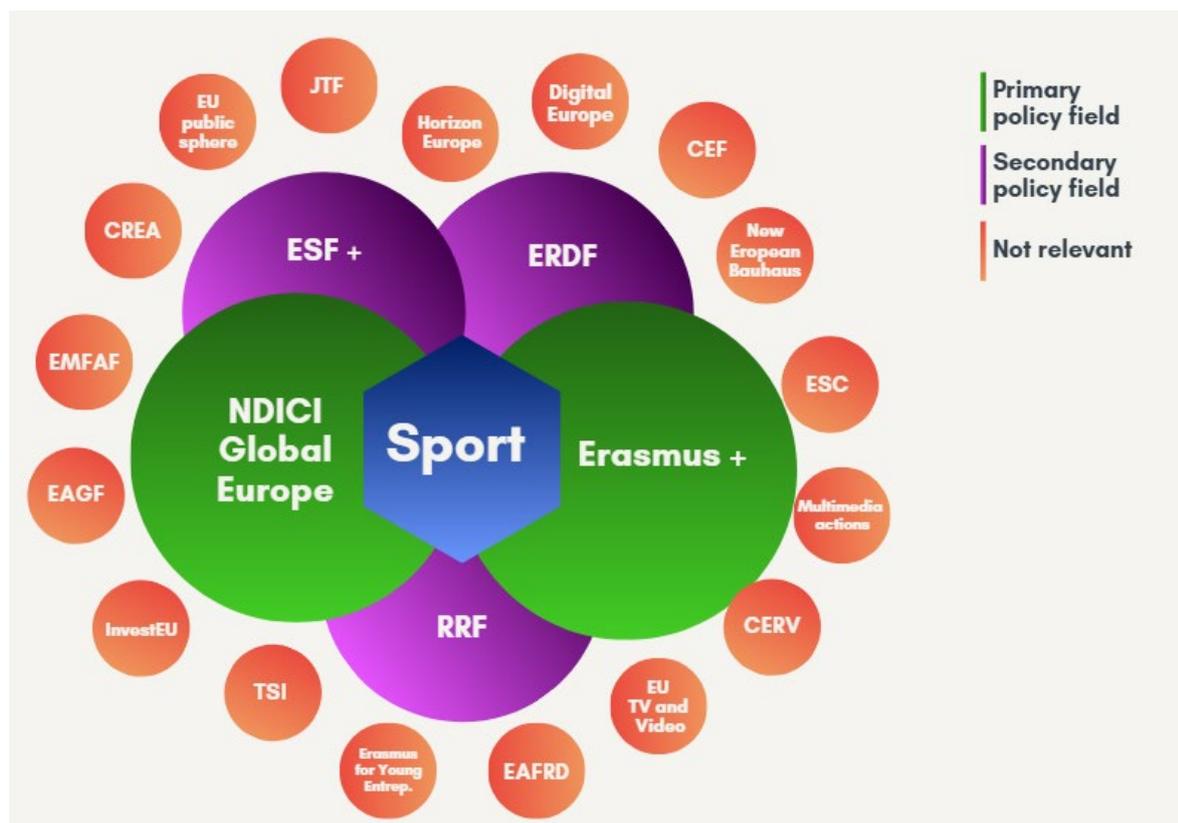
Across target groups, primary youth instruments converge on young people, learners, educators, youth organisations, new entrepreneurs, host organisations and public authorities. Secondary instruments intersect through broader or adjacent populations such as NEETs, vulnerable groups, farmers, rural communities and third-country nationals. This widens the network of complementary interventions in areas such as capacity-building, training, civic engagement and social inclusion.

Erasmus+ and the ESC are central to this landscape. Their objectives and management modalities are closely aligned with other youth-focused initiatives, particularly CERV, NDICI–Global Europe and the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs strand. This alignment, combined with synergies across programmes, fosters complementarities in mobility, education, civic engagement, volunteering and entrepreneurship. Coherence of youth policy is strengthened through collaboration with ESF+ and shared management instruments which support inclusion, skills development and local access to opportunities.

### 2.3.5. Sport

The sport policy field appears across five of the 22 EU instruments, with Erasmus+ and the geographic programmes strand of NDICI–Global Europe identifying it as a primary policy field. Together, these instruments constitute the core group with explicit objectives for physical activity promotion, grassroots sport and education through sport. Erasmus+ is the flagship instrument.

Figure 14: Instruments for 'Sport' policy



Source: Own elaboration.

Among the primary instruments, direct and indirect management predominate, with DG EAC and EACEA as key implementing actors. National agencies, offices and local authorities play a supporting role in project selection and implementation, particularly for Erasmus+ sport actions. Implementation for sport is relatively small-scale and highly targeted, reflecting the specialised nature of support in this field.

Sport is largely funded through programmes that also focus on youth. However, the sector's limited size and focused objectives mean that sport instruments operate independently, and, during the 2021-2027 programming period, this did not result in this policy field facing significant challenges in competing with broader youth initiatives for funding.

Secondary instruments, such as ERDF, RRF, and ESF+, contribute indirectly to sport. Their primary focus is on broader objectives including territorial development, social inclusion, or skills. These may intersect with sport marginally, for instance through infrastructure investments or community engagement.

Across target groups, sport instruments focus on grassroots sport organisations, athletes, schools, local authorities and community groups. The narrow targeting ensures that funding and support are tailored to specific needs of the sport sector, complementing rather than overlapping with youth policy programmes. Erasmus+ and NDICI–Global Europe provide the main channels for cross-border cooperation, skill development, and promotion of physical activity, while secondary instruments create limited additional entry points.

### 3. NEW MFF PROPOSAL 2028–2034

#### KEY FINDINGS

- The Commission’s proposal for the 2028–2034 MFF represents a substantial reconfiguration of the EU budget, introducing structural and procedural reforms to how EU spending is organised, allocated and monitored.
- The proposal reduces the number of programmes from 52 to 16 and restructures the budget from seven headings and two sub-headings into four headings, with changes in budgetary nomenclature. A unified expenditure-tracking and performance framework is introduced for all EU programmes, replacing multiple systems and relying on standardised output and result indicators.
- Erasmus+ and AgoraEU are proposed as the core CULT instruments. The Committee will also provide legislative opinions for the procedure related to Horizon Europe, the NRP fund (i.e., European Fund for economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture and rural, fisheries and maritime, prosperity and security for the period) and the ESF+.
- The MFF proposes nominal budget increases for key CULT instruments, notably Erasmus+ and AgoraEU, but real-term growth is more limited once inflation, programme mergers and scope changes are taken into account.
- The proposed integration of programmes (Erasmus+ with the European Solidarity Corps; Creative Europe with CERV under AgoraEU) was intended by the European Commission to reduce overlaps and improve coherence. However, it has raised concerns in the EP about the loss of programme identity and visibility, particularly for smaller or niche interventions.
- The removal of earmarking across programmes (notably Erasmus+ and AgoraEU) may increase flexibility, but it also reduces predictability, transparency and budgetary oversight.
- Changes to governance and programming, especially the absence of comitology for annual work programmes, risk weakening the role of Member States and reducing the European Parliament’s oversight.

#### 3.1. General overview

##### 3.1.1. Overview of the new proposed regulatory framework

On 16 July 2025, the European Commission presented its proposal for the new MFF for the 2028–2034 programming period, amounting to nearly EUR 2 trillion. The proposal marks a substantial reconfiguration of how the EU intends to organise, allocate and monitor its long-term budget. Presented as a means to enhance strategic focus and improve the effectiveness of EU spending, it introduces both structural and procedural reforms with some key changes:

- The number of programmes reduced from 52 to 16.
- A comprehensive restructuring of the EU budget, streamlining the structure from seven headings and two sub-headings into four headings, with significant changes in budgetary nomenclature.

- Increased flexibility and simplification in governance, sometimes (e.g., cohesion policy) entailing significant centralisation.
- Unified expenditure-tracking and performance framework applied to all EU programmes.

The table below lists the 2028–2034 programmes relevant for the CULT Committee:

Table 20: 2028–2034 programmes relevant for the CULT Committee

Instrument	Nominal amounts in 2025 prices	Nominal amount in current prices
Erasmus+	EUR 36.19 billion	EUR 40.83 billion
AgoraEU	EUR 7.61 billion	EUR 8.58 billion
National Regional Partnership Plans	EUR 771.32 billion	EUR 865.10 billion
Horizon Europe (as part of the Competitiveness Fund)	EUR 154.88 billion	EUR 175 billion

Source: COM(2025)570 final and Council Regulation 2024/765 amending Regulation 2020/2093.

In this context, the EU will continue to invest in skills, media and civil society to shape a shared future, foster transnational cooperation, strengthen EU citizenship and promote mutual understanding. The key instruments in the period addressing this field will be Erasmus+ and the new AgoraEU programme.

The renewed Erasmus+ will merge the current Erasmus+ with the ESC, forming a single programme. It will continue to support education and training, expand learning mobility for young people as well as promote skill development and shared experiences. The programme will also include measures related to youth, volunteering and sport.

AgoraEU will consolidate the Creative Europe Programme (2021–2027), the CERV Programme (2021–2027) and current prerogative lines for multimedia actions. Bringing these elements together under a single framework, according to the Commission, is supposed to provide unified access to funding for culture, media and civil society and other civic space actors under more harmonised rules and funding arrangements.

Differences between the 2021–2027 and 2028–2034 budget headings are presented in the table below. In the draft interim report of 27 November 2025<sup>11</sup>, Parliament’s MFF co-rapporteurs stress that, to facilitate understanding, the budget nomenclature should correspond to the specific objectives or strands of each programme, ensuring transparency and providing the budgetary authority with information to oversee budget implementation. In practice, however, the new nomenclature is more aggregated, resulting in reduced transparency and making direct comparisons between funding periods more difficult.

<sup>11</sup> [Draft Interim Report on the proposal for a Council regulation laying down the Multiannual Financial Framework for the years 2028 to 2034](#)

Table 21: Budgetary nomenclature 2021–2027 vs. 2028–2034

MFF 2028–2034 Heading	MFF Headings 2028–2034 Programme	MFF Headings 2021–2027 Heading, sub-heading and Programme*
<b>1. Economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture, rural and maritime prosperity and security</b>		
National and Regional Partnership Plans, of which:		
	Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) income support and fisheries of which interventions of the Common Fisheries Policy	3. Natural Resources and Environment 8. Agricultural and Maritime Policy *Direct payments, market measures and EAFRD
	Migration and border management	4. Migration and border management 10. Migration & 11. Border management *AMIF, BMVI, and ISF (shared management)
	Economic, territorial and social cohesion including fisheries and rural communities and tourism	2. Cohesion, Resilience and Values 5. Regional Development and Cohesion & 7. Investing in People, Social Cohesion and Values 3. Natural Resources and Environment 8. Agricultural and Maritime Policy & 9. Environment and Climate Action *CF, ERDF, ESF+, EAFRD, EMFAF, JTF
	p.m. * Social Climate Fund	Social Climate Fund
	Interreg	2. Cohesion, Resilience and Values 5. Regional Development and Cohesion *Interreg
	EU Facility - Union actions, of which:	

MFF 2028-2034 Heading	MFF Headings 2028-2034 Programme	MFF Headings 2021-2027 Heading, sub-heading and Programme*
	Unity Safety Net/Agricultural reserve	3. Natural Resources and Environment 8. Agricultural and Maritime Policy *EAGF reserve
	EU Solidarity Fund	European Solidarity Reserve
	HOME Thematic facilities	4. Migration and Border Management 10. Migration & 11. Border Management 5. Security and Defence 12. Security *Thematic facilities under AMIF, BMVI, ISF
	Other (cities, employment & social innovation...)	Other
	EU Facility – Cushion	
	Support to the Turkish-Cypriot Community	2. Cohesion, Resilience and Values 5. Regional Development and Cohesion *Support to the Turkish-Cypriot Community
	Decentralised agencies	Decentralised agencies
	Repayment of NGEU	2. Cohesion, Resilience and Values 6. Recovery And Resilience *Financing cost of the European Union Recovery Instrument (EURI)
<b>2. Competitiveness, prosperity and security</b>		
	European Competitiveness Fund	

MFF 2028-2034 Heading	MFF Headings 2028-2034 Programme	MFF Headings 2021-2027 Heading, sub-heading and Programme*
	Horizon Europe	1. Single market, innovation and digital 1. Research and Innovation *Horizon Europe
	Clean Transition and Industrial Decarbonisation	3. Natural Resources and Environment 9. Environment and Climate Action 1.Single market, innovation and digital 1. European Strategic Investment & 3. Single Market *LIFE, Innovation Fund (IF), InvestEU Fund, Single Market Programme – SME competitiveness strand
	Resilience and Security, Defence Industry, and Space	1. Single market, innovation and digital 2. European Strategic Investments & 3. Single Market & 4. Space 5. Security and Defence 12. Security & 13. Defence *European Defence Fund, Short-term Defence instrument on common procurement, Defence Industrial Reinforcement Instrument; European Defence Industry Programme, European Space Programme, Union Secure Connectivity, InvestEU Fund, Single Market Programme – SME competitiveness strand
	Digital Leadership	1.Single market, innovation and digital 2. European Strategic Investments & 3. Single Market *Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) – Digital, Digital Europe Programme, InvestEU Fund, Single Market Programme – SME competitiveness strand
	Health, Biotech, Agriculture and Bioeconomy	1.Single market, innovation and digital 2. European Strategic Investments & 3. Single Market 2. Cohesion, Resilience and Values

MFF 2028-2034 Heading	MFF Headings 2028-2034 Programme	MFF Headings 2021-2027 Heading, sub-heading and Programme*
		6. Recovery And Resilience *EU4Health, InvestEU Fund, Single Market Programme – SME competitiveness strand
	Erasmus+	2. Cohesion, Resilience and values 7. Investing in People, Social Cohesion and Values *Erasmus+
	Connecting Europe Facility	1. Single market, innovation and digital 2. European Strategic Investments 2. Cohesion, resilience and values 5. Regional development and Cohesion 5. Security and Defence 13. Defence *Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) – Transport, Cohesion Fund (CF), contribution to CEF – Transport, Military Mobility, CEF - Energy
	Union Civil Protection Mechanism + (UCPM+)	2. Cohesion, Resilience and values 6. Recovery and Resilience Union Civil Protection Mechanism (RescEU), EU4Health
	AgoraEU	2. Cohesion, Resilience and values 7. Investing in People, Social Cohesion and Values *Actions financed under the prerogatives of the Commission and specific competences conferred to the Commission, Creative Europe, Rights and Values
	Single Market and Customs Programme	1. Single market, innovation and digital 3. Single Market

MFF 2028-2034 Heading	MFF Headings 2028-2034 Programme	MFF Headings 2021-2027 Heading, sub-heading and Programme*
		*Single Market Programme, EU Anti-Fraud Programme, Cooperation in the field of taxation (Fiscalis), Cooperation in the field of customs (Customs)
	Euratom Research and Training Programme, of which:	1. Single market, innovation and digital 1. Research and Innovation *Euratom Research and Training Programme, International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER)
	Instrument for emergency support within the Union (ESI)	Instrument for emergency support within the Union (ESI)
	Protection of the euro against counterfeiting (the 'Pericles V programme')	2. Cohesion, Resilience and values 6. Recovery and Resilience Protection of the euro against counterfeiting (the 'Pericles IV programme')
	Nuclear decommissioning (Lithuania) (Ignalina programme)	5. Security and Defence 12. Security *Nuclear decommissioning (Lithuania)
	Nuclear safety cooperation and decommissioning	5. Security and Defence 12. Security *Nuclear Safety and decommissioning (incl. For Bulgaria and Slovakia), European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation (INSC)
	Justice	2. Cohesion, Resilience and values 7. Investing in People, Social Cohesion and Values *Justice
	Decentralised agencies	Decentralised agencies

MFF 2028-2034 Heading	MFF Headings 2028-2034 Programme	MFF Headings 2021-2027 Heading, sub-heading and Programme*
	Prerogatives	Prerogatives
	Other	Other
	Pilot projects and preparatory actions	Pilot projects and preparatory actions
<b>3. Global Europe</b>		
	Global Europe	6. Neighbourhood and the world 14. External Action & 15. Pre-accession assistance * Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe (NDICI - Global Europe), Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III), Humanitarian Aid (HUMA), Reform and Growth Facility for Western Balkans, Other actions (MFA grants), Emergency Aid Reserve
	Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)	6. Neighbourhood and the world 14. External Action *Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)
	SFPA and RFMO	6. Neighbourhood and the world 14. External Action Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPA) and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMO)
	Decision on the Overseas Association, including Greenland	6. Neighbourhood and the world 14. External Action * Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) (including Greenland)
	Prerogatives	Prerogatives

MFF 2028-2034 Heading	MFF Headings 2028-2034 Programme	MFF Headings 2021-2027 Heading, sub-heading and Programme*
	Other actions	Other actions
	<b>4. Administration</b>	<b>7. European Public Administration</b>

Source: Own elaboration, based on [The EU's 2021-2027 long-term budget and NextGenerationEU](#) and [COM\(2025\) 570 final](#).

\* p.m. - pour memoire/pro memoria - meaning that a priori, no specific allocations (for a certain year) are planned, but the budget line is kept active.

A key element underpinning the new MFF architecture is the unified expenditure-tracking and performance framework<sup>12</sup> for all EU programmes, including Erasmus+ and AgoraEU. This is a significant departure from the 2021–2027 period, when more than 50 programmes operated separate performance structures. The new proposed regulation consolidates these into a single system designed by the Commission to improve transparency, reduce administrative complexity and strengthen accountability for results. Central to this framework is a harmonised list of 543 intervention fields, covering every type of activity eligible for support under the EU budget. These fields were clustered into 18 policy areas. The policy areas that include intervention fields relevant to CULT are:

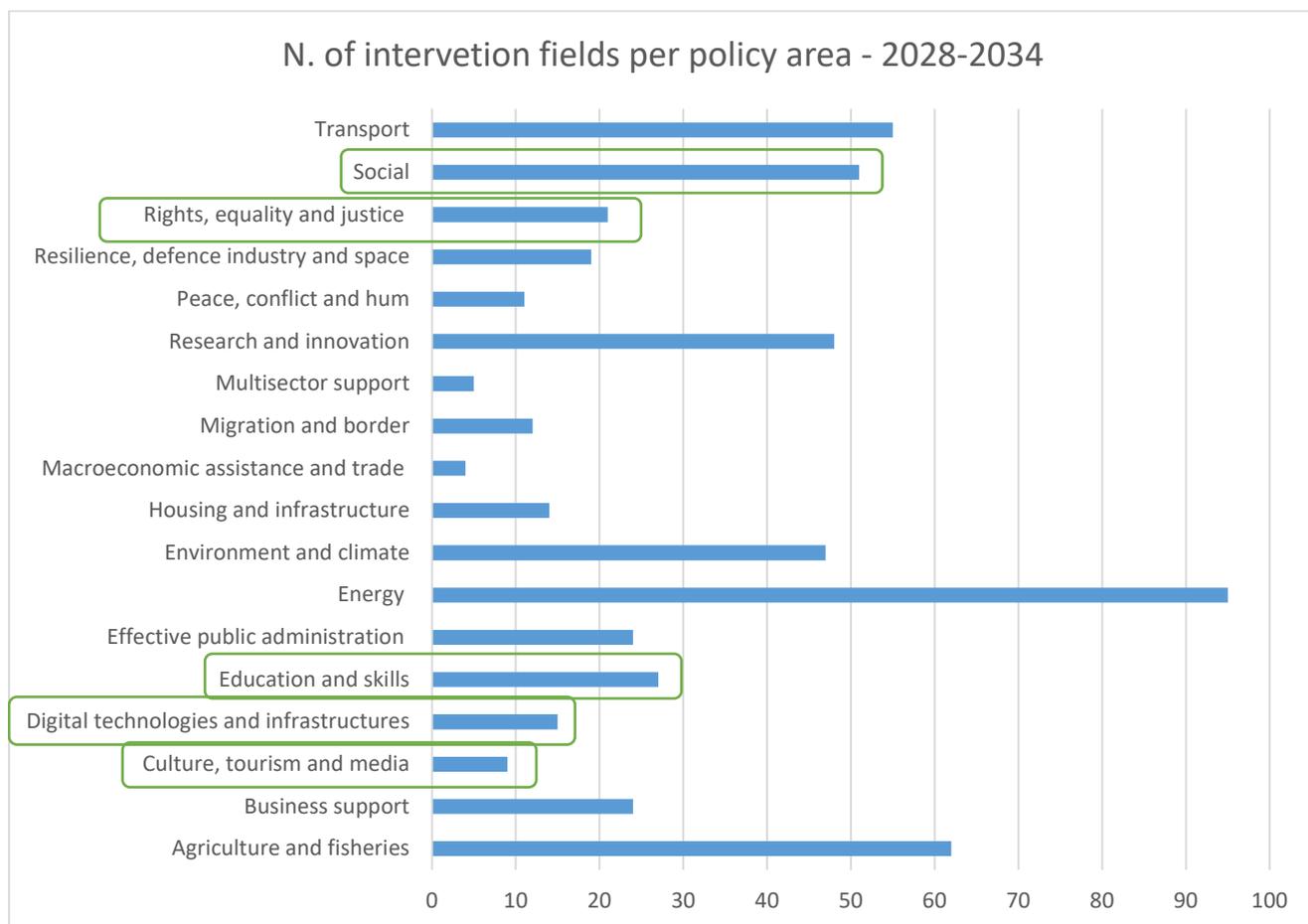
- Culture, tourism and media
- Digital technologies and infrastructure
- Education and skills
- Rights, equality and justice
- To a very limited extent, agriculture and fisheries, if interventions are dedicated to young people.

Annex 4 lists 2028–2034 intervention fields relevant to the policy fields under the CULT remit.

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<sup>12</sup> Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing a budget expenditure tracking and performance framework and other horizontal rules for the Union programmes and activities <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52025PC0545&qid=1753797488776>

Figure 15: Number of intervention fields per policy area - 2028-2034



Source: Own elaboration based on Annex I of the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a budget expenditure tracking and performance framework and other horizontal rules for the Union programmes and activities.

Each intervention field is linked to standardised output and result indicators, forming a single performance system intended, according to the Commission, to enable more consistent monitoring and evaluation across the MFF. All programmes will report against the same overarching structure, using unified rules for collecting, validating and presenting performance information. The proposal also entails a substantial reduction in the number of performance indicators - from around 5,000 in the current period to approximately 700, which will depend on how the system is implemented.

The following table provides examples of indicators for the intervention fields most relevant to CULT. The intervention fields are examples. A full list of the 2028–2034 intervention fields relevant to policy areas under CULT’s remit is provided in Annex 4.

Table 22: Examples of output and result indicators provided for some of the intervention fields most relevant to CULT

Intervention field	Output indicators	Result indicators
87-Creative, cultural and arts activities and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of specific projects supported (<b>such as theatre productions, cultural events</b>) of which European cultural works;</li> <li>• Number of <b>artists and cultural professionals</b> supported disaggregated by EU/non-EU – by gender;</li> <li>• Organisations supported that engage in cross-border <b>artistic and cultural cooperation</b>;</li> <li>• Number of transnational cooperations/partnerships supported;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people accessing <b>European cultural and creative works</b> – by country of origin of the works (their own/others) and by gender;</li> <li>• Number of people accessing <b>cultural and creative works</b>;</li> <li>• Number of jobs sustained or created in enterprises supported;</li> <li>• Number of <b>artists or cultural professionals</b> who have acquired new skills or competences;</li> </ul>
88-Physical regeneration and security of public spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open space created or rehabilitated in urban areas (m2);</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of annual users;</li> </ul>
89-Media freedom and pluralism, media viability, and access to news content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of <b>organisation supported</b> – by micro, small &amp; medium, large;</li> <li>• Number of cases of <b>media and journalists under threat</b> detected and assessed;</li> <li>• Number of <b>professional journalistic content</b> pieces produced under support;</li> <li>• Number of supported <b>news media entities</b>;</li> <li>• Number of projects across borders;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of jobs sustained or created in enterprises supported – by gender;</li> <li>• Total <b>audience</b> reach and engagement in supported actions;</li> <li>• Number of <b>digital tools</b> adopted;</li> <li>• Share of total production from <b>digital products</b>;</li> <li>• Number of <b>innovative editorial projects</b>;</li> </ul>

Intervention field	Output indicators	Result indicators
90-Enhance detection and countering of disinformation and media literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of <b>fact-checking</b> initiatives;</li> <li>• Number of <b>disinformation cases</b> formally reported and assessed;</li> <li>• Number of <b>supported actions on digital and media literacy</b>;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people reached by disinformation countermeasures and media literacy measures – by gender;</li> </ul>
91-Media and entertainment: support creation, circulation and access to audiovisual works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of enterprises supported – by micro, small &amp; medium, large;</li> <li>• Number of <b>audiovisual works</b> supported for creation and for distribution/promotion;</li> <li>• Number of <b>cinemas, film festivals and markets</b> supported;</li> <li>• Number of <b>supported audiovisual works</b> in lesser-used languages;</li> <li>• Number of <b>co-production supported</b>;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of <b>works supported</b> for development that are released within 4 years after being given support;</li> <li>• Number of <b>video games</b> supported for development that are released;</li> <li>• Number of <b>jobs sustained</b> or created in enterprises supported – by gender;</li> </ul>
120-Learning mobility (education sectors incl. non-formal and informal education and youth)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of staff – by gender and age;</li> <li>• Number of learners – by gender, by age, by socio-economic background and by sectors of skills (including STEM);</li> <li>• Number of participants in activities directly promoting EU values, fostering solidarity and civil engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share of participants considering that they have benefitted from their participation;</li> <li>• Share of participants considering that they have increased their key competences;</li> <li>• Share of participants considering that they have an increased <b>European sense of belonging</b></li> </ul>
137-Volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of participants – by gender, by age, by socio-economic background;</li> <li>• Number of organisations involved in cross-border <b>cooperation partnerships in the field of youth</b>;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of participants considering that they have benefitted from their participation;</li> <li>• Number of participants considering that they have increased their key competences;</li> </ul>

Intervention field	Output indicators	Result indicators
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of participants considering that they have an increased European sense of belonging;</li> </ul>
124-Education, youth and sport reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of laws adopted or entered into force;</li> <li>• Number of policy preparations or evaluations finalised;</li> <li>• Number of stakeholder consultation</li> </ul>	

Source: Own elaboration from Proposed regulation: [EUR-Lex - 52025PC0545 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

### 3.1.2. Budget proposal and comparison with the last programming period

The 2028–2034 MFF proposal set a budget of EUR 1 985 894 million in current prices. The Commission published two financial scenarios: nominal terms (i.e. current prices) and using a 2% deflator for 2025 prices.<sup>13</sup> For both scenarios, the MFF increases in some areas of interest to the CULT committee, including a 30% increase for Erasmus+ and a 75% increase for AgoraEU in constant prices compared to the last programming period (including repayments of NGEU).

However, the increases in nominal terms hide different dynamics, namely:

- Changes in the scope of the instrument, as the increase is partly due to instruments from the previous MFF period being merged in the new MFF framework.
- Budget allocations have changed between 2021 and 2027 due to re-funding and reallocations between funds, meaning the actual allocation does not reflect the initial one.<sup>14</sup>
- Inflation over the implementing period distorts the financial aggregates, hiding the actual volume trend behind a price effect.

The real impact of the budget increase depends heavily on the inflation rates from 2018 to 2025. The Commission uses a constant 2% to adjust for price effects over the MFF, which makes sense from a forecasting perspective. However, historic price series are more accurate for comparisons with past trends.

The increase in the consumer price index (HCPI) for 2018–2025 was 28% (3.6% per year), with high volatility on the period.<sup>15</sup> There were similar increases in the Industrial producer price index for industry purchases and investments (IPPI). **This means that buying the same basket of goods and services in 2025 cost 28% more than in 2018.** In other words, a budget of EUR 128 in 2025 is required to purchase the same quantity of goods and services as a budget of EUR 100 in 2018. In this respect, increases in the MFF budget in nominal terms including repayments of NGEU (+59%), as highlighted in the Commission proposal partially off-set this 28% price increases. So, the increase in real terms (i.e. in terms of 'purchasing power') by taking account inflation over the period is smaller than stated by the Commission using a 2% discount rate (see Annex 3 for more details).

## 3.2. Main CULT instruments

### 3.2.1. Erasmus+

#### a. European Commission proposal for a regulation establishing the Erasmus+ programme for the period 2028–2034, and repealing Regulations (EU) 2021/817 and (EU) 2021/888

The main changes under the proposed Erasmus+ programme for 2028–2034 are:

- 1) Integration of programmes with the merging of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps (Article 4)
- 2) Revised programme structure (Article 3)
- 3) New intervention areas (Article 4)

<sup>13</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Budget, Europe's budget – An ambitious budget for a stronger Europe 2028–2034, 2025.

<sup>14</sup> As for example after the mid-term revision: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/mid-term-revision-of-the-eu-long-term-budget-2021-2027/#funding>

<sup>15</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/prc\\_hicp\\_midx\\_\\_custom\\_18174171/default/line?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/prc_hicp_midx__custom_18174171/default/line?lang=en)

- 4) Governance (Articles 17 to 20)
- 5) Programming changes (Article 15)
- 6) Budget changes (Article 9)
- 7) Removal of earmarking
- 8) Reduced administrative burden
- 9) Increased focus on programme inclusiveness and diversity (Article 8)
- 10) Strengthened synergies (Article 11)
- 11) Audit (Article 21)

### Integration of programmes

*Change:* The new Erasmus+ proposal (2028–2034) integrates the ESC, which is separate in the current programming period.

*Rationale:* The proposal reflects the political priority of reducing the number of EU programmes in the next MFF and builds on the alignment between Erasmus+ and ESC. It should reduce overlaps, improve coherence and offer a single-entry point for young people and organisations.

The merger is framed as a simplification measure, aiming to create a more accessible and harmonised framework. Bringing together formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities is described as a means to support skills development, engagement, solidarity and social cohesion.

The Commission also refers to the mid-term evaluations of both programmes, which highlighted overlaps affecting efficiency and clarity. A consolidated structure is expected to mitigate these issues and reduce duplication in areas such as work programmes, monitoring and communication.

### Revised programme structure

*Change:* The programme will be organised into two pillars: learning opportunities for all and capacity-building support, replacing the previous 'Key Actions' structure and chapters of Erasmus+.

Table 23: Erasmus+ 2028–2034 and Erasmus+ and ESC 2021–2027 programmes

ERASMUS+ and ESC 2021-2027	ERASMUS+ 2028-2034
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Solidarity Corps - Volunteering</li> <li>• Erasmus+ - Key Action 1 – Learning mobility</li> <li>• Erasmus+ - Jean Monnet Actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning opportunities for all</li> <li>- <i>Learning mobility and volunteering:</i></li> <li>- <i>Talent and excellence development opportunities</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erasmus+ - Key Action 2 – Cooperation among organisation and institutions</li> <li>• Erasmus+ - Key Action 3 - Support to policy development and cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building support:</li> <li>- <i>Cooperation among organisations and institutions</i></li> <li>- <i>Support to policy development</i></li> </ul>

Source: Own elaboration based on Article 3 REGULATION (EU) 2021/817 and article 3 of the proposed regulation for the period 2028–2034, repealing Regulations (EU) 2021/817 and (EU) 2021/888.

*Rationale:* the restructuring is intended to simplify the programme's architecture by:

- Merging actions with overlapping objectives under two pillars (e.g. learning mobility, volunteering and Jean Monnet actions under a single pillar, 'Learning opportunities for all').
- Grouping similar actions (e.g. bringing cooperation opportunities for organisations together or moving support to platforms alongside other tools);
- Removing separate chapters by field;
- Combining cooperation and policy support actions under the same pillar.

According to the Commission, these changes aim to clarify the programme structure and support applicants in identifying opportunities.

### **New areas of intervention**

*Change:* 4 new actions will be introduced to address new challenges and policy priorities.

Under *Pillar – Learning Opportunities for All*, new actions include:

- Learning mobility and volunteering:
  - Learning mobility of athletes and people active in grassroots sport. In particular, mobility opportunities have been extended to include athletes, in addition to staff.
  - Support for teaching and learning about the EU.
- Talent and excellence development:
  - Erasmus+ scholarships in strategic areas (such as technology, engineering, mathematics, competitiveness and innovation).

Under *Pillar – Capacity Building Support*, new actions include:

- Cooperation among organisations and institutions: Erasmus+ will continue to support long-term transnational cooperation between institutions under existing Erasmus+ key flagship initiatives<sup>16</sup>. The proposal notes that these initiatives will be used to test new tools that strengthen links with the private sector and support sustainable impact and change. According to the Commission, these new tools are intended to directly address emerging policy priorities stemming from the Union of Skills, the Competitiveness Compass, the Clean Industrial Deal, and the Preparedness Strategy.

*Rationale:* The proposed changes build on the existing programme architecture, maintaining interventions that target individuals, organisations and systems, while aiming to increase the impact and effectiveness of the Programme.

The choice to introduce a separate activity for 'Support for teaching and learning about the EU' under the Pillar '*Learning Opportunities for All*' builds on experience from the 2021–2027 programming period. These activities were previously funded under Jean Monnet actions, which proved difficult for schools to access and therefore challenging to implement.

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<sup>16</sup> The European Universities Alliances, Centres of Vocational Excellence, European Teacher Academies, European School Alliances, Joint study programmes, European Youth Together and Sport Collaborative Alliances.

## Increased focus on programme inclusiveness and diversity

*Change:* The new programme aims to enhance inclusiveness and diversity across education, training, youth and sport. This priority was highlighted by the Commission in the CULT Committee meeting of 24 September 2025 and the explanatory memorandum accompanying the Erasmus+ regulation proposal.

Chapter III (Article 8) – Inclusion and Diversity of the proposed regulation reiterates the intention to reach more participants with fewer opportunities. The text confirms a series of measures, although the accompanying operational arrangements are not yet detailed:

- The Commission will support access from an early age and across socio-economic backgrounds, including measures such as financial support where relevant (Article 8(3)).
- Financial support mechanisms may be adjusted by the Commission or by national agencies, based on objective criteria to improve access for people with fewer opportunities (Article 8(4)).
- National agencies will develop national inclusion and diversity plans, though the proposal does not clarify how these will differ from existing 'inclusion action plans' or whether mechanisms to address the uneven delivery observed in the current programme will be introduced (i.e., not all national agencies delivered an accurate inclusion and diversity plan).

*Rationale:* The evaluation of the ESC (2018–2020) highlighted the need to better identify people with fewer opportunities to facilitate their participation. Inclusiveness for newcomers is also to be pursued through administrative simplification (further details provided below). During the CULT Committee meeting on 24 September 2025, the DG EAC representative presented findings of the Erasmus+ 2021–2027 interim evaluation.<sup>17</sup> This highlighted progress to enhance programme's inclusivity but some persisting challenges (e.g., underfinancing compared to funding requests, beneficiaries' need for further administrative simplification, and the unexploited potential for synergies with other funds). Efforts in this area had already started with a dedicated section on inclusion (Chapter V) and an 'inclusion action plan' introduced for the first time into the Regulation for the 2021–2027 period.

## Strengthened synergies

*Change:* During the presentation of proposals to the CULT Committee on 24 September 2025, the Commission indicated that the new regulation includes better provisions for synergies (Article 11). For example, it allows funding from different EU programmes to be combined under a single set of rules. In the proposal, for actions funded with Union contribution from another programme, 'a single set of rules may be applied to all contributions and a single legal commitment may be concluded'.

Finally, as in the current programming period, the proposal also specifies that resources allocated to Member States under shared management may, at their request, be made available to the Erasmus+ programme.

*Rationale:* Stakeholder consultations and evaluations of the current programming period highlighted the importance of facilitating synergies between EU instruments, improving coordination at the European level and strengthening the international dimension.

## Management

*Change:* The proposal maintains the combination of direct and indirect management, building on the positive experience of previous Erasmus+ programmes with only one minor change:

<sup>17</sup> [EUR-Lex - 52025SC0186 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

- Jean Monnet actions (outside higher education) and cooperation partnerships for sport will move from direct to indirect management.

*Rationale:* the Commission explains that transferring these actions to indirect management is intended to simplify implementation and make participation more accessible. The change is also expected to help address barriers encountered by grassroots, small, or first-time applicant organisations and to broaden the reach of the actions.

## Programming

*Change:* In the 2021–2027 period, the Commission adopts annual work programmes through implementing acts, which are subject to committee procedure.<sup>18</sup> Under this arrangement, the Committees must<sup>19</sup> deliver a favourable opinion before an implementing act can be adopted, ensuring a formal role for Member States in the implementation of the Erasmus+ and ESC programmes. This mechanism is not foreseen in the framework proposed for 2028–2034.

Instead, the proposed Erasmus+ 2028–2034 Regulation refers, under Article 15, only to Article 110 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2025 on financing decisions to adopt an annual work programme. As this approach does not provide for a comitology procedure, the adoption of work programmes would no longer be subject to committee-based approval, thereby removing Member State control and limiting the European Parliament’s oversight role.

## Budget

*Change:* When comparing the budgets in current prices, the Erasmus+ allocation for the current programming period increases by almost 50% to reach EU 40.83 billion.

However, several factors need to be taken into account when interpreting this comparison.

First, Erasmus+, along with several other programmes, received additional allocations during the 2021–2027 period, namely EUR 1.7 billion in 2018 prices under MFFR Article 5. In addition, the ESC will be integrated into Erasmus+ for the 2028–2034 programming period. Activities previously funded separately under the ESC—such as volunteering and solidarity initiatives—will be included in the Erasmus+ envelope, increasing the overall budget for the next period.

For a full comparison between the two-programming periods, adjustments are recommended related to:

- additional funding for Erasmus+ in 2021–2027 (EUR 1.7 billion in 2018 prices);
- the different scope of intervention of both programmes (e.g. integrating ESC in the new Erasmus+);
- inflation since 2018.

Moreover, additional financial contributions shall be made available to support actions implemented and managed in accordance with the Global Europe Regulation. This is also possible in the current programming period, an additional financial contribution is available to support actions implemented

<sup>18</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/817, Article 34.

<sup>19</sup> As set out in Regulation (EU) No 182/2011, where basic acts require Member State control over the Commission’s adoption of implementing acts, committees composed of representatives of the Member States and chaired by the Commission are to be established for this purpose. Pursuant to Article 5, the Commission may adopt a draft implementing act only where the committee delivers a positive opinion.

and managed in accordance with the regulations establishing NDICI – Global Europe and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III).

Based on the assumptions outlined above and applying the HICP index for price adjustments<sup>20</sup>, **the real increase (or ‘fresh money’) in the Erasmus 2028–34 budget after adjustment for inflation can be estimated at EUR 4.9 billion, +16% in purchasing power compared to the 2021–27 programming period**, and before the repayment of the debt interest rate to NGEU (for more details see Annex 3).

*Rationale:* Funding in the previous programming period was limited relative to the programme’s ambitions and objectives. According to the Commission, the increase in budget should partly address these funding limitations.

### Removal of earmarking

*Change:* the proposed regulation for Erasmus+ no longer provides any indicative allocation by thematic area, type of intervention, or target group. By contrast, during the 2021–2027 period an indicative distribution of funding across themes and sub-themes left limited margin for manoeuvre:

Table 24: Education and training sub-field allocations

Typology of action	Budget (approximated)	% of budget
<b>Education and training</b> , of which:	<b>EUR 20.4 billion</b>	<b>83%</b>
<i>(i) the learning mobility of students and staff and (ii) partnerships for cooperation and exchange of practices in the field of <b>higher education</b>.</i> <sup>21</sup>	- At least EUR 7 billion	- 34.6%
<i>(i) the learning mobility of students and staff and (ii) partnerships for cooperation and exchange of practices in the field of <b>vocational education and training</b>.</i> <sup>22</sup>	- At least EUR 4.4 billion	- 21.5%
<i>(i) the learning mobility of students and staff and (ii) partnerships for cooperation and exchange of practices in the field of <b>school education</b>.</i> <sup>23</sup>	- At least EUR 3.1 billion	- 15.2%
<i>(i) the learning mobility of students and staff and (ii) partnerships for cooperation and exchange of practices in the field of <b>adult education</b>.</i> <sup>24</sup>	- At least EUR 1.2 billion	- 5.8%
<i>Jean Monnet Actions</i> <sup>25</sup>	- At least EUR 0.4 billion	- 1.8%

<sup>20</sup> The programme distributes money to target groups (students, staff) mainly for travels, daily living expenses (in goods and services), renting for accommodation and staff labour costs; the programme does not support investments in equipment and infrastructure. This justifies the use of the HICP index.

<sup>21</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/817, Article 5(1)(a) and Article 6(a) in the field of higher education.

<sup>22</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/817, Article 5(1)(b) and Article 6(a) in the field of vocational education and training.

<sup>23</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/817, Article 5(1)(c) and Article 6(a) in the field of school education.

<sup>24</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/817, Article 5(1)(d) and Article 6(a) in the field of adult education.

<sup>25</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/817, Article 8.

Typology of action	Budget (approximated)	% of budget
<p><i>Actions that are primarily directly managed and horizontal activities including: (iv) virtual learning and measures such as language support, preparatory visits, training and virtual cooperation; (ii) cooperation among organisations and institutions; and (iii) support to policy development and cooperation<sup>26</sup></i></p> <p><i>Margin of flexibility that can be used to support any of the actions referred to <b>education and training</b> (Chapter II of the Regulation)</i></p>	<p>- At least EUR 3.5 billion</p> <p>- At least EUR 0.9 billion</p>	<p>- 17%</p> <p>- .1%</p>
<b>Youth</b>	<b>EUR 2.5 billion</b>	<b>10.3%</b>
<b>Sport</b>	<b>EUR 466.9 million</b>	<b>1.9%</b>
<b>Contribution to the operational costs of national agencies</b>	<b>EUR 819.9 million</b>	<b>3.3%</b>
<b>Programme support</b>	<b>EUR 368.6 million</b>	<b>1.5%</b>

Source: Regulation (EU) 2021/817, Article 5(1)(a) and Article 17.

In the proposed regulation, none of these breakdowns or minimum allocations are retained. Article 9 sets out the Programme's budget by establishing the indicative financial envelope for 2028–2034. This allows for additional contributions from Global Europe to support the Programme's international dimension, allowing appropriations beyond 2034 for ongoing actions and specifying that the budget may also be used for technical and administrative assistance related to implementation.

In the 2021–2027 EU budget, four budget lines were assigned to Erasmus+, partly reflecting the structure set out in the regulation (i.e., for education, youth and sport):

- **07 03 01 01:** Promoting learning mobility of individuals and groups and cooperation, inclusion and equity, excellence, creativity and innovation at the level of organisations and policies in the field of education and training — Indirect management, largely corresponding to Key Action 1.
- **07 03 01 02:** Promoting learning mobility of individuals and groups, and cooperation, inclusion and equity, excellence, creativity and innovation at the level of organisations and policies in the field of education and training — Direct management, mostly corresponding to Key Actions 2 and 3, containing the funding for direct management.
- **07 03 02:** Promoting non-formal and informal learning mobility and active participation among young people and cooperation, inclusion, creativity and innovation at the level of organisations and policies in the field of youth, corresponding to the youth strand across all three key actions.

<sup>26</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/817, Article 5(2), Article 6(b)(c)(d) and Article 7.

- **07 03 03:** Promoting learning mobility of sport staff and cooperation, inclusion, creativity and innovation at the level of sport organisations and sport policies, corresponding to the sport strand across all three key actions.

The proposed new structure of the Erasmus+ budget from 2021–2027, with only two budget lines suggested in the financial statement (one for education and one combining youth and sport), is a significant shift.

*Rationale:* removing earmarking is intended to allow greater flexibility to reallocate resources in response to emerging needs. Evaluations and stakeholder consultations highlighted challenges related to inflexible funding and the Commission considers the proposed changes as a way to improve efficiency, better address new challenges and make funding more accessible and adaptive for participants and organisations.

### Reduced administrative burden

*Change:* The proposal for the new Erasmus+ regulation introduces simplification measures for applicants and beneficiaries:

- Very low-value grant partnerships with strongly reduced administrative requirements (details not yet specified).
- Maximum use of simplified grants (lump sums, unit costs, flat rates), with cost reimbursement used only as a last resort. As stated in Article 12 of the proposal: 'Where Union funding is provided in the form of a grant, funding shall be provided as financing not linked to costs or, where necessary, simplified cost option'. It is also added that 'Funding may be provided in the form of actual eligible cost reimbursement only where the objectives of an action cannot be achieved otherwise', however it is not clarified how this can be proven in specific cases.

*Rationale:* Participation in Erasmus+ and ESC remains challenging for people with fewer opportunities and for small or newcomer organisations. Stakeholders have called for simpler rules, lighter reporting and clearer guidance on inclusion. While progress has been made, further streamlining and flexibility are needed to widen access, reduce administrative burden and strengthen outreach to disadvantaged groups and grassroots organisations.

### Audit

*Change:* An independent national audit body to provide an ex-ante assessment that the national agency satisfies the minimum requirements for internal control standards and rules for the management of Programme funds – Reinforcing the support and supervisory roles of the national authority.

*Rationale:* No specific rationale was provided by the European Commission though this reinforces the supervisory role of the national authority and ensures greater transparency.

#### b. Potential challenges and EP concerns

This section discusses potential challenges and concerns, some of them directly raised by MEPs during the CULT Committee meeting of 24 September 2025, in relation to the changes. These cover 8 of the 10 points listed above.

**Integration of Programmes:** Potential challenges regard the integration of ESC into the broader Erasmus+ programme. Key concerns include the need to maintain the ESC's distinct identity and visibility, ensuring that volunteering and solidarity actions retain clear objectives, dedicated resources and separate monitoring. Questions include how governance and reporting could track ESC-specific

results within a unified structure and whether smaller or symbolic solidarity initiatives might lose prominence in a broader programme landscape.

**Revised programme structure:** Simplification of the programme architecture could reduce the visibility of specific sectors, particularly volunteering as mentioned above, which has been merged with learning mobility but also other actions such as Jean Monnet. MEPs highlighted the importance of safeguarding the prominence and dedicated support of the European Universities Alliances, given their strong performance and far-reaching impact under the current programme. The European Parliament resolution of 11 September 2025 on a new vision for the initiative recognises the value of keeping the Alliances within Erasmus+. It also invites the Commission to explore tailor-made financing for the post-2027 multiannual financial framework, potentially as a standalone programme, to enable long-term planning and sustained cooperation. This concern was echoed by Members during the 24 September 2025 discussions, where the absence of specific, high-quality funding for the Alliances was underlined.

**New areas of intervention:** While the new actions are intended to address emerging challenges, MEPs warned that the programme's mandate risks becoming overstretched without a corresponding increase in the budget, intensifying competition for resources<sup>27</sup>.

**Programming changes:** The governance of annual work programmes becomes crucial under this model, as these programmes will determine the distribution of resources in the absence of earmarking. However, the proposed Regulation refers only to Article 110 of the Financial Regulation for the adoption of annual work programmes, without providing for delegated or implementing acts. As a result, the European Parliament and the Council would no longer have formal scrutiny rights over these programmes, which may limit their ability to exercise budgetary oversight.

**Budget:** While the proposed nominal increase in the Erasmus+ budget for 2028–2034—from EUR 24.57 billion of Erasmus+ plus EUR 1 billion for the ESC in 2021–2027 to EUR 40.83 billion for both programmes in 2028–2034—is a substantial rise, closer analysis suggests that the real growth is more limited when adjusting for inflation, previous additional allocations and the integration of the ESC into the programme. After these adjustments, the net increase amounts to approximately EUR 4.5 billion (+14%) in real terms compared to the 2021–2027 period, raising questions about whether this will be sufficient to meet the programme's ambitious objectives.

The Draghi report highlights that Erasmus+ currently reaches only 15% of the EU's young people and that, to achieve a truly 'Erasmus for all,' funding would need to be five times higher in the next programming period. Specific concerns remain. The school and vocational education and training sectors may continue to be underfunded relative to other areas; mobility grants may not fully cover actual costs, potentially limiting access to those who can afford part of the mobility expenses and affecting the inclusiveness of the programme.

**Removal of earmarking:** The proposed Erasmus+ regulation removes indicative allocations for thematic areas, target groups and types of intervention, marking a significant departure from the 2021–2027 period when budgets were defined. While the Commission argues that removing earmarking allows greater flexibility to respond to emerging needs, several concerns arise:

<sup>27</sup> One subtle change has happened in the field of 'adults'. In definitions 2021–2027 regulations: 'adult education' means any form of non-vocational education for adults after initial education, whether of a formal, non-formal or informal nature. In definitions provided in the 2028–2034 proposal for a regulation, on the other hand, 'adult learner' means a person who has left or finished initial education and training and engages in formal, non-formal or informal learning, including NEET.

- **Predictability and oversight:** Without indicative allocations, budgetary decisions are concentrated at Commission level, limiting co-legislators’ oversight and ability to influence resource distribution.
- **Support for smaller initiatives:** Youth organisations and innovative local projects may struggle to compete with larger, better-resourced actors.
- **Sport sector funding:** as with the youth sector, the lack of earmarking poses a risk, particularly for sport which, being the smallest and least visible sector, is most affected by the removal of earmarking. Furthermore, as noted in the synergy analysis in Section 2.3, sport cannot rely on significant funding from other instruments.
- **Inclusiveness and equity:** The absence of earmarking may reduce access for vulnerable or underrepresented groups, potentially undermining diversity and accessibility.

In summary, while flexibility can be beneficial, safeguards (such as targeted allocations or minimum guarantees) are essential to ensure that strategic priorities, inclusiveness and Parliamentary oversight are preserved.

**Increased focus on programme inclusiveness and diversity:** Inclusiveness of the programme could be at risk due to budgetary limitations. If Erasmus+ does not cover the costs of mobility, participation may be restricted to those who can afford it, undermining accessibility for disadvantaged learners.

There is also a lack of clarity regarding the measures envisaged to support inclusion such as financial assistance to enable participation from an early age and across different socio-economic backgrounds, as mentioned in the proposal. It remains uncertain whether the proposed inclusion and diversity plans would differ substantially from existing plans. While national agencies are expected to develop these plans, the proposal does not appear to address shortcomings identified during the current programme, namely the uneven quality and delivery of such plans across Member States.

Because of this level of uncertainty, questions persist regarding the added value of the newly introduced elements. Further uncertainty also arises in relation to monitoring the inclusion measures.

**Strengthened Synergies:** While synergies with other EU funds – such as ESF+ and regional development instruments – can enhance programme impact, it is important that these do not result in substitution effects or the diversion of Erasmus+ resources to fill gaps in other instruments. Transparency over combined funding, compatible rules and safeguards to protect education and youth priorities are essential. The proposed regulation refers to a single set of rules to be applied when funds from multiple programmes are used synergistically to finance an action. However, no further details are provided, leaving it unclear how this approach will be operationalised and what potential added value it may bring.

Table 25: Commission rationale and EP potential challenges – Erasmus+

Changes	Proposal rationale	Potential challenges and issues relevant for Parliament
Integration of Programmes	<p><b>Efficiency:</b> Reducing overlaps between Erasmus+ and ESC may streamline procedures and improve the use of resources.</p> <p><b>Coherence:</b> Integrating the two programmes aligns objectives, reduces</p>	<p>(i) Maintaining ESC identity and visibility;</p> <p>(ii) Ensuring volunteering and solidarity actions retain dedicated resources;</p>

Changes	Proposal rationale	Potential challenges and issues relevant for Parliament
	<p>fragmentation and provides a clearer, single-entry point for participants.</p> <p><b>Effectiveness and EU added value:</b> Streamlined access could enhance awareness of opportunities and support broader participation across the EU.</p>	<p>iii) Monitoring ESC-specific results;</p> <p>(iv) Risk that smaller or symbolic solidarity initiatives lose prominence.</p>
Revised programme structure	<p><b>Efficiency:</b> Multiple key actions and chapters can make implementation complex; the new structure may simplify implementation.</p> <p><b>Coherence:</b> A fragmented architecture can weaken internal logic; the new pillars are intended to align related actions.</p>	<p>(i) Risk that specific sectors (e.g., youth, sport, volunteering) lose visibility</p>
New areas of intervention of the programme	<p><b>Relevance:</b> Introduces actions to address emerging challenges and policy priorities.</p> <p><b>Effectiveness:</b> Builds on existing delivery mechanisms to reach individuals, organisations and systems, enhancing programme impact.</p>	<p>(i) Programme mandate could become overstretched without additional budget.</p> <p>(ii) Risk of increased competition for resources limiting effectiveness.</p>
Management changes	<p><b>Efficiency and Effectiveness:</b> Transferring Jean Monnet actions to indirect management aims to simplify implementation, increase accessibility and support participation by smaller and less experienced applicants.</p>	
Programming changes		<p>(i) Uncertainty over annual work programme adoption (i.e., financing decision instead of implementing or delegated act) affects Parliament oversight.</p>
Budget change	<p><b>Effectiveness and EU added value:</b> A larger budget allows the programme to better pursue its objectives and respond to emerging needs.</p> <p><b>Efficiency:</b> Flexibility in fund allocation may improve the use of resources and reduce administrative constraints.</p>	<p>(i) Real growth limited after adjusting for inflation, previous allocations and ESC integration.</p> <p>(ii) School and VET sectors underfunded, mobility grants may not cover full costs, affecting inclusiveness.</p>

Changes	Proposal rationale	Potential challenges and issues relevant for Parliament
		(iii) Newly introduced initiatives (e.g., learning mobility for athletes) need dedicated funding.
Removal of earmarking and Programming changes	<b>Efficiency:</b> Flexibility in fund allocation may improve the use of resources and reduce administrative constraints.	(i) No indicative allocations limits Parliament's influence. (ii) Smaller initiatives and less visible sectors, with more limited budgets in this programming period (e.g., sport), losing funding. (iii) Youth and sport organisations may struggle to compete without a dedicated budget.
Reduced administrative burden	<b>Efficiency:</b> Streamlined procedures, simplified grants and harmonised reporting reduce administrative burden and improve the use of resources.	(i) It is important that simplified procedures ensure accountability.
Programme inclusiveness and diversity	<b>Effectiveness and EU added value:</b> Aims to improve participation of disadvantaged groups and support broader access across education, training, youth and sport. <b>Relevance:</b> Addresses gaps in reaching people with fewer opportunities.	(i) Risk that budget limitations undermine inclusiveness. (ii) Lack of clarity on concrete measures (financial support, new inclusion and diversity plans).
Strengthened synergies	<b>Coherence:</b> Facilitating synergies between Erasmus+ and other EU programmes supports better alignment of objectives and reduces fragmentation. <b>Effectiveness and EU added value:</b> Improved coordination at the European level and the potential for combined funding may enhance the impact of the programmes and generate benefits that individual Member States could not achieve alone.	(i) Risk of substitution effects or diversion of Erasmus+ resources. (ii) Unclear operationalisation of combined funding; need safeguards to protect education and youth priorities.
Audit	<b>Transparency:</b> strengthening the supervisory role of the national authority.	

Source: Own elaboration.

### 3.2.2. AgoraEU

#### a. European Commission proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the 'AgoraEU' programme for the period 2028–2034, and repealing Regulations (EU) 2021/692 and (EU) 2021/818

The main changes under the proposed **AgoraEU** programme for 2028–2034 can be summarised as:

- 1) Integration of programmes with the merging of Creative Europe and CERV (Article 3)
- 2) Revised programme structure (Articles 4 to 7)
- 3) New areas of intervention
- 4) Removal of earmarking
- 5) Governance and programming (Article 17)
- 6) Budget (Article 11)
- 7) Reduced administrative burden.

#### Integration of programmes

*Change:* The Commission proposes to merge **Creative Europe** (Culture, MEDIA, cross-sector) and **CERV** (Citizens, Equality, Rights & Values) into a single programme called **AgoraEU** for the 2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework:

- AgoraEU is proposed to have three strands: **Creative Europe – Culture**, as well as **MEDIA+ and Democracy, Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV+)**.
- Union support for areas such as media and countering disinformation, currently financed via the **Multimedia Actions line** and **Digital Europe**, will be consolidated under AgoraEU.

*Rationale:* According to the Commission's Impact Assessment and Explanatory Memorandum, the rationale for this merger is to:

- **Expand reach** and ensure wider access to EU support,
- **Simplify programme management** through streamlined structures and procedures,
- **Strengthen synergies** between related policy fields,
- **Avoid overlaps** in funding across separate instruments.

The Commission opted for this 'objective-based merger' to enable better coordination, greater flexibility and more effective use of the EU budget while maintaining a clear policy focus. Bringing culture, media and rights under a single framework could improve coordination on cross-cutting issues such as digitalisation, democracy and diversity. Stakeholder consultations highlighted the need for simpler funding procedures and stronger coherence across programmes.

The name AgoraEU draws on the idea of the 'agora' as a gathering place in ancient Greece, symbolising a shared space for artistic, social, business and political life. The programme is conceived as an integrated framework where citizens can meet, create and exchange, freely express their views and deepen their appreciation of diversity.

#### Revised programme structure

*Change:* The proposed AgoraEU programme for 2028–2034 is structured around three main strands (i.e., (i) Creative Europe – Culture strand; (ii) MEDIA+ strand; (iii) CERV+), each further subdivided into

specific objectives. In addition to the strand-specific actions, the programme will support cross-cutting and horizontal activities that contribute to the general objectives of the programme.

Key differences compared to 2021–2027:

**Creative Europe strands:** The 2021–2027 programme included separate Culture, Media and Cross-sectoral strands. Under AgoraEU, the Culture and Media strands are maintained as separate strands, while the cross-sectoral strand will no longer exist independently. Its functions are to be redistributed mainly through cross-cutting and horizontal activities across the three strands. For the MEDIA+ strand, while in the 2021–2027 Creative Europe Programme covers exclusively audiovisual actions, the new programme will also have a ‘news’ component. This is meant to contribute to ‘a free, viable and diverse Union information ecosystem, notably by supporting free and independent journalism and news media, enhancing citizens’ access to trustworthy information and tackling disinformation’. It should also support the [European Board for Media Services](#)<sup>28</sup> and citizens digital and media literacy (including young people).

**CERV strands:** Previously divided into four strands (Union values; Equality, rights and gender equality; Daphne (aim: preventing and combating gender-based violence and violence against children and other groups at risk); Citizens’ engagement), these have now been consolidated into a single CERV+ strand under AgoraEU. Specific objectives from the previous strands are maintained but coordinated within the unified structure.

Table 26: Correspondence between AgoraEU strands and 2021–2027 CREA and CERV strands

AgoraEU strand	2021–2027 CREA and CERV strands	AgoraEU Specific Objectives
CULTURE	Creative Europe – Culture strand	i. Culture
MEDIA+	Creative Europe – Media strand	i. Audiovisual
		ii. News
CERV+	CERV – Union values strand and Equality, rights and gender equality strand	i. Rights, equality, citizens and civil society
	CERV – Daphne strand	ii. Daphne
	CERV – Citizen engagement and participation strand	

Source: Own elaboration.

Furthermore, during the 2021–2027 period, the Creative Europe Regulation included Annex I, which provided a description of the programme’s actions for each strand of Creative Europe. This included, for example, the sectoral actions to be funded under the Culture strand of the programme (such as the music sector, book and publishing sector, architecture and cultural heritage for a quality-built

<sup>28</sup> An independent advisory body at Union level, established by the European Media Freedom Act, consisting of representatives from national media regulators. The Board is responsible for promoting the effective and consistent application of EU media law, including the EMFA and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD). More information is available [here](#).

environment, and other sectors of artistic creation where specific needs were identified), thereby providing a high level of detail on the actions to be funded. This level of detail is not included in the new proposed Regulation.

*Rationale:* The three-strand structure preserves the distinct focus of each sector—Culture, MEDIA+ and CERV+—while operating under a single framework. This approach maintains sector-specific objectives and budgets. The aim is to ensure continuity and targeted support, while facilitating coordination and cross-cutting activities across strands to enhance overall programme coherence and flexibility.

### New areas of intervention of the programme

*Change:* During the CULT Committee ordinary meeting on 25 September 2025, representatives of DG EAC, DG JUST and DG CNECT presented the new AgoraEU programme and highlighted areas of intervention that were not previously funded under Creative Europe but are proposed for the next programming period under the Culture and MEDIA+ strands:

- **Culture:** Addresses emerging challenges such as the use of AI, precarious working conditions for artists and threats to artistic freedom. With regard to precarious working conditions for artists, the EMPL and CULT Committees have issued a recommendation through a legislative own-initiative report, calling for a legislative proposal. The European Parliament has advocated for a European framework combining legislative and non-legislative instruments to improve the social and professional conditions of artists and cultural professionals and to ensure fair and equal treatment across the EU.<sup>29</sup>
- **MEDIA+:** For the first time, the programme will provide consolidated support to the **news media sector**, complementing the European Media Freedom Act by strengthening editorial independence and supporting news media viability at regional and local levels.

*Rationale:* The cultural and creative sectors face multiple challenges, including digital transformation, climate adaptation and threats to freedom of expression. Supporting these sectors helps unlock their potential and ensures broad participation. As with the news media sector, declining revenues, shrinking employment and limited consumer trust highlight the need for targeted support to maintain pluralism, tackle disinformation and strengthen editorial independence. Previous evaluations indicate that EU support was effective in producing original content and reaching audiences across Europe.

### Management and programming

*Change:* In the 2021–2027 period, the Commission adopts annual work programmes through implementing acts, which are subject to committee procedure.<sup>30</sup> Under this arrangement, the Creative Europe Committee must<sup>31</sup> deliver a favourable opinion before an implementing act can be adopted, thereby ensuring a formal role for Member States in the implementation of the programme. This mechanism is not foreseen in the framework proposed for 2028–2034.

Instead, the proposed AgoraEU Regulation refers only to Article 110 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2025 on financing decisions for the adoption of annual work programmes. As this approach does

<sup>29</sup> [https://oeil.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/en/procedure-file?reference=2023/2051\(INL\)](https://oeil.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/en/procedure-file?reference=2023/2051(INL))

<sup>30</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/817, Article 24.

<sup>31</sup> As set out in Regulation (EU) No 182/2011, where basic acts require Member State control over the Commission's adoption of implementing acts, committees composed of representatives of the Member States and chaired by the Commission are to be established for this purpose. Pursuant to Article 5, the Commission may adopt a draft implementing act only where the committee delivers a positive opinion.

not provide for a comitology procedure, the adoption of work programmes would no longer be subject to committee-based approval, removing Member State control and limiting Parliament's oversight role.

## Budget

*Change:* The Commission proposes a budget of EUR 8.6 billion for AgoraEU (2028–2034), compared with about EUR 3.9 billion for Creative Europe and CERV together in 2021–2027 (European Commission, 2025): (i) Culture strand: EUR 1.8 billion; (ii) MEDIA+: EUR 3.2 billion; (iii) CERV+: EUR 3.6 billion. These allocations are stated in the financial statement attached to the proposed regulation and not in the core text of the latter.

In the current programming period, programmes under the new Agora umbrella should receive an additional allocation (i.e. namely programme-specific adjustments under MFFR article 5). For Creative Europe this is EUR 600 million and EUR 800 million for the CERV programme (including the previous Justice Programme).

The purchasing power of the programmes is impacted by inflation. Considering the regulatory provisions on the programme's eligible expenditure<sup>32</sup>, Creative Europe and CERV should be affected by producer price increases for services (e.g. communication, transmission, creation and diffusion), equipment for media and audiovisual as well as staff costs. Using this inflation rate, and not the Commission's 2% deflator, **the net budget increase in real terms for the instruments in AgoraEU between the two programming periods is closer to +50% (i.e. in terms of purchasing power or money available for new investments), rather than +75% (2025 prices) as announced by the Commission** (for more details see Annex 3).

*Rationale:* Outlined in the Commission's Impact Assessment and other reports:

- **High demand and oversubscription:** Demand significantly exceeds funding, particularly in the Culture strand, which risks limiting the programme's attractiveness to stakeholders.<sup>33</sup>
- **Funding gaps in CERV strands:** Resources are insufficient to fully address equality, rights, gender equality and combating violence.<sup>34</sup>
- The Multimedia Actions evaluation showed current funding levels are **inadequate to respond to the fast-changing news media landscape** and evolving consumption patterns across the Union.<sup>35</sup>

## Removal of earmarking

*Change:* In the current programming period, Creative Europe and CERV regulations include financial earmarking. The allocations are presented in the table below. For CERV, the amounts are indicative, whereas for Creative Europe the regulation sets minimum and maximum allocations.

<sup>32</sup> Eligible expenditures for Creative Europe projects (including the Media + strand) include direct costs like personnel, travel, subsistence, and project-specific activities (e.g., communication, promotion, dissemination). Indirect costs, costs for specialized consultancies and depreciation of equipment are also eligible. Eligible costs for the CERV programme are similar and include staff costs travel, equipment, and subcontracting, which must be incurred during the grant implementation period.

<sup>33</sup> European Parliament, Implementation of the Creative Europe Programme 2021–2027, Report A9-0425/2023, 8 December 2023, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0425\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0425_EN.html).

<sup>34</sup> European Commission, Ex-post evaluation of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) and the Europe for Citizens (EfC) programmes (2014–2020) and interim evaluation of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme (2021–2027), Publications Office of the European Union, 22 August 2023, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3630bcdd-40eb-11ee-952f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

<sup>35</sup> European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document: Impact Assessment Report, Accompanying the documents Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the 'AgoraEU' programme for the period 2028–2034, Brussels, 2025, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3630bcdd-40eb-11ee-952f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

Table 27: 2021–2027 financial allocation to Creative Europe and CERV strands

	Strand	Budget allocation
Creative Europe	Culture strand	At least 33% of the Creative Europe budget
	Media strand	At least 58% of the Creative Europe budget
	Cross-sectoral strand	Up to 9% of the Creative Europe budget
CERV	Union values strand	Around 46% of the CERV budget
	Equality, rights and gender equality strand	Around 26% of the CERV budget
	Citizen engagement and participation strand	Around 27% of the CERV budget
	Daphne strand	Not clearly specified

Source: Own elaboration based on the information provided in Regulation (EU) 2021/818 and Regulation (EU) 2021/962.

The proposed regulation sets the indicative allocation of budget among the strands in the financial statement.

For the structure of 2021–2027 EU budget lines, three were assigned to Creative Europe reflecting the regulation (i.e., in 2021–2027 three separate budget lines, one for each strand):

- **07 05 01:** Culture strand
- **07 05 02:** Media strand
- **07 05 03:** Cross-sectoral strand

*Rationale:* Removing earmarking is intended to allow greater flexibility to reallocate resources in response to emerging needs.

### Reduced administrative burden

*Changes:* Novelties include:

- Use of **simplified funding** as default: lump sums, financing not linked to costs (FNLC).
- Greater use of **financial support to third parties**, helping smaller organisations access funds.
- More **multi-annual grants**, reducing repetitive applications.
- **Harmonised rules** for applications, reporting and monitoring across strands.

*Rationale:*

- The CERV evaluation noted that the application process was burdensome and complex, particularly for small municipalities and grassroots CSOs, with guidance often only in English. Administrative workload and technical demands discouraged less experienced organisations, and some Member States remained underrepresented.

- The EP implementation report on Creative Europe concluded that administrative procedures remain complex, and reporting systems are not always user-friendly.<sup>36</sup>

#### **b. Potential challenges and EP concerns**

**Integration of programmes.** The proposed integration of existing cultural, media and citizenship programmes into the broader 'AgoraEU' framework has raised concerns about preserving each programme's identity, visibility and strategic coherence. Although the overarching architecture has broadly been acknowledged as coherent, MEPs and delegations from the Cultural Affairs Committee, the Audiovisual and Media Working Party and the Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens' Rights and Free Movement of Persons in the Council warned that merging distinct instruments risks weakening their individual strengths.

The views in this section were drawn from the progress report on AgoraEU presented at the meeting of the Council on 14 November 2025 (the 'Council progress report').

Delegations stressed that the change of name, combined with limited detail in the proposal, could dilute the strong brand recognition that Creative Europe and its components have developed over several programming periods. Parliamentary discussions also underlined that smaller beneficiaries may find it more difficult to navigate a merged structure, as larger organisations are generally better placed to benefit from integrated calls. Ensuring clear information channels and maintaining recognisable strands were considered essential to prevent loss of visibility and to safeguard the specific objectives of each component.

**Revised programme structure:** During the CULT meeting of 25 September 2025 where the Commission presented the AgoraEU proposal, MEPs broadly welcomed the introduction of three distinct strands (Creative Europe – Culture, MEDIA+ and CERV+), including the focus on implementing the European Media Freedom Act, supporting the work of the European Board for Media Services<sup>37</sup>. They nonetheless stressed the importance of safeguarding media independence within any new structure. Journalism, the fight against disinformation and protection of a pluralistic information space would need more visibility. Some MEPs expressed concerns that the proposed MEDIA+ strand may not provide sufficient guarantees of resilience or adequately protect the independence of information from political, commercial or technological pressure and the current structure may fall short of what is needed.

The Council progress report also notes that, while the three-strand structure was generally well received, several delegations suggested alternative configurations. These included merging culture and audiovisual actions under a single Creative Europe strand while establishing a dedicated 'News' strand or introducing a cross-sectoral strand to ensure that transversal priorities, such as media literacy, artistic freedom and societal resilience, are not overlooked.

**New areas of intervention.** Under the 2021–2027 programme, the actions listed in the MEDIA strand<sup>38</sup> supported the development of audiovisual works by European independent production companies, as well as innovative and high-quality TV content and serial storytelling for diverse audiences. In the new proposal, the requirement that these activities be carried out by European independent producers is no longer specified. The absence of such an independence criterion could strengthen the position of major platforms at the expense of smaller European producers, in a context in which preserving a

<sup>36</sup> <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/decade-creative-europe>

<sup>37</sup> The European Board for Media Services is an independent advisory body established by the European Media Freedom Act. It is composed of representatives from national regulatory authorities of the media and audiovisual sectors. More information is available here: [https://media-board.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://media-board.europa.eu/index_en)

<sup>38</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/818, Annex I Section 2 'MEDIA Strand'.

pluralistic and independent audiovisual ecosystem is essential to broader objectives such as media pluralism and the fight against disinformation. The Council progress report also reflects this concern.

During the same meeting (i.e. on 25 September 2025), MEPs further underlined that the music sector requires a long-term and cohesive strategy underpinned by transparent and equitable resources.

**Programme governance and earmarking removal.** During the CULT Committee meeting of 25 September 2025, MEPs expressed concerns that the proposal grants excessive discretion to the Commission and offers insufficient clarity on how the European Parliament and Member States will participate in programme governance. They called for stronger guarantees on transparency and oversight, cautioning against the centralisation of powers within the Commission, particularly regarding Parliament’s role in adopting the annual work programmes.

In the proposed structure, the annual work programme would take on an important role. As with Erasmus+ 2028–2034, the lack of earmarking in the regulation – while allowing considerable flexibility in implementation – will not ensure stable funding for areas considered strategic or in need of support, considering policy priorities agreed with the co-legislators in the programme’s regulation.

The Council progress report mentioned that delegations have generally supported increased flexibility, while emphasising the need to preserve transparency and predictability.

**Budgetary concern.** Proposed resources are not deemed sufficient to address demand, particularly when considering inflation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Increased funding would be required to compensate for the difficult years of the pandemic and to achieve a success rate of at least 30–40% among beneficiaries; it currently stands around 10%.

Table 28: Commission rationale and MEP potential challenges AgoraEU

Changes	Proposal rationale	Potential challenges and issues
Integrated programmes	<p><b>Efficiency:</b> Consolidating Creative Europe and CERV into a single programme may simplify management and reduce overlaps in funding and procedures.</p> <p><b>Coherence:</b> Integrates related policy fields (culture, media, rights, equality) under a single framework, aligning objectives and improving internal logic.</p>	<p>(i) Risk of losing programme identity and visibility.</p> <p>(ii) Smaller beneficiaries may struggle in a merged structure.</p> <p>(iii) Concern that brand recognition of Creative Europe could be diluted.</p>
Revised programme structure	<p><b>Efficiency:</b> Streamlining the programme into three strands reduces complexity for stakeholders.</p> <p><b>Coherence:</b> Consolidating previous strands into a unified structure aligns related objectives and strengthens internal logic.</p>	<p>(i) MEDIA+ strand inside a larger programme may not sufficiently protect media independence and pluralism.</p> <p>(ii) Risk that transversal priorities may be overlooked</p>

Changes	Proposal rationale	Potential challenges and issues
New areas of intervention of the programme	<b>Relevance:</b> Addresses emerging challenges such as AI, artistic precarity, artistic freedom, media innovation and support for news media.	(i) Removal of independence criterion may disadvantage smaller producers and strengthen major platforms. (ii) Risks to media pluralism and the fight against disinformation and implementation of the European Media Freedom Act. (iii) Need for a clearer long-term strategy for the music sector.
Earmarking removal	<b>Efficiency:</b> Flexibility in fund allocation may improve the use of resources and reduce administrative constraints	(i) Flexibility welcomed but lack of predictability for strategic areas. (ii) Risk that annual work programmes become the sole tool for safeguarding priorities.
Governance and programming	No clear rationale in relation to these changes.	(i) Concerns about excessive concentration of powers in the Commission (ii) Need for stronger transparency and clearer roles for Parliament and Member States.
Budget increase	<b>Effectiveness and EU added value:</b> Higher funding levels respond to previous funding gaps and oversubscription, potentially supporting a broader range of activities across the three strands.	(i) The budget is still deemed insufficient to meet beneficiary demand.
Reduced administrative burden	<b>Efficiency:</b> Harmonised rules, multi-annual grants and simplified funding procedures may reduce programme administrative burden.	(i) Simplified procedures should ensure accountability.

Source: Own elaboration.

### 3.3. Other relevant instruments

#### 3.3.1. National and Regional Partnership Plans

The main changes in the Commission's proposal are: (i) single-fund consolidation of several existing pre-allocated funds; (ii) a new delivery model based on NRP Plans and an EU Facility/Interreg Plan; (iii) a clearly quantified multi-billion-euro budget envelope with earmarks.

## Fund consolidation

The proposal creates one large European Fund covering cohesion (regional, social, territorial), agriculture and rural development, fisheries and maritime and selected areas of prosperity and security (migration, borders, internal security). This is supposed to replace the current system of multiple pre-allocated funds.

As mentioned in the Commission Staff Working Document (SWD(2025) 565), the new Fund brings together 14 existing instruments, including: (1) Cohesion Fund; (2) ERDF; (3) ESF+; (4) JTF; (5) EAGF; (6) EAFRD; (7) EMFAF; (8) AMIF; (9) BMVI; (10) ISF; (11) Brexit Adjustment Reserve over and above the MFF ceilings; (12) RRF; (13) SCF and (14) the Modernisation fund.

According to the Commission, the consolidation is intended to:

- improve coherence between EU priorities and national/regional actions;
- simplify implementation and improve value for money by reducing administrative complexity;
- allow more flexible reallocation of resources to respond to emerging needs and crises while maintaining long-term objectives.

In the draft interim report of 27 November 2025, Parliament's MFF co-rapporteurs raise concerns about the NRPP model, notably the integration of multiple policy areas into a single national plan, which may undermine the predictability and stability of funding for final beneficiaries.<sup>39</sup>

## Areas of intervention relevant for CULT

The proposal includes specific objectives of relevance to CULT.

Table 29: Specific objectives of the Fund relevant to the CULT Committee

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE OF THE FUND RELEVANT TO THE CULT COMMITTEE	
(c) to <b>strengthen social cohesion</b> by supporting people and strengthening the Union's societies and the Union's social model by:	<i>(ii) enhancing labour supply and improving education and lifelong acquisition of skills, in particular by promoting upskilling and reskilling;</i>
(e) to protect and strengthen <b>fundamental rights, democracy, the rule of law and to uphold Union values</b> by:	<i>(i) sustaining and further developing open, rights-based, democratic, equal and inclusive societies, including by building civil society and social partners' capacities to uphold Union values, citizenship education and youth participation;</i> <i>(ii) promoting and upholding the rule of law through strengthening justice systems, anti-corruption frameworks, media pluralism, information integrity, media literacy, and effective checks and balances;</i> <i>(iv) promoting culture as a catalyst for European values and supporting a vibrant and diverse cultural sector.</i>

Source: Own elaboration.

<sup>39</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2026/783552/BUDG\\_BRI\(2026\)783552\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2026/783552/BUDG_BRI(2026)783552_EN.pdf)

The fund-specific proposed regulations for ERDF, CF and ESF do not define specific objectives for each fund. Instead, the proposed specific objectives are set out in the common regulation<sup>40</sup>, which applies to all funds under the NRP Plans. This differs from the 2021–2027 programming period, where each fund had its own specific objectives.

For ESF, the accompanying explanatory text to the regulation proposal indicates that the Fund will contribute to the implementation of EU policies and to national or regional structural reforms for employment, education and skills, social inclusion and care services, including long-term care and healthcare. From a CULT standpoint, the education and skills component are of particular importance. ESF is expected to continue complementing the support provided by Erasmus+. Both instruments intervene in closely related areas (i.e., acquisition of new skills, promoting upskilling in response to the needs of the industrial sectors and enhancing digital competences).

More detail on the types of actions funded under each specific objective can be found in the intervention fields, as well as in the common output and result indicators in Annex I of the Proposal for a Regulation establishing a budget expenditure tracking and performance framework and other horizontal rules for Union programmes and activities. The intervention fields under the following policy areas offer interesting insights into the types of actions to be funded, as they are relevant to the specific objectives:

- Culture, tourism and media
- Education and skills
- Social
- Rights equality and justice

A selection of 2028–2034 intervention fields relevant for the CULT remit is provided in Annex 4.

### Programme structure

A major change concerns delivery mechanisms: from close to 540 programmes in 2021–2027 to 27 NRPPs plus one Interreg Plan in 2028–2034.

- 2021–2027: multiple operational programmes under separate funds (ERDF, ESF+, CF, etc.), often with several programmes per fund in each Member State.
- 2028–2034: delivery principally through NRP Plans prepared by each Member State. Each Plan must set a coherent package of reforms, investments and measures prepared in partnership with stakeholders.

Two additional instruments complement the NRP Plans:

- EU Facility to respond to crises and new priorities. It should also be noted that, in addition to the EU facility, 25% of each national allocation is reserved as a flexibility amount, allowing Member States to respond to crises and adjust spending priorities in line with national and regional needs.
- Interreg Plan, continuing cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation.

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<sup>40</sup> Article 3 of the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Fund for economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture and rural, fisheries and maritime, prosperity and security for the period 2028–2034 and amending Regulation (EU) 2023/955 and Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/250.

## Box 2: Interreg: from 2021–2027 to 2028–2034 proposal

**INTERREG**

- In 2021–2027, Interreg was part of cohesion policy, funded via the ERDF and structured around four strands (cross-border, transnational, interregional, outermost regions), with multi-annual programmes and strong regional/local involvement.
- For 2028–2034, the Commission proposes to maintain Interreg with a budget of EUR 10.264 billion, delivered through a dedicated Interreg Plan under the new Fund. This should simplify governance and align cooperation more closely with EU priorities, while still covering cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. Unlike the previous period, Interreg will not be a strand of the ERDF but an EU-level plan.

Source: Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing the European Fund for economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture and rural, fisheries and maritime, prosperity and security for the period 2028–2034 and amending Regulation (EU) 2023/955 and Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509.

As outlined in the paper ‘cohesion policy on the Rocks’<sup>41</sup>, the Commission argues that this consolidation in one NRRP per Member State will enhance efficiency, coherence and strategic focus. However, a key concern for both Member States and the European Parliament is the potential loss of the regional dimension following the disappearance of dedicated regional programmes. The precise role of territorial or regional chapters remains unclear and is likely to depend on national implementation choices. Furthermore, this new model could create complex governance and coordination structures, which may slow decision-making and introduce greater institutional complexity through shifts in responsibilities across different levels (i.e., shift in roles of national and regional authorities and institutions).

**Budget**

The proposal sets an overall financial envelope for the Fund of EUR 865.076 billion (current prices) for 2028–2034. Allocation within that envelope is expressed as:

- NRP Plans: EUR 782.879 billion
- EU Facility: EUR 71.933 billion
- Interreg Plan: EUR 10.264 billion

The Commission also proposes that 14% of spending (excluding agriculture, fisheries and the Social Climate Fund) should be dedicated to social objectives. This would represent around EUR 100 billion, tracked for the first time across the EU budget. Part of this allocation should be of particular relevance to the implementation of education policies within the remit of the CULT Committee. This is intended to:

- Foster active social inclusion and socio-economic integration to promote equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation and improving employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups, third-country nationals including migrants and marginalised communities.

<sup>41</sup> Mendez C, Bachtler J and Wishlade F (2025) Cohesion Policy on the Rocks?, EoRPA Report 25/3, European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde and EPRC Delft.

- Address material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived persons and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion.
- Implement the Child Guarantee through targeted actions and structural reforms to tackle child poverty particularly in Member States above the Union average of children of less than 18 years old at risk of poverty or social exclusion, based on Eurostat data, between 2024 and 2026.
- Implement the Youth Guarantee through targeted actions and structural reforms to support youth employment, vocational education and training, particularly in Member States above the Union average of young people of 15 to 29 years of age who are NEETs, based on Eurostat data, between 2024 and 2026.

To increase budget flexibility, the Commission proposes fewer headings in the MFF and merges many programmes under three major funds. Under Heading 1, where the NRPPs are located, the budget has significantly fewer chapters, titles and lines. While this may enhance flexibility, it could reduce transparency and predictability, even if allocation decisions are largely determined by national envelopes rather than the annual budgetary procedure.<sup>42</sup>

### Administrative programming changes and simplification

- A single approval process: each NRP Plan would be adopted by a Council Implementing Decision.
- A pre-financing schedule: early disbursements in the first years.
- Integrated management and control systems, adapted to the Plan model.

A performance-based approach: payments dependent on meeting milestones and target. For what concerns the performance-based approach, the interim report of the European Parliament highlights substantial risks due to insufficient safeguards for sound financial management and unclear measures to address shortcomings of existing performance-based instruments.

Table 30: Commission rationale and MEP potential challenges NRP Plans

Changes	Proposal rationale	Potential challenges and issues
Single-fund consolidation	<p><b>Coherence:</b> improves alignment between EU priorities and national/regional actions.</p> <p><b>Efficiency:</b> simplifies implementation and improves value for money by reducing administrative complexity.</p> <p><b>Flexibility:</b> allows reallocation of resources to respond to emerging needs and crises while maintaining long-term objectives.</p>	(i) Merging multiple policies into one plan may reduce funding predictability for beneficiaries, as well as the visibility of different policies (i.e., CAP and cohesion policy)
Areas of intervention relevant for CULT	<p><b>Coherence:</b> integration of CULT-relevant objectives (Culture, tourism and media, Education and skills, Social, Rights equality and justice) within the common regulation applicable to all funds.</p>	

<sup>42</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2026/783552/BUDG\\_BRI\(2026\)783552\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2026/783552/BUDG_BRI(2026)783552_EN.pdf)

Changes	Proposal rationale	Potential challenges and issues
	<p><b>Complementarity:</b> ESF interventions on education and skills are expected to complement Erasmus+.</p>	
<p>Programme structure (NRP Plans, EU Facility and Interreg Plan)</p>	<p><b>Effectiveness:</b> delivery through NRP Plans intended to ensure coherent packages of reforms, investments and measures prepared in partnership with stakeholders. It also allows for increased flexibility, in order to respond to relevant needs and crises situations.</p> <p><b>Efficiency:</b> reduction from around 540 programmes to 27 NRP Plans plus one Interreg Plan simplifies delivery mechanisms.</p> <p><b>EU added value:</b> EU Facility supports EU-level projects and priorities; Interreg Plan preserves cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation.</p> <p><b>Coherence:</b> alignment of national, EU-level and territorial cooperation actions with EU priorities.</p>	<p>(i) Role of regional chapters is unclear; regional ownership may weaken, and the (possibly) resulting governance complexity could slow decision-making and create tensions</p> <p>(ii) Parliament has limited influence on flexibility amounts provided by the regulation (i.e., EU Facility and the 25% of each national allocation is reserved as a flexibility amount)</p>
<p>Budget</p>		<p>(i) Allocations for EU shared management would decline by about 10% compared to the current MFF.<sup>43</sup></p> <p>(ii) Fewer headings and reduced budget nomenclature under Heading 1 could undermine transparency and predictability of allocations.</p>
<p>Administrative programming changes and simplification</p>	<p><b>Efficiency:</b> single approval process via Council Implementing Decision, pre-financing, integrated management and control systems, and performance-based payments aim to simplify implementation and accelerate delivery.</p>	<p>(i) Insufficient safeguards for financial management and performance-based instruments.</p> <p>(ii) Uncertainty on milestones, targets, and adjustments may shift rather than reduce administrative burden</p>

<sup>43</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2026/783552/BUDG\\_BRI\(2026\)783552\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2026/783552/BUDG_BRI(2026)783552_EN.pdf)

Source: Own elaboration.

### 3.3.2. Horizon

#### Broader strategic context

In 2028–2034 the programme sits within a much larger EU competitiveness and research strategy, closely linked to a new European Competitiveness Fund that pools support for strategic technologies (clean tech, digital, bioeconomy, defence and space). While Horizon Europe remains a standalone research and innovation programme, it is tightly linked with the new fund.

#### Areas of intervention relevant for CULT

- **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA):** The MSCA will continue to support research training and career development, with a portion of the budget allocated to these activities.
- **New European Bauhaus:** The initiative, launched in 2020, is included in the proposed Horizon Europe regulation in the next programming period.
- **Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society:** Restructuring has removed the visibility of this area, funded in 2021–2027 under Pillar II with a clearly allocated budget. In the new regulation, although collaborative research is expected to support the development and rapid diffusion of culture and creativity, it is not specified under which component of Pillar II ('Competitiveness and Society') this should be funded and no budget has been pre-allocated.
- The instrument, as in 2021–2027, **will also address the 'education' policy field, especially through the creation of networks between education institutions, research organisations and business under Part III 'Innovation' (Article 4 c (ii) the proposed regulation).**

In the negotiations for MFF 2021–2027, NEB has become part of a wider debate between Parliament and the Commission. The CULT and ITRE Committees, in their joint report (2021/2255(INI)), welcomed the initiative's ambition but regretted its lack of detail. They urged the Commission to focus on affordable housing, less-developed areas and the inclusion of marginalised groups and called for EUR 500 million to be added to Horizon Europe in the 2023 MFF revision. Looking to the future, both Committees explicitly recommended that NEB be transformed into a stand-alone Union programme with a dedicated budget line from 2028, supported by clear project selection criteria and a Bauhaus Label as a quality mark.

By contrast, in the new legislative proposals for the 2028–2034 MFF, the Commission has confirmed the continuation of the NEB Facility as a component within Horizon Europe, on the same footing as the European Missions and MSCAs. The Facility should maintain its dual structure, combining a Research and Innovation strand financed under Horizon Europe with a deployment strand supported by other EU instruments (such as cohesion policy and the Single Market Programme) and by national co-funding. According to the Commission, this is meant to ensure continuity with the 2025–2027 phase, while embedding the NEB more firmly within the Union's long-term research, innovation and competitiveness strategy. It also links the initiative directly to the European Green Deal and to broader objectives related to social cohesion and territorial development.

#### Administrative programming changes and simplification

The Commission proposal also places a strong emphasis on simplification and efficiency, including streamlined programme structures, closer alignment with other EU instruments under the

competitiveness agenda and measures aimed at reducing administrative burden and accelerating project implementation across Horizon Europe.<sup>44</sup>

Table 31: Commission rationale and MEP potential challenges – Horizon

Changes	Proposal rationale	Potential challenges and issues
Broader competitiveness framework	<b>Coherence:</b> Horizon Europe is positioned within a wider EU competitiveness and research strategy and closely linked to the European Competitiveness Fund, while remaining a standalone research and innovation programme.	
Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)	<b>Effectiveness:</b> continuation of support for research training and career development, with a dedicated share of the programme budget allocated to MSCA activities.	
New European Bauhaus (NEB)	<b>Coherence:</b> inclusion of the NEB Facility within Horizon Europe ensures continuity with the 2025–2027 phase and embeds the initiative within the Union’s long-term research, innovation and competitiveness strategy.	The Commission proposal does not provide for a stand-alone programme or a dedicated budget line for NEB, as previously recommended by the CULT and ITRE Committees.
Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society	<b>Coherence:</b> collaborative research under Pillar II (‘Competitiveness and Society’) is expected to support culture and creativity as part of broader societal objectives.	Reduced visibility of this area compared to 2021–2027, with not clearly identified component or pre-allocated budget under Pillar II.
Education-related actions	<b>Coherence:</b> continuation of support to the education policy field through the creation of networks between education institutions, research organisations and business under Part III of the programme.	
Administrative programming changes and simplification	<b>Efficiency:</b> streamlined programme structures, closer alignment with other EU instruments under the competitiveness agenda, and measures aimed at reducing administrative burden and accelerating project implementation.	

Source: Own elaboration.

<sup>44</sup> See the 2025 Interim evaluation of Horizon at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52025SC0110>

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

#### 2021–27 programming period

1. CULT-related thematic fields are addressed in many MFF programmes, albeit with some differences in terms of priority focus, type of intervention and budget. The main weakness lies in the persistent imbalance between needs and resources despite constant increases over the period, especially for Erasmus+ and Creative Europe. Very high demand is a recurring feature, leaving many projects unfunded despite strong alignment with programme priorities.
2. Erasmus+, ESC, CERV and Creative Europe are entirely relevant for CULT themes; however, they represent less than 3% of the 2021–2027 MFF budget. The main financial contribution (around 8% of the MFF) comes from programmes that address CULT themes more broadly (e.g., ERDF). In some cases, such as under CAP, CULT thematic fields are addressed with a limited scope (e.g. young farmers) or with a territorial focus (e.g. cultural heritage in rural areas).
3. There are CULT-relevant programmes under both direct and indirect management. DGs EAC, EMPL, CNECT and JUST are responsible for implementation, with delegation to EACEA and national bodies for indirect management. The NEB initiative, ERDF, ESF+, AMIF and EMFAF CAP programmes are partly or fully implemented under shared management.
4. For programmes under shared management, financial allocations to CULT thematic fields depend heavily on national/ regional needs and priorities. National and regional authorities are fully responsible for designing the strategy and selecting the type of interventions, with limited decision-making power for the Commission and a larger role for partnerships at territorial level. Implementation of horizontal principles and principles from the Charter of Human Rights of the EU addressing CULT thematic fields is also relevant for many programmes (e.g. Charter Article 11- Freedom of expression and information; Article 13 - Freedom of the arts and sciences, Article 14 -Right to education).
5. Tracking expenditure for CULT thematic fields is not mandatory in general, making it difficult to assess what funding has been spent and where (rural versus urban areas, less versus more developed regions, by Member State).
6. Key findings from the mid-term evaluations so far are:
  - Relevance – High degree of relevance (demand is higher than available funding). Adaptability to new emerging needs as well as long-term relevance to EU policy priorities and principles. There is room for improvement: e.g., the Erasmus+ sport sector has very limited funds in some areas, particularly for event organisation.
  - Efficiency and effectiveness – Centrally managed instruments operate more efficiently thanks to streamlined procedures and simplification tools, while shared-management funds still face higher administrative burdens, delays and uneven simplification. Furthermore, in some cases programme guidance documents are predominantly in English, which creates a barrier for small organisations with limited language capacity.
  - Most instruments are on track to achieve their objectives, and in some high-demand programmes such as Erasmus+ and Creative Europe, performance indicators have even

- overperformed. For shared management, contributions (e.g. creative sector under ERDF) remain difficult to assess due to the absence of specific measures or indicators.
- Added value – EU funding enables actions in culture, education and youth that national budgets could not support, adding resources for underfunded areas (e.g. mobility) and creating opportunities for innovation and cross-border collaboration that benefit from a European scale.
  - Visibility – According to the Flash Eurobarometer 563 (2025), awareness of EU-funded actions remains limited: only 40% of citizens recall projects in their area, though 68% recognise at least one shared-management fund. Visibility varies widely (high for Erasmus+, low for Interreg, CEF and JTF). When citizens are aware, perceptions are strongly positive, with most considering EU-funded projects beneficial and reinforcing their sense of EU citizenship.
7. The thematic field supported by the most instruments is 'Education', funded by 17 instruments, of which 7 list it as their primary policy field. This is followed by 'Culture and creative sectors', financed by 16 instruments with 7 identifying it as a primary policy field. This means these two areas are the most fragmented, leaving the greatest scope for synergies and complementarities. Effective and coordinated use of all EU resources in 'Education' and 'Cultura and creative sectors' requires robust coordination to align a wide range of funds with differing rules, objectives and scopes.
  8. Creative Europe plays a central role in this landscape. Its MEDIA strand is closely aligned with several major information and media initiatives, particularly those managed by DG CNECT. This thematic proximity, combined with similar management modalities, creates strong potential for complementarity with instruments such as the citizen-facing media portal, the online media offer for young Europeans and Multimedia Actions.
  9. For the next programming period the Commission has proposed to integrate Multimedia Actions into the MEDIA+ strand of the new AgoraEU programme, which would combine the current Creative Europe and CERV programmes. The extent to which this new architecture will enhance coherence, and complementarity will depend on its implementation.
  10. Similarly, in the next programming period, NEB is proposed to be more firmly included under Horizon programmes, providing an important opportunity to foster synergies with AgoraEU.
  11. Synergies and complementarities are effective, e.g. Erasmus (mobility), ESF+ (education and learning), Horizon (researcher mobility), as well as ERDF and Digital Europe (infrastructure and digital investments). The Seal of Excellence label, as defined in Horizon, also applies to the cultural and creative sectors, making it easier to create synergies with other funding sources. However, its implementation still requires an assessment.
  12. Under the multilevel management approach, differences in implementation rules and various levels of responsibilities make it difficult to implement synergies and complementarities and monitor them in practice (e.g. coordination between management authorities for calls for proposals are challenging). In some cases, programmes have similar action lines such as Creative Europe and the Cross-border Interreg programmes (in cross-border areas).

**2028-34 programming period**

1. The next MFF proposal adopts a less fragmented and more focused approach by aggregating programmes. Cohesion policy and CAP are proposed to be jointly managed through national plans combining reforms and investments. The Commission has proposed objective-based mergers for Creative Europe and CERV (i.e., AgoraEU 2028-2034), as well as for Erasmus+ and ESC (Erasmus+ 2028-2034) to reduce overlaps, improve coherence, strengthen synergies and simplify access for beneficiaries. This partly responds to needs identified in the instrument evaluations, though two concerns emerge for thematic fields under CULT's remit:
  - Less visible or less established types of intervention may lose prominence within broader merged structures – particularly volunteering activities previously funded under ESC, now proposed to fall under the Erasmus+ learning mobility pillar. Likewise, under AgoraEU, currently pivotal themes as journalism support, the fight against disinformation, and protection of a pluralistic information space risk reduced visibility within a larger programme covering multiple policy fields.
  - Programmes with strong, distinct identities, such as Creative Europe, may see reduced visibility and a weakening of their specific profile once integrated into the wider AgoraEU architecture under a new name.
2. A budgetary increase is foreseen for both key instruments under the remit of the CULT Committee (i.e., Erasmus+ and AgoraEU), reflecting the continued priority given to education, culture, media and democratic values. Ongoing discussions, however, highlight the importance of interpreting this increase in light of two elements:
  - Inflation in recent years has surpassed the Commission's 2% deflator, and
  - Some programmes are expected to operate with a broader scope, taking on objectives and types of intervention previously financed through other instruments.

When these elements are considered, the effective increase is more modest than the headline figures might suggest. Nonetheless, compared with other policy areas – such as CAP income support and fisheries, which face a reduction of 9%, or economic, social and territorial cohesion, with a 12% reduction – the proposed budgets for these instruments demonstrate their relevance.

3. Considering the new instrument scope and real inflation rate, Erasmus+ is likely to show an increase of 'fresh money' of less than 20% while AgoraEU would increase by around 50% compared to the current programming period.
4. CULT related fields are still addressed in many of the new regulation proposals, but tracking is difficult at this stage, considering the level of aggregation.
5. In ESF+, Horizon Europe, CAP and cohesion policy, culture-related fields continue largely in line with the 2021–2027 approach.
  - Under cohesion policy, four relevant specific objectives were identified. Support will target skills development, the rule of law, media pluralism and culture as drivers of European values and a diverse cultural sector.
  - In Horizon Europe, MSCAs will maintain funding for research training, the NEB remains included, but restructuring has removed the explicit Culture, Creativity and

Inclusive Society area from Pillar II. Although cultural research is mentioned, its placement within Pillar II is unclear and no dedicated budget is pre-allocated.

6. In Global Europe, strengthened synergies with Erasmus+ will be pursued, as both regulation proposals state that Global Europe will provide an additional financial contribution to the programme and the Erasmus+ regulation will apply to those funds. These provisions were already implemented in previous programming periods.
7. The proposals introduce greater flexibility and simplification by merging instruments. However, there is no clear financial earmarking for individual priorities. In Erasmus+, the lack of earmarking could weaken long-term policy commitments, as annual decisions on allocations make long-term planning difficult. Although a key aim is to improve inclusiveness and reach vulnerable groups, merging programmes, removing earmarking in Erasmus+ and less detailed actions in AgoraEU compared with Creative Europe may undermine this objective.
8. With this increased focus on flexibility, the role of Parliament is diluted by the adoption of annual work programmes as a rule under financing decisions. Under the proposed 2028–2034 framework indeed, under Erasmus+ and AgoraEU the comitology mechanism is not present, limiting Member State powers and reducing the co-legislators' oversight.
9. For the NRP plans, more decisional power is on the Commission and the Member State which should centralize the design of the strategy and the involvement of partnership at national level. In addition, the application of the partnership principle and the role of local and regional authorities in designing and implementing NRP plan strategies are not clear.
10. Under the NRP plans the Commission also proposes that 14% of spending (excluding agriculture, fisheries and the Social Climate Fund) should be dedicated to social objectives. This would be around EUR 100 billion, tracked for the first time across the EU budget. This allocation is very relevant to the implementation of education policies within the remit of the CULT Committee.
11. At this stage, several provisions designed to bring added value in terms of simplification and synergies remain insufficiently detailed. As a result, it is not yet possible to fully assess either their genuine added value or potential challenges that may arise during implementation.

## Recommendations

1. With the 2021–2027 MFF period ending, it is important to publish the outstanding mid-term evaluations (e.g. CAP policy). Due to the large number of programmes that address CULT themes directly or indirectly, evaluations should generally address the cultural, media, education, youth and sports themes separately to improve clarity, accountability and transparency (mostly relevant for the next generation of evaluations).
2. Given the high demand for funding in the current programming period and the recognised added value of EU programmes in national policy contexts where support is lacking, additional funding is required that is earmarked securely throughout the entire period.
3. For the key CULT instruments (Erasmus+ and AgoraEU), the new proposal requires a clear demarcation of priorities within each fund and instrument. The basic acts should clearly set out the specific intervention logic for each CULT priority, detailing planned interventions

and set out adequate budgets consistent with the needs, including with a sufficiently detailed breakdown in the acts.

4. For the shared management programmes, the legislative acts must provide detailed information about the actions relevant to CULT. This can include selection criteria addressing CULT priorities. Monitoring and reporting are also key for improving transparency on the programme performance in the cult thematic fields.
5. Erasmus+ would benefit from pursuing stronger complementarities with ERDF and ESF+. ERDF can provide infrastructure and territorial conditions that underpin education and training environments, while ESF+ supports inclusion, employability and skills development. These programmes address different yet interconnected aspects of the education and skills ecosystem creating potential for more integrated approaches in which Erasmus+ mobility and learning actions are reinforced by ERDF and ESF+ investments.
6. Implementation rules may specify legislator roles in the entire implementation process, with clear guarantees for Parliament's role (e.g. adoption of annual work programmes through delegated acts).
7. Tracking CULT thematic expenditure across programmes and funds is key to understanding where EU funding is going, which sectors and areas it is supporting and who the recipients are. This could support Parliament's scrutiny role and reinforce transparency and accountability in this area of public funding. Guidance for tracking CULT spending should be based on intervention fields detailed in the Annex of the proposal for the 2028-2034 performance Regulation. Contributions to CULT spending might be ranked in three classes: 0% (i.e. not contributing to CULT thematic fields), 40% (partly contributing to CULT thematic fields) and 100% (fully contributing to CULT thematic fields). A pilot for such weighting is proposed in Annex 4 of this study.

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## ANNEX 1 – INSTRUMENT CONTRIBUTION TO THE CULT THEMATIC FIELDS

This annex provides details on the estimations in Table 5 of the study.

Financial tracking of instruments in the CULT thematic fields is based on information reported by monitoring systems and regularly published by the European Commission (see data sources in column 4 of the table). Estimates in the third column are only provided for interventions with a direct match between the intervention code/category and CULT thematic fields (see the 'Comment' column in the fifth row for details). In some cases, the estimate could either underestimate or overestimate the programme's contribution to the CULT thematic fields (for example ERDF innovation projects in culture are not specifically included in programme monitoring, and the monitoring categories of Global Europe include activities beyond the scope of CULT thematic fields). However, considering the programme's priorities and targets, the margin of error is expected to be limited.

The estimates include the following categories of interventions:

- Projects, support and activities in education (private and public sector);
- Worker skills and re-skilling financial supports;
- Digital projects and activities in the creative sector, media and for education purposes;
- Cultural heritage projects and related infrastructure;
- Support for youth (young and minors), including services for childhood.

The estimates do not include:

- Investment in digital infrastructure, when not directly linked to culture, media or education;
- Infrastructure when not formally related to education, sport or cultural heritage;
- Innovation projects when not formally related to the CULT thematic fields.

Table 32: Estimated budget allocation to CULT thematic fields MFF 2021–2027 (EUR million)

Instruments	CULT thematic fields	Estimated contribution to CULT in EUR bn (current prices)	Data sources	Comment
European Social Fund + (ESF)	Education, training, development of skills (inc. digitalization) and youth in PO4 Specific objective s from ESO4.1 to ESO4.13	33.2	<a href="https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/2021-2027/2021-2027-Finances-Detailed-Planned-vs-Implemented/3git-md5z/about_data">https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/2021-2027/2021-2027-Finances-Detailed-Planned-vs-Implemented/3git-md5z/about_data</a>	Intervention field codes: 028, 121, 124, 136, 139, 143, 145, 148, 149, 150,151, 154, and 163
Digital Europe Programme	Digital skills and use of digital technologies	0.4	<a href="https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/work-programmes-digital">https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/work-programmes-digital</a>	Specific objectives related to actions on advanced digital skills in key capacity areas through specialised education programmes and other actions: work programme 2021–2022 (EU 166 million), 2023–2024 (EU 121 million), 2025–2026 (109.5 million)
ERDF, including Interreg	Cultural, creative industry, and digital skills in PO1, education and youth in PO4, investments in cultural heritage under PO 5 + Interreg intervention fields covering culture, education and youth	29.4	<a href="https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/2021-2027/2021-2027-Finances-Detailed-Planned-vs-Implemented/3git-md5z/about_data">https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/2021-2027/2021-2027-Finances-Detailed-Planned-vs-Implemented/3git-md5z/about_data</a>	Intervention field codes: 004, 008, 012, 028, 121, 122, 123, 124, 143, 148, 149, 150, 154, 163, and 166

Instruments	CULT thematic fields	Estimated contribution to CULT in EUR bn (current prices)	Data sources	Comment
Horizon Europe	Pillar I with MSCA and Pillar II, cluster 2 'Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society'	8.9	<a href="https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/cluster-2-culture-creativity-and-inclusive-society_en">https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/cluster-2-culture-creativity-and-inclusive-society_en</a>	EUR 2.28 bn in Cluster 2 - Culture, creativity and inclusive society covering democracy, cultural heritage and social and economic transformations.  EUR 6.6 bn for doctoral and postdoctoral training and mobility across borders and exposure to different sectors and disciplines.
InvestEU	Investments in three areas relevant for the CULT Committee (digital technologies and services, cultural creative and media).	0.81	<a href="https://investeu.europa.eu/investeu-programme/investeu-fund/investeu-indicators_en">https://investeu.europa.eu/investeu-programme/investeu-fund/investeu-indicators_en</a>	Volume of operations (08/2025) in digital technologies and services, cultural creative sectors and media
TSI	Unclear allocations to the areas relevant for the CULT Committee: Skills, education and training and digital transition. Two interventions of the 10 planned are CULT relevant.	<0.1	<a href="https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/technical-support-instrument/technical-support-instrument-tsi_en#documents">https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/technical-support-instrument/technical-support-instrument-tsi_en#documents</a>	10 areas of intervention for a total of EUR 864 million. CULT areas include skills, education and training, and digital transition.

Instruments	CULT thematic fields	Estimated contribution to CULT in EUR bn (current prices)	Data sources	Comment
EAGF	Young farmers	5.8	<a href="https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/financing-cap/cap-funds_en?prefLang=it">https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/financing-cap/cap-funds_en?prefLang=it</a>	Support to young farmers is 2% of the EAGF
EAFRD	Young farmers and rural development (including Cultural heritage)	4.75	<a href="https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/financing-cap/cap-funds_en?prefLang=it">https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/financing-cap/cap-funds_en?prefLang=it</a>	SO7: Attract young farmers and facilitate business development in rural areas; SO8: Promote employment, growth, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including bio-economy and sustainable forestry; and cross-cutting objective which aims at fostering knowledge, innovation, and digitalisation in agriculture. 5% of the funding to Leader/CLLD approach
EMFAF	Measures related to CLLD are designed and implemented by Member States. Unclear funding for the improvement of skills and working conditions in the fishing and aquaculture sectors.	0.5	<a href="https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/funds/emfaf/21-27#">https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/funds/emfaf/21-27#</a>	Interventions under PO5 specific objective MS03.1 "Enabling a sustainable blue economy", including cultural heritage, training and skill, and technical assistance (in CLLD plans)
JTF	Education and training	2.6	<a href="https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/2021-2027/2021-2027-Finances-Detailed-">https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/2021-2027/2021-2027-Finances-Detailed-</a>	Intervention fields code: 004, 008, 012, 018, 023, 028, 121, 122, 123, 124, 136, 139, 145, 148, 149, 150 and 151

Instruments	CULT thematic fields	Estimated contribution to CULT in EUR bn (current prices)	Data sources	Comment
			<a href="#">Planned-vs-Implemented/3git-md5z/about_data</a>	
AMIF	Minors (children migration and vulnerable), language and civic training	0.87	<a href="https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/2021-2027/2021-2027-Finances-Detailed-Planned-vs-Implemented/3git-md5z/about_data">https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/2021-2027/2021-2027-Finances-Detailed-Planned-vs-Implemented/3git-md5z/about_data</a>	Intervention fields code: SO1.004, SO2.004, SO2.005, SO2.011, SO3.008
NDICI – Global Europe – geographic programmes strand	Education, training, youth, and media sectors.	9	<a href="https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/funding-instruments/global-europe-programming_en">https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/funding-instruments/global-europe-programming_en</a>	Thematic programmes: Human rights and democracy (1.5 bn), Civil society Organisations (1.5 bn), Global Challenges (priority 1 and 3: 2.4 bn) GE supports Erasmus+ actions for around .2 2 bn over the period.
CEF – Digital strand	Digital connectivity	--		Investments in digital infrastructure. The contribution is not specific, though contributing to education and the creative economy indirectly.

Source: Own elaboration.

## ANNEX 2 – INSTRUMENT FICHES

Annex 2 (in a separate document) to this study is available on the internet at:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2026/784019/IUST\\_STU\(2026\)784019\(AN N01\)\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2026/784019/IUST_STU(2026)784019(AN N01)_EN.pdf)



## ANNEX 3 – BUDGET COMPARISON: A 'PURCHASING POWER' APPROACH

### Nominal prices versus real prices budget

Eurostat regularly publishes statistics on prices, primarily to enquire into price stability and its structural evolution across Member States. The most popular statistics are the consumer price index (HICP) and the Industrial producer price index (IPP) with sub-indexes for transport, services and industry.<sup>45</sup> For 2018–2025, the HICP increased by an average of 3.6% per year, with large differences between categories of goods and services. Energy prices increased the most (+6%), while 'goods' averaged +3.3%.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, there were significant variations between Member States and high volatility within the years in the period.<sup>47</sup> Trends are similar for the IPPI: prices increased by 29% over the period, meaning +3.7% per year.

As different instruments are expected to 'buy' different baskets of goods and services, the real impact of inflation on the 'purchasing power' of the instrument differ depending on the instrument purpose and eligible expenditures (e.g. ERDF covers investments in infrastructure and equipment, while ESF and Erasmus are service-oriented).

The tables below report some of the price changes relevant for the CULT instruments (i.e. referring to the basket of goods and services that the instrument 'buys').

Table 33: Consumer price changes, EU 27 2018–2025<sup>48</sup>

Item (Special aggregate codes)	Yearly average increase (%)	Total increase (%)
HICP index	3.6	28.5
Goods (IGD_NNRG_SD)	3.3	18
Services (SERV)	5.3	36
Energy (NRG)	6	50
Transport services (SERV_TRA)	4.5	35
Communication services (SERV_COM)	4,3	36

Source: Own elaboration from Eurostat data.

<sup>45</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/hicp>

<sup>46</sup> NACE Rev. 2 Section L (Real estate activities) covers renting, operating, buying, and selling of own or leased real estate, along with agency services like property management and appraisals.

<sup>47</sup> According Eurostat 2025, in 2024 consumer prices rose by as much as 5.8% in Romania. The next highest increases were in Belgium (4.3%) and Croatia (4.0%). At the other end of the range, the lowest average annual inflation rates in 2024 were in Lithuania (0.9%), Finland (1.0%) and Italy (1.1%). [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Consumer\\_prices\\_-\\_inflation](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Consumer_prices_-_inflation)

<sup>48</sup> Labour costs cover the eurozone over the period 2018–2024 (<https://data.ecb.europa.eu/publications/macroeconomic-and-sectoral-statistics/3030631>). The average labour cost of 31,8€ in the EU 27, masks significant gap between EU countries. According to Eurostat the lowest labour costs are reported in Bulgaria (€ 9.3) and Romania (€11) and the highest are in Luxembourg (€53.9) and Denmark (€ 48).

Table 34 Producer price changes, EU 27 2018–2025<sup>49</sup>

Item (NACE code)	Yearly average increase (%)	2018–2025 increase (%)
Industrial producer price index (IPPI)	3.8	29.5
Service index (SPPI)*	3.3	18
Energy (35)	8,4	76.3
Equipment (manufacturing) (28)	3%	23%
Labour costs	3.4	22.6

Source: Eurostat and the European central Bank data Portal.\*

### Erasmus allocation in real terms

The table below provides the details for a comparison in terms of purchasing power between MFF allocations to Erasmus+ across the two programming periods:

- Table column a): MFF 2021–2027 allocations (2018 prices)<sup>50</sup>;
- Table column b): ‘purchasing power’ after HICP adjustment over the period 2018–2025;
- Expected Erasmus allocation as from the MFF 2028–2034 COM proposals (2025 prices).

Column b) = column a) x 1,28.

Table 35: Estimated budget changes for Erasmus+ programme MFF 2021–2027 to MFF 2028–2032 (EUR million)

	MFF 2021–2027		Erasmus+ 2028–2034
	a)	b)	c)
Erasmus+ (initial)	€ 21 708	€27 892	
Additional allocation under MFFR Article 5	€1 700	€2 184	
European Solidarity Corps (ESC)	€895	€1 149	
<b>Total</b>	<b>€24 303</b>	<b>€31 226</b>	<b>€36 186</b>

\* COM report 27 779 million euro in 2025 prices.

Source: Own elaboration.

<sup>49</sup> Labour costs cover the eurozone over the period 2018–2024 (<https://data.ecb.europa.eu/publications/macroeconomic-and-sectoral-statistics/3030631>). The average labour cost of 31,8€ in the EU 27, masks significant gap between EU countries. According to Eurostat the lowest labour costs are reported in Bulgaria (€ 9.3) and Romania (€11) and the highest are in Luxembourg (€53.9) and Denmark (€ 48). The SPPI is published since 2020.

<sup>50</sup> Multiannual Financial Framework, 2021–2027: [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/multiannual-financial-framework-2021-2027-commitments\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/multiannual-financial-framework-2021-2027-commitments_en)

### AgoraEU allocation in real terms

The table below provides the details for a comparison in terms of purchasing power between MFF allocations across the two programming periods:

- Table column a): MFF 2021–2027 allocations (2018 prices)<sup>51</sup>;
- Table column b): ‘purchasing power’ after IPPI adjustment over the period 2018–2025;
- Expected AgoraEU allocation as from the MFF 2028–2034 proposals (2025 prices).

Column b) = Column a) x1.29

Table 36: Estimated budget changes for AgoraEU programmes MFF 2021–2027 to MFF 2028–2032 (EUR million)

	MFF 2021–2027		AgoraEU 2028–2034
	a)	b)	c)
Total MFF 2021–27	2 493	3 229	
<i>Creative Europe</i>	1 642	2 127	
<i>Media +</i>	-		
<i>CERV</i>	841	1 089	
Additional allocation under MFFR Article 5	+ 600 (CE) + 800 (CERV)	1 813	
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 893</b>	<b>5 061*</b>	<b>7 606</b>

\* COM report 4 350 million euro in 2025 prices.

Source: Own elaboration.

<sup>51</sup> Multiannual Financial Framework, 2021–2027: [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/multiannual-financial-framework-2021-2027-commitments\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/multiannual-financial-framework-2021-2027-commitments_en)

## ANNEX 4 – CULT BUDGET TAGGING

The table below presents intervention fields in the proposed Regulation<sup>52</sup> establishing a budget expenditure-tracking and performance framework, together with other horizontal rules for Union programmes and activities. These fields are based on their relevance to policy areas under the remit of CULT. The regulations cluster the intervention fields into broader policy areas (level 1), with further distinctions made at a more granular level (policy area level 2).

Under the new MFF, tracking will be reported across the following areas:

- **CCM:** climate change mitigation
- **CCA:** climate change adaptation and resilience
- **ENV:** environment
- **SOC:** social

In the final column, the proposed tracking classifications indicate the expected contribution of each intervention field to policy areas falling under CULT's remit. Contributions to CULT-related spending are categorised as: 0% (no contribution to CULT thematic fields), 40% (partial contribution) and 100% (full contribution).

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<sup>52</sup> [EUR-Lex - 52025PC0545 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

Table 37: Intervention fields contribution to CULT

Policy area (level 1)	Policy area (level 2)	#	Intervention Field	CCM	CCA	ENV	SOC	CULT %
Agriculture and fisheries	Agriculture	1	<b>Promote generational renewal of farmers</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	40%
Culture, tourism and media	Culture and creative sectors	87	<b>Creative, cultural and arts activities and services</b>	0	0	0	40	100%
Culture, tourism and media	Culture and creative sectors	88	<b>Physical regeneration and security of public spaces</b>	0	0	0	0	100%
Culture, tourism and media	Media	89	<b>Media freedom and pluralism, media viability, and access to news content</b>	0	0	0	0	100%
Culture, tourism and media	Media	90	<b>Enhance detection and countering of disinformation and media literacy</b>	0	0	0	40	100%
Culture, tourism and media	Media	91	<b>Media and entertainment: support creation, circulation and access to audiovisual works</b>	0	0	0	0	100%
Culture, tourism and media	Reforms	92	<b>Culture, tourism and media reforms</b>	0	0	0	0	100%
Culture, tourism and media	Tourism	93	<b>Protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage and tourism services (excluding infrastructures)</b>	0	0	0	40	40%
Digital technologies and infrastructures	Connectivity	96	<b>3C networks (including FTTP, 5G, 6G)</b>	0	0	0	0	40%
Digital technologies and infrastructures	Connectivity	97	<b>Digital backbone networks, including subsea cable networks (excl. satellites)</b>	0	0	0	0	40%

Digital technologies and infrastructures	Digital capacities and advanced technologies	107	<b>Other emerging technologies – deployment and scale-up (e.g. virtual worlds, software technologies and open Internet stack)</b>	0	0	0	0	40%
Digital technologies and infrastructures	Reforms	108	<b>Digital policy and regulatory framework</b>	0	0	0	0	40%
Digital technologies and infrastructures	Reforms	109	<b>Digital connectivity, infrastructure and market functioning</b>	0	0	0	0	40%
Education and skills	Education	111	<b>Early childhood education and care (excluding infrastructure)*</b>	0	0	0	100%	100%
Education and skills	Education	112	<b>Primary education (excluding infrastructure)</b>	0	0	0	100%	100%
Education and skills	Education	113	<b>Secondary education (excluding infrastructure)</b>	0	0	0	100%	100%
Education and skills	Education	114	<b>Tertiary education (excluding infrastructure)</b>	0	0	0	100%	100%
Education and skills	Education	115	<b>Initial vocational education (excluding infrastructures)</b>	0	0	0	100%	100%
Education and skills	Education	116	<b>Improving access of people with disabilities to education</b>	0	0	0	100%	100%
Education and skills	Education	117	<b>Improving access of marginalised communities such as the Roma to education</b>	0	0	0	100%	100%
Education and skills	Education	118	<b>Education for refugees in third countries</b>	0	0	0	100%	100%

Education and skills	Education	119	<b>Teacher training – education level unspecified</b>	0	0	0	100%	100%
Education and skills	Education	120	<b>Learning mobility (education sectors incl. non-formal and informal education and youth)</b>	0	0	0	100%	100%
Education and skills	Reforms	123	<b>Early childhood education and care reforms*</b>	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Education and skills	Reforms	124	<b>Education, youth and sport reforms</b>	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Education and skills	Reforms	125	<b>Skills and adult learning reforms</b>	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Education and skills	Skills	126	<b>Education and initial vocational education and training policy and regulatory framework</b>	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Education and skills	Skills	127	<b>Basic skills (incl. literacy, mathematics, science, and citizenship, excl. digital and green skills)</b>	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Education and skills	Skills	128	<b>Advanced digital skills</b>	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Education and skills	Skills	129	<b>Basic digital skills</b>	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Education and skills	Skills	130	<b>Green skills</b>	100%	40%	40%	100%	100%
Education and skills	Skills	131	<b>Financial literacy skills</b>	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Education and skills	Skills	132	<b>Up-skilling and re-skilling for marginalised communities such as the Roma</b>	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%

Education and skills	Skills	133	<b>Up-skilling and re-skilling for persons with disabilities</b>	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Rights, equality and justice	Democracy and rights	420	<b>Freedom of expression and promoting access to public information</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	40%
Rights, equality and justice	Democracy and rights	422	<b>Support to fundamental rights, rule of law, equality, anti-discrimination measures, digital rights and data protection</b>	0%	0%	0%	40%	40%
Social	Employment and labour market	438	<b>Improving access to employment</b>	0%	0%	0%	100%	40%
Social	Employment and labour market	443	<b>Specific support to youth employment</b>	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Social	Social Inclusion	476	<b>Social inclusion of young people</b>	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%

Source: Own elaboration.

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EU funding for culture, media, education, youth and sport in 2021–27 is wide-ranging, yet instruments directly focused on these areas (Erasmus+, Creative Europe and CERV) represent less than 3% of the MFF 2021–2027. Most support comes from broader programmes such as ESF+ and Horizon. Erasmus+, ESC, Creative Europe and CERV show clear EU added value. Implementing simplification and synergies remain key items on the agenda.

For 2028–2034, the Commission is proposing consolidated instruments such as Erasmus+ and AgoraEU. Compared to the previous programming period, the budget increases, though wider thematic coverage and recent inflation may reduce the impact.

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