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Creative Europe 2021-2022: The years of transformation

Resilience in times of pandemic and war, digital transformation, and Social inclusion, against the backdrop of immense uncertainty and transition were the main characteristics of the Creative Europe program 2021-2022, according to the latest monitoring report.

It was two years with unprecedented challenges for the Creative Industries of Europe: the first global pandemic, economic uncertainty and the return of war on European soil. The Creative sectors faced delays, lost opportunities and went through financial strain from unforeseen events. Yet, according to the monitoring paper issued by the European Commission, despite the odds, these were also the years for decisive and at times innovative problem-solving on display. Beneficiaries consistently found new ways to engage audiences when old methods failed - embracing mobility, collaboration and promoting European values in dynamic virtual or hybrid formats. The Creatives Unite, being one of the major examples of that transition was born in that era of turbulence as a digital tool that facilitated the cure of an immense contradiction: the need for more creativity in the absence of any social or economic activity.

Challenges were unprecedented: The pandemic severely impacted cultural/creative sectors and disrupted projects, events, productions and collaborations. Rising inflation and recession risks in 2022-2023 further strained sector finances and the appetite for co-productions/investment. The war in Ukraine generated a refugee crisis in Europe and disrupted collaborations with Ukrainian cultural players. A special call was issued to help alleviate impacts. While sustainability has been a priority in Europe for years, it's not always easy for arts/media with limited budgets to factor in green goals like travel restrictions into projects. Greening came to the centre of

the stage for the Creatives. Last but not least, different languages and cultures make it harder for European works/professionals to connect and audiences to access international content. The latest development of the Creatives Unite platform upgrade, which aims to develop a European editorial for the sector aims to bridge these gaps and bring European Creatives into a common discussion across borders

The COVID-19 challenge and Europe's response

Creative Europe is the EU's main cultural and creative program that provides funding and support to artists, cultural organizations and the audiovisual/media sectors across Europe. The COVID pandemic threw quite a spanner in the works for many Creative Europe beneficiaries. According to the numbers, provided in the monitoring report, Creative Europe successfully delivered increased funding and resources to cultural and creative operators building the adaptive capacity and sustainability of the cultural and creative sectors in COVID and beyond. The program supported taking creative content and connections online and opened doors for underrepresented groups through new funding priorities, building on the continent's diversity. Many calls saw extended submission and eligibility windows to give sectors more time to adapt projects. Projects could modify their plans, prioritizing virtual/digital activities over physical events and travel. The option to receive pre-financing of up to 60% of the grant was introduced to boost sector cash flow and many grants saw automatic 6-12 month extensions to account for delays beyond control. There were tangible deliverables too - films shot, festivals organized, capacity built.

The Creatives Unite platform

CreativesUnite is the first digital marketplace connecting creative professionals across Europe. The goal of CreativesUnite is to help make the cultural and creative sector more resilient by facilitating collaborations and connecting creatives with new project opportunities. During the pandemic lockdowns, the service became a lifeline for many struggling artists. The platform continues expanding the platform's functionality, helping more creatives to list services, find work and partners, and develop new creative works together

Key Facts from the Creative Europe 2021-2022 Monitoring Report

The program budget increased significantly from €2.4 billion total for 2014-2020 to €2.8 billion for 2021-2027. 1,909 projects were supported in 2021-2022 alone

- Total budget for 2021-2022: €693 million (fully absorbed)
- Number of applications received: 3,842
- Number of projects supported: 1,909
- Number of beneficiary organizations: 3,860 (over 80% were small orgs)
- Countries participating: All 27 EU members + 11 other European countries
- MEDIA support leveraged €676 million in overall investment
- Loans issued through CCS Guarantee Facility: 8,262 (worth €3.4 billion)
- Films supported by MEDIA received 190 nominations at major festivals, winning 52 awards
- Number of European Cooperation Projects funded: 291
- Attendance at Europa Cinemas network films: Over 21 million admissions
- Beneficiaries from new support schemes: 301 producers for 117 co-developments and 75 producers for 234 works
- Events organized by Creative Europe Desks: Around 2,000
- Applicants receiving Desk support: 60% of total applicants
- Budget for news media support (first time): €15 million
- News media organisations directly benefiting: 112

The Culture strand

The pandemic made it tough for many cultural events and initiatives to proceed as planned due to restrictions. Partnerships across countries faced travel barriers and economic uncertainty that impacted not only organization budgets but also individual artists who relied on them. As a result in different countries movements started for the recognition of creative and artistic work as one that must enjoy the benefits of all other forms of work in the EU. Furthermore, integrating new priorities around sustainability and inclusion

required adaptations, whereas the war in Ukraine also increased planned cooperation with Ukrainian counterparts for 2022 projects. Overall, 291 European Cooperation Projects were funded, promoting collaboration across borders- a record number in 2022. The Culture Moves Europe initiative proved successful in supporting mobility for over 1,000 artists and cultural professionals.

The Media Strand

MEDIA co-financed the development of 117 co-production projects involving 301 producers from different countries to help strengthen the European audiovisual sector. The strand provides funding to test innovative ideas and tools to help the industry transition to new platforms and business models. Projects supported under MEDIA reached over 43 million viewers, showing the appeal of European content across borders. MEDIA-supported films received 190 nominations at major festivals, including 35 awards, demonstrating their quality. Targeted support measures aim to strengthen specific parts of the value chain from training to distribution and access to finance. In 2022 there was a spotlight on emerging areas like video games with €15 million dedicated funding.

Cross-Sectoral strand

The Cross-sectoral strand achieved meaningful impacts by getting funds to publishers and supporting key democratic media roles in a time when the rule of law is challenged in many countries in and outside the EU. Responding to rising disinformation needs while respecting media freedom principles required nuanced policy development. 112 local, regional and national news media organizations benefitted from €15 million in grants. Pioneering collaborations through Journalism Partnerships shed light on issues like the rule of law. Defending Media Pluralism and Freedom projects upheld quality journalism standards. Three editions of the new European News Media Forum facilitated valuable stakeholder discussions.

The monitoring report also provides policy remarks that will shape the future of the Creative Industries. 2021-2022 were the years that exhibited the need for flexibility as crises like the pandemic require rapid remedies. The EU needs to quickly adjust procedures and funding priorities in response to unfolding events. While collaboration grew, the report suggests that more can be done to reduce barriers between markets and overcome fragmentation risks as sectors evolve differently in each state. All over the world and in Europe new priorities are emerging fast: From video games to the metaverse, the cross-sectoral strand is helping the European industries to embrace technological transformation faster so as to stay relevant.

- You can read the full report here