

All CCS and Cross-sectoral Tools & Resources EU response Spotlight All Europe Countries Working Conditions

Resilient by Training, Tired by Flexibility: Europe's Cultural Employment in 2024

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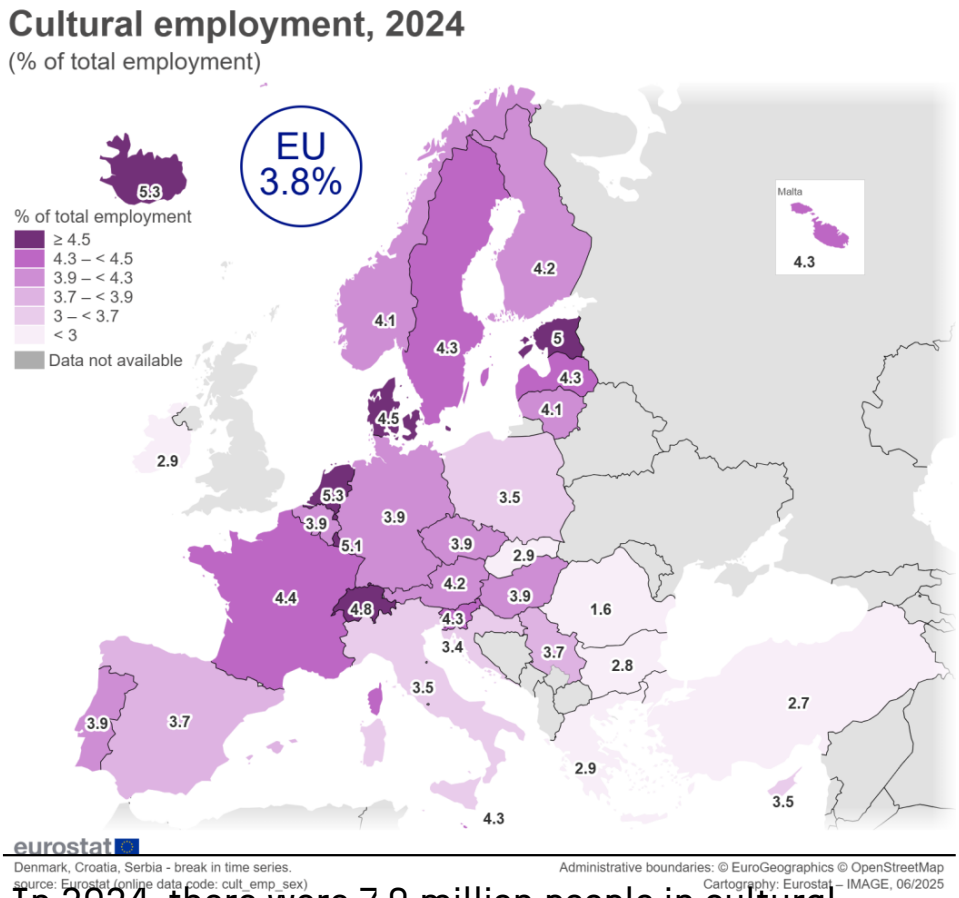
Co-funded by the European Union

In 2024, cultural employment accounted for 3.8% of total employment in the EU, (7.9 million people), ranging from a minimum of 1.6% in Romania to a maximum of 5.3% in the Netherlands. Overall, cultural employment accounted for a higher share of total employment in western and northern EU countries than in eastern and southern EU countries.

Cultural employment in the European Union has grown steadily over the past several years, rebounding strongly after the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, the sector employed over seven million people; after a temporary decline in 2020, employment rose to 7.4 million in 2021, 7.7 million in 2022, and reached 7.9 million in 2024. This growth has kept cultural employment at roughly 3.7–3.8% of the EU's total workforce.

According to the statistics by Eurostat, there are positive and encouraging facts to be noted: the gender distribution in the sector is at its most balanced point on record, with only a small difference between the number of men and women employed. On the downside, long-standing structural vulnerabilities persist. Much of the sector's workforce remains self-employed or employed in small organisations, which increases exposure to precarious work, unstable contracts, and limited access to social protections. Recovery and growth are also uneven across EU member states, with some countries recording rapid expansion and others lagging behind.

In 2024, [cultural employment increased in 15 EU countries] compared with 2023. Romania (10.4%), France (9.4%) and Hungary (9.0%) recorded the highest increases, while Sweden (-7.7%) and Finland (-7.1%) saw the most significant decreases. Czechia was the only country where cultural employment remained unchanged over the period (CLICK IMAGE TO ENLARGE).



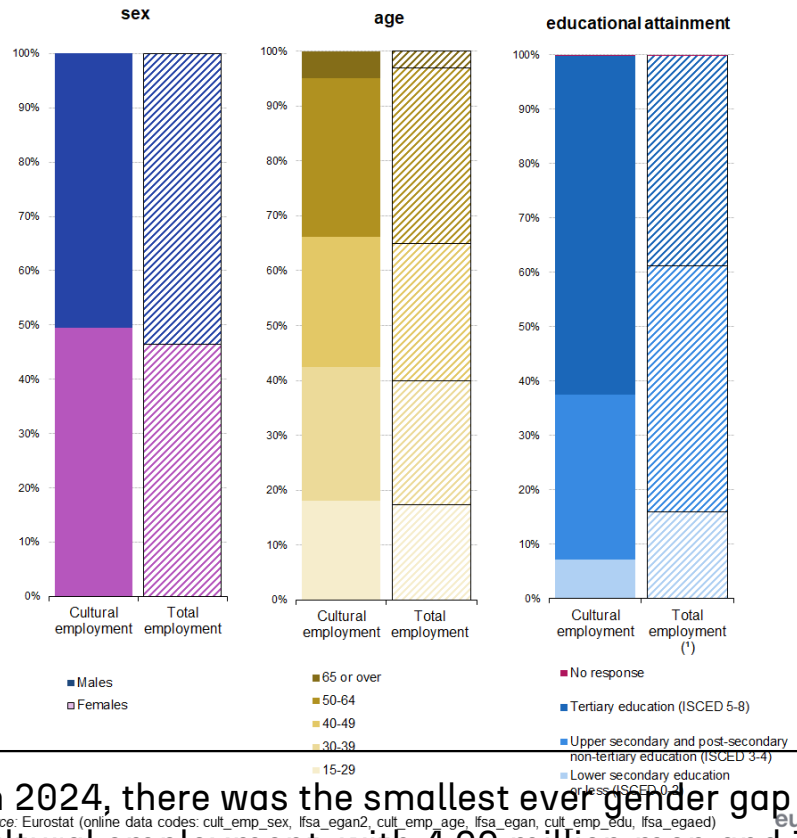
In 2024, there were 7.9 million people in cultural employment across the EU, 3.8% of the total employment

At EU level, in 2024, cultural employment showed an annual increase of 1.9%. However, trends varied significantly across countries. In 6 EU countries, growth was recorded consecutively in 2022, 2023, and 2024. In 5 others, a decline in 2024 followed two consecutive years of growth. In 4 countries, cultural employment rose between 2021 and 2022 but declined in 2023 and 2024. In Slovenia, after 2 years of decline, cultural employment rose in 2024. By contrast, Belgium recorded a continuous decrease throughout the period from 2022 to 2024.

Cultural employment by sex, age and educational attainment

In 2024, the sociodemographic profile of cultural employment in the EU was slightly different from that of total employment, in particular concerning sex and age. However, the differences were more significant when these groups were broken down by educational attainment level. (CLICK IMAGE TO ENLARGE)

Cultural and total employment by sex, age and educational attainment, EU, 2024



Source: Eurostat (online data codes: cult_emp_sex, lfsa_egan2, cult_emp_age, lfsa_egan, cult_emp_edu, lfsa_egaed)

In 2024, there was the smallest ever gender gap in cultural employment, with 4.00 million men and 3.93 million women employed in the sector.

Women's share in cultural employment was higher than the share of women in total employment (with a share of 49.6% versus 46.4%). When broken down by age, cultural employment showed higher percentages of people aged 30–39 years (24.5% in cultural employment versus 22.6% in total employment), those aged 65 years and over (4.9% versus 3.1% in total employment), and those aged 15–29 years (18.0% versus 17.3%). Conversely, there were fewer people in cultural employment compared to total employment in the age groups

50–64 years old (28.9% versus 32.0%) and 40–49 years old (23.7% versus 25.0%).

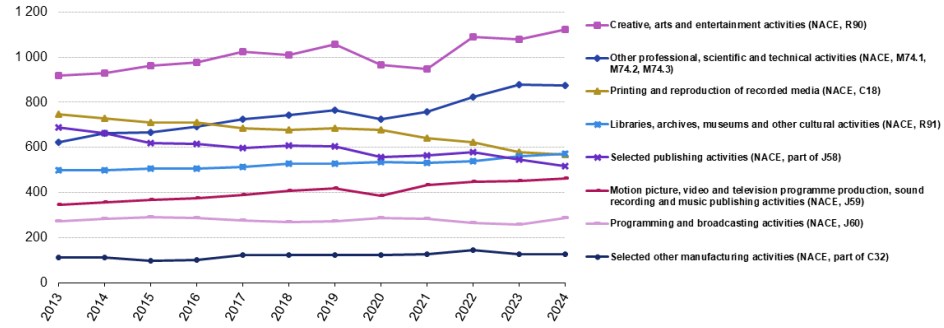
Compared with sex and age, the educational attainment structure shows the most pronounced difference between cultural and total employment. According to 2024 data, the sociodemographic profile of cultural employment was characterised by a generally higher level of educational attainment, with 62.3% of cultural workers having tertiary education, 30.4% having upper secondary education and 7.1% of them having the lowest levels of educational attainment. In total employment, these figures accounted for 38.6%, 45.2% and 16.0%, respectively.

While the share of men and women in cultural employment at the EU level in 2024 was almost equal, the picture varied somewhat across EU countries. In 16 EU countries, there were more women than men in cultural employment, with the highest national share observed in Latvia at 66.5%, followed by Estonia at 62.1% and Cyprus at 60.5%. Countries with the lowest percentage of women in cultural employment were Spain (44.3%) and Italy (45.1%).

Employment status across the EU for Cultural professionals

Besides the high share of tertiary-educated workers, cultural employment is also characterised by a relatively high proportion of self-employed persons. This reflects the independent and specialised nature of many occupations in the cultural sector – for example, authors, performing artists, musicians, painters, sculptors, or craftspeople. (CLICK IMAGE TO ENLARGE)

Evolution of cultural employment by selected NACE Rev. 2 activities, EU, 2013-2024
(thousands)



Note: break in time series for all countries in 2021 due to the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 (see LFS metadata).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: cult_emp_n2)

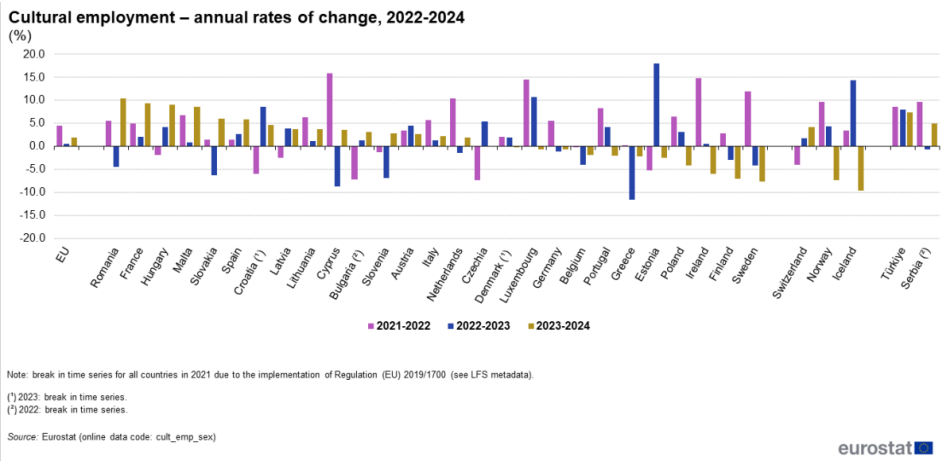
eurostat

In 2024, cultural employment in the EU grew by 1.9% compared to the previous year.

In 2024, almost one-third (31.7%) of cultural workers across the EU were self-employed (compared to an average of 13.6% in the whole economy). Self-employment accounted for nearly half of all cultural employment in Italy (47.1%) and the Netherlands (46.0%). The other countries with rates of cultural self-employment higher than the EU average were Greece, Czechia, Ireland, Austria, Cyprus, and Slovenia. By contrast, less than 20% of those in cultural employment were self-employed in Luxembourg and Romania. The level of self-employment in the field of culture was higher than the level of self-employment in the national economy in all 27 EU countries.

In 2024, more than three quarters (75.5%) of cultural workers in the EU were employed on a full-time basis, (6 pp less than in the entire economy). This pattern occurred in almost all EU countries, except for the Netherlands and Romania. The smaller proportion of people working full-time in culture-related professions could be explained, at least partly, by a number of cultural jobs being characterised by self-employment/freelancing and job flexibility. Full-time employment in the cultural field varies significantly across countries, ranging from 60.0% in the Netherlands to 95.4% in Croatia and 97.3% in Romania. These differences primarily reflect variations in national labour markets, such as the prevalence of part-time work, rather than unique features

specific to cultural employment. (CLICK IMAGE TO ENLARGE)



Less pronounced differences between total and cultural employment concerned job permanency and single-job holding. In 2024, permanency of job was 5 pp lower for cultural employment (81.9%) than for total employment (87.1%). The lowest rates of permanent employment in cultural sectors were observed in the Netherlands (68.9%) and France (71.2%), while the highest rates were seen in Romania (99.4%), Lithuania (98.5%), Latvia (97.8%), Bulgaria (96.5%) and Hungary (95.1%).

Holding one job was slightly less common in cultural employment than in total employment in almost all EU countries. The only exceptions were Romania and Malta, where the shares of single-job holders in cultural employment (99.9% and 95.3%, respectively) slightly exceeded those in total employment (99.4% and 95.1%).

Writers and Artists

In 2024, the EU had almost 1.79 million artists and writers,

constituting 22.6% of all cultural employment. Among them, around 45.1% were self-employed, a significantly higher proportion compared to both total employment (13.6%) and the cultural employment of the EU (31.7%). In Germany, the share of self-employed artists and writers was 5.5 times higher than the share of self-employed persons in the total national economy. In 2024, the full-time employment rate among artists and writers in the EU was 71.4%, slightly lower than the rates observed for cultural employment (75.5%) and the total economy (81.2%). A sign of the precarious nature of employment faced by artists and writers can be seen in the duration of their work contracts. In 2024, 87.1% of all employees in the EU had a permanent employment contract, while among artists and writers, a permanent contract was held by less than three-quarters (71.9%) of employees. Besides their main job, some artists, and writers have a second job. Across the EU, most people (96.0%) in overall employment held a single job in 2024. Artists and writers were less likely (90.0%) to have just one job, and this pattern occurred in all EU countries except Malta (low reliability) and Romania.