



Skills Foresight: The Creative Economy and Untapped Potential of Cultural Cooperation for Africa-Europe Youth

A research project by the South African Cultural Observatory and culture Solutions funded by the Africa-Europe Foundation as part of its Research Agenda.
November 2024-June 2025.

Scope

and rationale

Our research project focuses on assessing the **state of cultural cooperation between the EU and Africa** (looking at the AU-EU partnership, regional and national projects) and its implications and **adequacy for creative youth** in the cultural and creative sectors, in a pressing context of **digital transformation**. In both unions, there is a powerful impetus to transform economic and job models, upskill and reskill, share policy and regulation insights and approaches, and build future preparedness and resilience. This is a moment where intellectual property, copyrightable material, arts, culture, heritage, the media and the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) face a wave of disruptions that will reshape jobs, lives, creative production, cultural practices and societies.

Our project covers the CCIs as defined by UNESCO, the EU and UNCTAD. UNESCO defines them as: “activities, goods and services which (...) embody or convey cultural expressions, irrespective of the commercial value they may have”; and the **UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics** (FCS) (2009), on which most SACO research work is based, defines culture through the identification and measurement of the behaviours and practices resulting from the beliefs and values of a society or a social group. The Cultural Domains defined in UNESCO FCS (2009: 11) embody a “common set of economic (such as the production of goods and services) and social (such as participation in culture activities) activities that traditionally have been regarded as being ‘cultural’. Related Domains consist of other economic and social activities that may be considered ‘partially cultural or that are more often regarded as being ‘recreational or leisure’ rather than ‘purely cultural’.” The domains include core creative fields and industries associated with them including cultural and natural heritage; performance and celebration; visual arts and crafts; books and press; audio-visual and interactive media; and design and creative services. The project reflects on a shared effort by the EU and AU to support **innovative media content** (part of the AU 2063 Agenda) and an **open, plural and inclusive media system** between Europe and Africa. As noted by the UNCTAD, creative economy is a notion that evolves and our project will make sure to grasp this transformation and the potential implied, especially given the pace of digital transformation underway across governments and sectors.

As organisations committed to encouraging cooperation between Africa and Europe and promoters of culture in international relations and for youth opportunities and economic development, our project addresses the important research question: **How can cultural cooperation nurture skills development among creative youth in the AU and EU?** Our research will answer this question through two reports, relying on qualitative and quantitative methods (interviews and survey) as well as innovative method of foresight:

Deliverable #1: Policy analysis report. An EU-AU cultural cooperation fit for the future.
Lead: culture Solutions.

Deliverable #2. Skills’ Foresight report.
Lead: South African Cultural Observatory.

Deliverable #1: Policy analysis report.

Lead: culture Solutions.

The aim of this report is to take stock of the Sub-Saharan Africa-EU cultural cooperation at a pivotal moment in the relationship, when cultural perceptions and memory policies seem to be determining diplomatic relations more than ever. This report is intended to be a source of **information** and **inspiration** for EU and AU policy-makers ahead of the **7th EU-AU summit** that will take place in the second half of 2025 and to inform European and African policy makers and cultural professionals more broadly. It provides precise information on how support and cooperation with the cultural and creative sector is perceived and received by culture professionals, academics and experts who have been following the development of cultural policies and cultural and creative industries in Africa for a long time. It places these observations in a broader contextualisation of **geopolitical and technological changes** happening on both continents and globally and of pressing attention on youth's needs and expectations that will be determining in both European and African future realities. This report takes stock of the last EU funding programmes targeting the cultural and creative sector (such as ACP-EU Culture 2019-2025, EUNIC Cluster Fund and Spaces of Culture, the Cultural Relations Platform) and those relevant to CCIs, and presents the follow-ups to these programmes and identifies new approaches to finance and new angles through which CCIs can be supported while aligning with EU's Global Gateway priorities. The questions guiding this report are: What are the new trends impacting creative economy and cultural cooperation? What are the policy framework and ecosystem in place in Africa and the EU for cultural cooperation? How are AU and EU cultural actions perceived? How is cultural cooperation evolving? How can we ensure that creative economy and cultural cooperation's potential are linked to new priorities and methods?

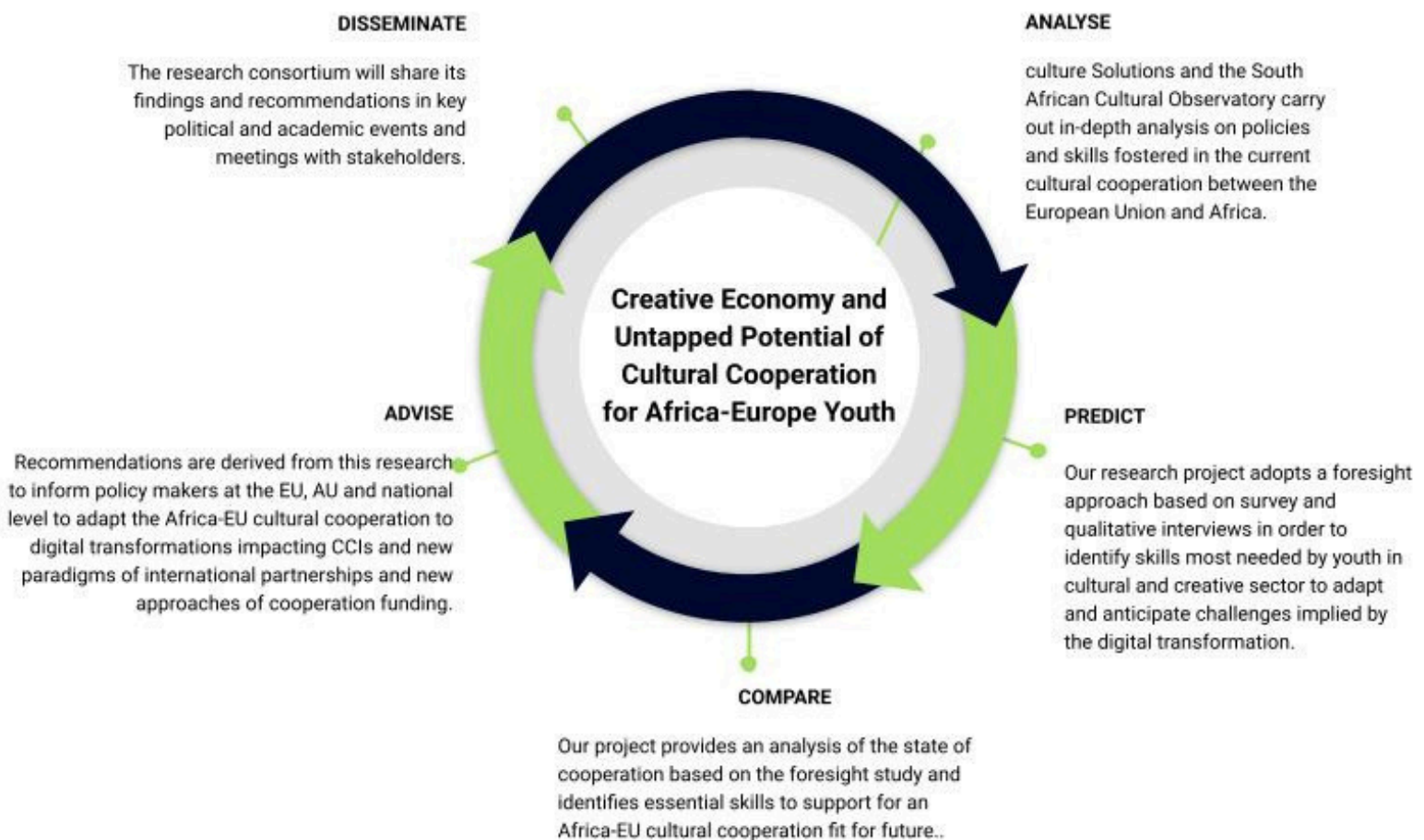
Deliverable #2. Skills' Foresight report.

Lead: South African Cultural Observatory.

Through a streamlined foresight analysis, our second report interprets the results of a comprehensive national skills **survey of creative young people in South Africa** who have benefited from cultural cooperation, as a country case study. These insights are augmented by other data from a concurrently run AEF youth survey supporting the inclusion of views beyond South Africa, and from other AU and EU nations, organisations and creative practitioners. The South African survey gathers data on current skills, anticipated **future needs**, and the **skills gap** within the creative sector, indicating where cultural cooperation supports skills development. Similar questions are replicated in the AEF survey for a cross-cultural and country view. In South Africa, in-depth interviews and case studies will be conducted and produced on a smaller scale, prioritising key stakeholders and successful projects. The analysis will focus on the impact of digital transformation and technological advancements on the creative sector, and the emerging skills gap and needs.

Our research project fits into the priority theme of **Education, Science and Culture** identified by the Africa-Europe Foundation, and addresses more specifically:

- Cultural cooperation,
- Education and skills development,
- Investment in youth voice, agency and leadership, and
- Digital transformations and artificial intelligence.



Additional deliverables:

Our research provides a comprehensive theoretical and political framework for cultural cooperation, offering an in-depth **literature review** on Africa-EU cultural collaboration during an era of technological, economic, and geopolitical transformation. Additionally, we present a series of **infographics** that highlight key stakeholders and chronicle the evolution of the relationship.