



Rethinking Africa-Europe
cultural relations:
Toward an AU-EU cultural
cooperation fit for the future

Report
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Photo: Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town

culture
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Disclaimer

This report reflects the views of the authors based on the findings of a research initiative under the AEF Research Facility and drawing on their prior research and experience in their areas of expertise. While the research and analysis are produced in a dynamic and collaborative process with various partners, the perspectives expressed do not reflect the official views of culture Solutions, the South African Cultural Observatory nor of the Africa-Europe Foundation or its affiliated organisations.

ABOUT CULTURE SOLUTIONS

culture Solutions is a French association created in 2018, informing on the place and role of culture in the European Union's external relations and on international cultural relations. The association contributes to building trust-based partnerships between Europe and external partners.

ABOUT THE SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURAL OBSERVATORY

The SACO is the statistical service of the South African government for the cultural and sport economy and the national research centre dedicated to the development of a comprehensive cultural information system for South Africa. It was conceived in 2013 and formally established in 2015 to develop a more sophisticated understanding of South Africa's cultural and creative economy, and sports as of 2019.

ABOUT THE AFRICA-EUROPE FOUNDATION

The Africa-Europe Foundation was established in December 2020 to promote and strengthen relations between our two neighbouring continents through the building of a genuine partnership with shared visions for a shared future. A key pillar of the Foundation's work is strategic analysis and foresight.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH INITIATIVE

This action-orientated report has been developed under the AEF's multiannual strategic research programme implemented in partnership with leading think tanks and research institutes based on a unique "1+1" model pairing African and European research partners. The approach has been framed within the context of our shared Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063. Thus, the focus of the initiative is on areas where cooperation could most benefit from a future-oriented partnership to meet shared goals.

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Introduction: Africa-Europe cultural relations in a changing world

With a long and complex history, and a web of institutional, political, civil society, and artistic and cultural community links, culture and the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) lie at the heart of the Africa-Europe partnership. In preparation for the 7th African Union (AU)–European Union (EU) Summit in November 2025, this report considers the past and current dynamics of cultural relations between Africa and Europe and the policy frameworks interacting with and shaping it. It aims to support the AU and EU in adapting their cultural cooperation strategies to emerging contexts and challenges and to enhance the framework for international cultural relations.

Scope of the report

The report looks at AU-EU cultural cooperation, understood as AU, EU or AU-EU policies, funds, programmes and projects supporting cultural relations between the two continents. The report acknowledges member states' important cultural cooperation policies and fundings but does not analyse them unless they are part of a joint AU, EU, AU-EU project. The report is based on a policy framework timeline that traces back to the fourth version of the ACP-EEC Lomé Convention (1989), which contains the first reference to culture within the partnership. The timelines designed for this report ([annexes 1 & 2](#)) help replace cultural cooperation in a broader context of African culture and media strategies, EU's ICR and Africa-EU partnership.

AU-EU cultural cooperation should encompass EU funding and programming for both Sub-Saharan Africa and Northern Africa. To date, EU cultural programming with Africa has mostly treated these two regions separately. Projects involving Sub-Saharan African partners have primarily been conducted under:

- the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP)–EU Culture Programme, which covers Sub-Saharan Africa by region (Central, West, East and Southern Africa) and is set to run until 2026¹, and
- the geographic programming for Sub-Saharan Africa under the "Neighbourhood and the World" heading of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2021–2027.

Recently launched initiatives such as Procultura II PALOP-TL in Portuguese-speaking African countries and Creatifi foster connections between Africa, the Caribbean, and Pacific regions, with Creatifi also including projects in North Africa. North African countries are otherwise covered in EU's funding by the Neighbourhood and Mediterranean funding instruments and, in Tunisia's case, also benefit from the Creative Europe programme. Over the years, the EU has implemented innovative and impactful programmes with North African partners—for example, *Tfanen*, a EUNIC

¹ ACP-UE Culture website, <https://www.acp-ue-culture.eu/> (last accessed 26 May 2025).

project, funded by the EU Delegation to Tunisia and implemented by the British Council, which was carried out from 2016 to 2022.²

This report recommends strengthening this inclusive approach that connects Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa, ensuring closer alignment with the African Union's political and geographic framework. A positive example of such continental integration in practice is the inclusion of Sub-Saharan African universities in the Union for the Mediterranean Universities (UNIMED) network, supported by EU funding.³

For the purposes of this research, the report examines EU-funded projects and initiatives focused on Africa—primarily in Sub-Saharan Africa—that were launched or implemented between 2019 and the present. It also considers African projects supported by the EU National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) (2019–2025) and the Cultural Relations Platform (CRP) (2020–2026). It is worth noting that the new edition of the EU National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) Spaces of Culture initiative also focuses exclusively on Sub-Saharan Africa, whereas previous editions had a global scope. CRP also has a global scope, and the Platform is set to be renewed from 2026. Despite the targeted focus of the projects and funding, the conceptual and policy frameworks apply to the African continent, and the recommendations remain relevant to the AU. **Future research could assess how EU and AU programming might support better integration between the cultural sectors of North and Sub-Saharan Africa.**

Goal and target audience of the report

In both unions, there is a powerful impetus to transform economic and employment models, upskill and reskill, improve the pace of updating policy and regulation through shared insights and approaches, and build future preparedness and resilience. Across sectors, this is a moment where intellectual property (IP), copyrightable material, arts, culture, heritage, the media and the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), which include software and R&D,⁴ face a wave of disruptions that will reshape jobs, lives, creative production, cultural practices and societies.⁵

The report is intended to inform and inspire primarily EU and AU institutions and national policy in the aftermath of the 7th AU-EU summit. But it also serves to inform a wider audience of experts and cultural actors who shape and contribute daily to Africa-Europe cultural relations. 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 the CCIs in Africa. It raises questions on the adequacy, impact and implications of that cooperation for creative youth in a pressing context of digital transformation, geopolitical uncertainty, cultural tensions and environmental crisis.

²<https://www.culturesolutions.eu/articles/nouveaux-modeles-europeens-de-la-culture-tfanen-tunisie-creative/> ; <https://www.eunicglobal.eu/projects/tfanen-tunisie-creative>

³<https://www.culturesolutions.eu/articles/sustainable-digital-creative-ecosystems-in-africa-europe-relations/>

⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *The 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics*, 2009.

⁵ Based on UNCTAD 2024 data (Creative Economy Outlook 2024), by product group, the most exported creative services in 2022 were software services (41.3%) and research and development (30.7%), followed by advertising, market research, and architecture (15.5%), audiovisual services (7.9%), information services (4%), and cultural, recreational, and heritage services (0.6%). In 2023, streaming services expanded their share by 10.4%, now accounting for more than two thirds (67.3%) of global music market revenues. Source: UNCTAD, *How Digitalization Is Transforming the Creative Economy*, July 11, 2024, <https://unctad.org/news/how-digitalization-transforming-creative-economy>.

The recommendations presented in this report aim to shape the future of cultural relations within the Africa-Europe partnership, guide how culture should be highlighted in the AU-EU partnership and suggest ways for the AU and EU institutions to strengthen their engagement in this vital sector across political, economic, and social dimensions. These recommendations focus on three main areas: political/institutional, economic, and the values and methods underpinning cultural relations.

Conceptual background

The report is supported by a conceptual framework ([annex 6](#)). While the EU provides significant funding for African-European cultural and artistic projects, cultural cooperation is not a one-way donor-recipient relationship. The report highlights the positive outcomes as well as greater economic integration that have emerged from trust-based partnerships, resulting in mutual benefits for culture as a shared global good. The EU's contributions are presented alongside those of African institutions, with public investment from Africa steadily increasing. Political recognition, backed by adequate funding from African governments and institutions, is essential to pave the way toward fair and balanced cultural relations. **Future research could explore the path to achieving fairness and a clear vision by examining the impact of African CCIs on the European cultural sector and CCIs, focusing on their economic, social, and cultural contributions.**

The report introduces new approaches to financing the cultural cooperation and new angles through which CCIs can be supported while aligning with the EU's Global Gateway priorities. Alongside this report, the South African Cultural Observatory produced as part of this research project a study⁶ based on foresight methodology, exploring the skills that need to be supported among creatives to drive job creation and youth employment, particularly in light of the ongoing transformations and renewal of cultural cooperation presented here. The report considers future scenarios for CCIs shaped by technological developments.

⁶ Gaylard, J., Joffe, Mtotywa, M., A., Pearse, N., Shelver, A., Vitshima, S. 2025. Creative Futures: Leveraging Cultural Cooperation for Youth Development in Africa and Europe, South African Cultural Observatory for the Africa-Europe Foundation (to be released).

1- Culture at the heart of the Africa-Europe partnership

In this part:

- **A long history shaping cultural relations**
- **The weight of memory in Africa-Europe cultural relations**
- **Rapid geopolitical changes affecting intra and intercontinental cultural relations**
- **Rethinking the narrative around cultural relations**
- **Recognising culture's multiple values**
- **Conclusion: A decisive moment for international cultural relations**

Approaching cultural relations from an historical perspective helps us capture the global dynamics in which culture evolves, and that culture has always been shaped by exchanges. Although this rich and longstanding history exists, it is rarely acknowledged by today's creatives and cultural professionals. Highlighting this historical resource can inspire and enrich current collaborative efforts, particularly through shared historical research and renewed cultural engagement. Reminding history is also necessary in achieving justice, recognising important griefs from history. Alpers used the concept of work-value when he described the exploitation of Africa in the modern period: "What the Africans received in exchange for slaves in no way equalled the labour power lost to each society.... [In exchange for slaves, ivory, and gold], the Africans received [only] inexpensive consumable goods."⁷ That notion of value is still valid today when looking at who defines value, the direction of cultural product, from exporting to importing places, but also access to mobility.

A long history shaping cultural relations

The topic of cultural relations between Africa and Europe is paved by a long history. Cultural exchanges between Europe and Africa extend far beyond the New Imperialism age marked by the large-scale process of colonisation of European powers over Africa, following the 1884-1885 Berlin conference that announced invasion and violent conquest over the continent, with France, Britain, Italy, Germany and Portugal launching deadly wars against empires, kingdoms and populations to establish their rules.⁸ Both before and after the Age of Exploration (Portuguese navigators reached the coast of present-day Senegal by the 1440s and the Cape of Good Hope by

⁷ Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, 266. Alpers's text seems to mix here two different ideas: (1) the low price of these products in the cores would be linked to the low amount of work invested to produce them; (2) the price would result from gains in productivity.

⁸ France waged a series of military campaigns in West Africa and Madagascar to subjugate local kingdoms and consolidate colonial control. Britain fought to suppress resistance in Sudan, the Ashanti Empire, and Zululand. Italy attempted to conquer Ethiopia—suffering a major defeat at Adwa in 1896—and later invaded Libya. Portugal expanded its colonial rule through violent campaigns in Angola and Mozambique. Germany invaded what is now Tanzania and Namibia, where it led one of the most brutal colonial genocides. Between 1904 and 1908, during the suppression of uprisings by the Herero and Nama peoples in present-day Namibia, German forces of the Second Reich exterminated approximately 80% of the Herero population and 50% of the Nama—an estimated 65,000 Herero and 10,000 Nama, considered as the first genocide of the twentieth century. Le génocide des Herero et Nama, Mémorial de la Shoah, <https://www.memorialdelashoah.org/archives-et-documentation/genocides-xx-siecle/genocide-herero-nama.html> (last accessed 21 May 2025).

1490⁹) that extended from the latter half of the fifteenth through the sixteenth century, African societies traded and shared goods, ideas and religious beliefs with Europe and Asia through established networks. Art historians have underlined the centrality of diverse "contacts" (tourism, colonialism, religious pilgrimage, trade missions, and scientific voyages...) in shaping European cultural productions.¹⁰

Historians have referred to "world-systems" as zones of intense exchanges, synchronising with political, social, and ideological evolutions, as well as climatic changes.¹¹ It implicates the presence of dominant cores, semi peripheries and dominated societies according to their positioning and influence on the trade routes established. The Indian Ocean played an essential part in the emergence of an Afro-Eurasian world system.¹² For instance, the flourishing of the Swahili from the eight century was the result of a synergy between increase of exchange in the Indian Ocean and internal development. The latter was based not only on commerce and craft industries but also on an intensification of agriculture. Written by an anonymous Greek from Alexandria in the first century, the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* stresses the exports of cotton textiles and (Chinese) silk from various Indian ports, and of gold embroidered textiles from western Asia to India.¹³ In medieval times and at its trade's peak, two-thirds of the gold moving around the medieval Mediterranean came from West Africa.¹⁴ The spread of new economic, political, and religious practices resulted in the formation of new forms of social organisation. Islam was for instance widely adopted on the coast between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries, where it played an integrative role. Religion adoption or imposition on the African continent has greatly shaped cultures and marked peoples and countries' relations.

The Columbian Exchange that refers to the "exchange of diseases, ideas, food crops, and populations"¹⁵ between the New World and the Old World following the voyage to the Americas by Christopher Columbus in 1492, marked a global turning point in food and agriculture. African crops such as yams, sorghum, coffee, and okra were introduced to the Americas, while American crops like maize, potatoes, cassava, tomatoes, and peanuts transformed diets across Europe, Africa, and Asia. For example, potatoes and maize contributed significantly to population growth and improved nutrition in Europe, Africa, and China. Cassava, in particular, became a staple food in West Africa due to its adaptability to tropical climates. Coffee—originally native to Ethiopia—eventually spread to the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas, becoming a globally consumed beverage. Today, Turkish coffee is recognised by UNESCO as part of its Intangible Cultural

⁹ Head, D. (Ed.). (2017). *Encyclopedia of the Atlantic World, 1400–1900: Europe, Africa, and the Americas in an Age of Exploration, Trade, and Empires* [2 volumes]. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

¹⁰ Sheriff, M. D. (Ed.). (2010). *Cultural contact and the making of European art since the age of exploration*. Univ of North Carolina Press.

¹¹ Beaujard, P. (2013). *Ancient World-Systems And processes Of domination, Coevolution, And resistance: The Example of the East African Coast Before The seventeenth century*. *Actuel Marx*, No 53(1), 40-62, 2013.

¹² Beaujard, P. (2005), "The Indian Ocean in Eurasian and African World-Systems Before the Sixteenth Century," *Journal of World History* 16, no. 4 (2005): 411-465; Beaujard P. (2012), *Les Mondes de l'océan Indien*, 2 vols, Paris: Armand Colin, 2012.

¹³ Casson, L. (1989), *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (Princeton, CA: Princeton University Press, 1989).

¹⁴ Camel caravans, controlled by Sanhaja Berbers and Tuareg nomads, traversed the Sahara Desert to transport gold from West Africa to the urban centers of North Africa, Cartwright, M., *The Gold Trade of Ancient & Medieval West Africa*, 13 May 2019, World History Encyclopedia, <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1383/the-gold-trade-of-ancient--medieval-west-africa/>

¹⁵ Nunn, N., & Qian, N. (2010). The Columbian exchange: A history of disease, food, and ideas. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 24(2), 163.

Heritage, while Ethiopia is preparing a nomination to inscribe its Traditional Coffee Ceremony on the same list.¹⁶

The weight of memory in Africa-Europe cultural relations

"Each of us needs the memory of the other, not out of a virtue of compassion or charity, but as part of a new lucidity in the process of Relation. And if we wish to share the beauty of the world, if we want to stand in solidarity with its sufferings, we must learn to remember together." Édouard Glissant (2006)¹⁷

The relationship between Africa and Europe is profoundly shaped by a harsh and long past that bears the legacy of colonialism. Power imbalances continue to shape and constrain cultural relations, preventing deeper and equitable collaboration. The active involvement of cultural actors is essential to rebuilding and rebalancing these relationships. The conceptual framework for this research also questions the right term to use when referring to culture in Africa-Europe relations. Cooperation can be seen as unmatching the reality of that has long been the one of a donor-recipient relation. That is why the framework of [international cultural relations](#) and its decolonial dimension is put forward. With it, we can better capture the depth and complexity of the phenomenon under study and the great diversity of African and European cultures and cultural ecosystems. This report is rooted in local contexts and observations.

The opening of dialogue on the [restitution](#) of artefacts acquired during the colonial era has become a powerful symbol of the struggle to reclaim historical ownership, driven by African governments and supported by civil society. Culture has also served as a key driver of wider dialogue between Africans and Europeans, fostering a shared reflection on the past within a relationship tentatively built on trust.¹⁸ Trust does not imply agreement or alignment but rather the ability to engage in open and meaningful dialogue. This is what both the EU and the AU (and their respective member states) should continue to promote, prioritising alliances over purely interest-driven relations. This emphasis on cultural ties is what makes the ancient and multi-dimensional relationship between African and European countries—and their civil societies—unique, strengthening the deep and rich connections between them.

Reconciliation over and dialogue on colonial (and older) history remains particularly difficult between former colonised nations and their former colonisers. Long and complex processes of

¹⁶UNESCO, Brewing Heritage: Ethiopia Advances File Preparation for Traditional Coffee Ceremony to UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, 25 February 2025, <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/brewing-heritage-ethiopia-advances-file-preparation-traditional-coffee-ceremony-unesco-intangible>

¹⁷ Édouard Glissant, *Une nouvelle région du monde*, Gallimard (2006).

¹⁸ An example of this type of approach is found in the initiative "#cocreateIDENTITY" conducted in 2022 by South African partners, the Dutch Embassy and Consulate General in Cape Town, "to open meaningful dialogues around questions of identity and transformation in the context of our countries' shared cultural heritage, including Dutch historic ties through trade and slavery." Read more: #cocreateIDENTITY experience: Provoking your identity, Mail & Guardian, 28 May 2022, <https://mg.co.za/special-reports/2022-05-28-cocreateidentity-experience-provoking-your-identity/>

historical reckoning have taken place, some without reaching a shared understanding of the past, with a revival of colonial grief and unreconciled memories.¹⁹

Some key examples of recent memorial works can be acknowledged. Sixty years after independence, Belgium undertook a formal examination of its colonial legacy by appointing a special parliamentary commission to investigate its historical ties with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Burundi. The commission explored the roles played by the monarchy, the Church, the government, and private companies, while also addressing broader issues such as the restitution of looted art, the presence of colonial memory in public spaces, scientific cooperation, and the treatment of colonial history in education. From 2021 to 2022, 19 members of the Parliament from across the political spectrum analysed historical archives and heard testimony from witnesses, victims, and experts to determine what crimes were committed in the Belgian colonies between 1885 and the countries' independence.²⁰ In June 2022, King Philippe of Belgium visited the DRC for the first time, seeking to strengthen relations with a nation once exploited by his ancestors.²¹ However, the visit fell short of expectations: the King did not offer a formal apology for Belgium's colonial atrocities, despite having expressed "deep regrets" two years earlier—an omission that caused disappointment.²²

In 2022, the Presidents of France and Cameroon announced the creation of a joint commission²³ composed of two sections: one focused on research, and the other on artistic and heritage aspects. The commission was tasked with examining France's role in opposing the independence movements in Cameroon from 1945 to 1971. This commission was innovative in that it brought together a mixed team of researchers, equally made up of French and Cameroonian historians, and recognised the importance of oral archives in historical research.

Parallel memory processes have emerged, looking at other forms of European interventionism on the African continent. This is the case of two reports addressing France's role in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda: President Macron appointed a commission of historians, while the Rwandan government commissioned a law firm to conduct an investigation. These initiatives allowed both countries to reach shared (although not identical) conclusions on France's level of responsibility and to advance their mutual understanding of the past.²⁴ Since

¹⁹ The withdrawal of French troops from all their military bases in Africa but Djibouti with Sahel's heads of State relying on an anti-colonial discourse to back their decision is a recent example. This does not mean that the military cooperation will end entirely. In: Wilén, Nina. A Break with the Past: The End of French Military Presence in Chad and Senegal. Egmont Policy Brief 368, December 2024 ; Renoult, J., Ces cinq dossiers mémoriels qui perdurent entre la France et l'Afrique, *Le Monde*, 2 August 2024, https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2024/08/02/ces-cinq-dossiers-memoriels-qui-perdurent-entre-la-france-et-l-afrique_6265256_3212.html.

²⁰ Blanchard, S. interviewing Valérie Rosoux, La Belgique panse son passé colonial, *Deutsche Welle* 31 December 2022, <https://www.dw.com/fr/belgique-pass%C3%A9-colonial-commission/audio-64196444>

²¹ Lungumbu, S., Visite du roi belge en RD Congo : les excuses et accords jugés insuffisants, *BBC World Service*, 7 June 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/region-61721980>

²² Walkowiak, P., Congo : des excuses, après les regrets ?; *RTBF*, 7 June 2022, <https://www.rtf.be/article/congo-des-excuses-apres-les-regrets-11008001>

²³ Report published by the Commission: Ramondy, K. (dir.), 2025, *La France au Cameroun 1945-1971*, Paris: Editions Herman.

²⁴ The Commission Duclert's report concluded to "overwhelming" responsibilities and "political insofar as the French authority demonstrated a continual blindness in their support for a racist, corrupt and violent regime, conceived originally as a model for a new French policy in Africa as introduced in the speech at La Baule." Duclert, V. *Rapport de la Commission de recherche sur les archives françaises relatives au Rwanda et au génocide des Tutsi (1990-1994)* remis au Président de la République le 26 mars 2021 à Paris, Armand Collin, Paris, p.987, 2021 while the Muse report concluded "that the French government bears significant responsibility for enabling a foreseeable genocide" Levy Firestone Muse, *A Foreseeable Genocide, The Role of the French Government in Connection with the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda*, 19 April 2021.

then, relations between France and Rwanda improved, with the re-opening of the Institut français du Rwanda²⁵, the nomination of a new French Ambassador²⁶ and a presidential visit.²⁷

These two cases, among others, highlight the determining role of memory processes, co-owned by both parties, in shaping diplomatic and trade relations. In an exhibition happening this year in 2025, the Musée du Quai Branly invited African and European researchers to look into the conditions of acquisition of 3200 artefacts that the museum now hosts, and that were taken during the "Dakar-Djibouti Mission", a French scientific expedition from 1931 to 1933.²⁸ The exhibition "retraces the conditions under which these heritages were acquired and collected, in order to shed light on the colonial context and the stories of men and women who have remained anonymous until now."²⁹ Such practices open ways for Africans and Europeans to research the past together, in an approach of historical truth.

Rapid geopolitical changes affecting intra and intercontinental cultural relations

Recent developments have highlighted Africa's growing importance in the global order, with South Africa serving as the continent's representative in the G20. In addition, the AU became a permanent member of the G20 in 2023. At the 2024 G20 summit, the AU was represented by the Chairperson of the AU Assembly, supported by the Chairperson of the AU Commission, in accordance with a decision made at the 37th AU Summit held in Addis Ababa in February 2024.³⁰ In February 2025, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced an invitation for President Zelensky to make a state visit,³¹ emphasising the need for an inclusive peace process—one that ensures Ukraine is not excluded from discussions between the US and Russia. On March 13th, the 8th EU-South Africa Summit focused on strengthening EU-South Africa economic relations, energy transition, security and defence, sustainable value chains, and multilateral cooperation.³²

The US' stance, both diplomatically and financially, raises serious concerns. President Trump's disgraceful treatment of President Ramaphosa³³—reminiscent of the media trap he set for

²⁵ Lemut, O., France / Rwanda : la culture au service de la réconciliation, *Le Journal des Arts*, 27 July 2021, <https://www.lejournaldesarts.fr/actualites/france-rwanda-la-culture-au-service-de-la-reconciliation-155191>

²⁶ Le Troquier, P., Normalisation. Le lanceur d'alerte Antoine Anfré devient ambassadeur au Rwanda, *Courrier International*, 15 June 2021, <https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/normalisation-le-lanceur-dalerte-antoine-anfre-devient-ambassadeur-au-rwanda>

²⁷ Bertrand, N., Rwanda : visite symbolique d'Emmanuel Macron après plus de 25 ans de tensions diplomatiques, *France Info*, 27 May 2021, https://www.franceinfo.fr/monde/afrique/rwanda/genocide-au-rwanda/rwanda-visite-symbolique-demmanuel-macron-apres-plus-de-25-ans-de-tensions-diplomatiques_4639563.html

²⁸ Azimi, R. Le Quai Branly expose sa contre-enquête sur la mission Dakar-Djibouti et sa razzia d'objets menée sous couvert scientifique, *Le Monde*, 14 April 2025, https://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2025/04/14/le-quai-branly-expose-sa-contre-enquete-sur-la-mission-dakar-djibouti-et-sa-razzia-d-objets-menee-sous-couvert-scientifique_6595907_3246.html.

²⁹ Musée du Quai Branly Jacques Chirac, Mission Dakar-Djibouti [1931-1933] : Contre-enquêtes, 15 April 2025-14 September 2025, <https://www.quaibrantly.fr/fr/expositions-evenements/au-musee/expositions/details-de-levenement/e/mission-dakar-djibouti-1931-1933-contre-enquetes> (last visited 5 June 2025).

³⁰ Vines, A., The African Union Becomes a Full Member of the G20, 28 January 2025, Wilson Center, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/african-union-becomes-full-member-g20>

³¹ Khanyisile Ngcobo, South Africa invites Ukraine's Zelensky for state visit, *BBC*, 21 February 2025.

³² European Council, Press release: President Costa to participate in the 8th EU-South Africa summit on 13 March 2025, 12 February 2025, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/02/12/president-costa-to-participate-in-the-8th-eu-south-africa-summit-on-13-march-2025/>.

³³ Liptak, K., How the White House orchestrated Trump's Oval Office ambush of South African president, *CNN*, 21 May 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/05/21/politics/trump-ramaphosa-oval-office-ambush>

President Zelensky³⁴—disregards diplomatic norms and reveals a lack of consideration for international partners. Furthermore, the US government's cuts to the USAID budget are likely to have a long-lasting impact on US–Africa cultural relations, potentially creating a vacuum that invites greater Chinese presence in the region. The United States' ambivalent support for Ukraine—driven more by economic interests than by strategic alliance—and its increasingly open stance toward Russia serve as a wake-up call for the EU to strengthen its autonomous defence capabilities and reaffirm its diplomatic efforts and global alliances.

Wars, conflicts and divisions threaten culture and cultural heritage both in Africa and Europe. Not only is tangible cultural heritage at risk, so too is intangible heritage as populations are forced to flee. These displaced populations - internally or externally - are at risk of losing contact with their cultural heritage (music, songs, dances, rituals...). Closing and securitisation of borders puts an end to mobility for cultural goods, services, artists and the slowdown of international events, such as concerts, art fairs or sport events.

The African continent currently experiences major political shifts and new or resurgent conflicts.³⁵ The conflict that broke out in Sudan on 15 April 2023 has led to the internal displacement of more than 6 million people and 2 million have fled to other countries, making it the world's largest displacement catastrophe with numbers that will keep growing. The resurgence of a very deadly war for civilians in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)³⁶ remains also an obstacle to larger economic integration, despite encouraging signs within the East African Community (that DRC joined in 2022), and strong AU political will behind the flagship project of Agenda 2063 of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).³⁷

The withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger from the Economic Community of West African States,³⁸ effective at the start of the year 2025, is a major change for regional integration and questions the new regional trends that will emerge within the newly formed Alliance of Sahel States (AES) and between the Alliance and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), notably in terms of mobility and cultural cooperation, with the federation being home to major artistic talents and strong cultural centres.³⁹ Geopolitical changes in the Sahel are marked by the withdrawal of French troops against a backdrop of colonial resentment and closer diplomatic ties between Sahelian governments and Russia, impacting the global scene as

³⁴ Bateman, T., How the Trump-Zelensky talks collapsed in 10 fiery minutes, BBC, 1 March 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c2erwgvv8vgo>

³⁵ The Africa Center for Strategic Studies "Africa's 2024 Security Trends" notes that "The number of Africans forcibly displaced has risen for the 13th year in a row—to over 45 million people. This figure represents a 14% increase from the previous year.... 14 of the top 15 countries in total number of forcibly displaced populations are in conflict." (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, "Africa's 2024 Security Trends in 10 Graphics," December 17, 2024, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-2024-security-trends-graphics/>).

³⁶ A peace agreement was signed on 27 June 2025 between the DRC and Rwanda under the auspices of the United States and with mediation by Qatar. US Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, Peace Agreement Between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Rwanda, 27 June 2025, retrieved from:

<https://www.state.gov/peace-agreement-between-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-and-the-republic-of-rwanda/>

³⁷ "Trade under AfCFTA means a liberalised single market for goods and services facilitated by the easy movement of people and capital. Accordingly, AfCFTA lays the foundation for a continent-wide customs union." African Union (2015), op.cit, p.65.

³⁸ Ecowas was founded in 1975 in a bid to improve economic and political integration in West Africa and before the three States' departure, it had a total of 15 members, including states like Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Senegal.

³⁹ Launched in 2017, the African Culture Fund (ACF) located in Bamako (Mali) finances artistic projects with money from African artists themselves. No less than 2.9 million EUR has been raised in two years. Its founder and President, Mamou Daffé is also Director of the Centre culturel Kôré in Ségou (Mali) and of the Fondation Festival sur le Niger and was recently appointed Mali's Minister of Crafts, Culture, the Hotel Industry and Tourism.

recently seen during the vote at the UN General Assembly on 24 February, where the Alliance of Sahel States voted along Russia against the resolution proposed by Ukraine.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the EU is currently grappling with significant geopolitical and economic tensions. The war in Ukraine that started in 2022 still represents the main security, energy and economic threat to the EU: economists portray it as "the third asymmetric shock" that the Union has experienced in the last two decades, after the 2008 financial and economic crisis and the following Eurozone crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴¹ Ukraine has become the largest minefield in the world and EU member states are hosting millions of Ukrainians and hundreds of thousands of Russian citizens. The recently elected US President Trump is making it clear that the EU should be solely responsible for its security. The US new geopolitical line in favour of a peace agreement with Russia could be at the expense of both Ukrainian resources (with an American view on Ukrainian minerals),⁴² territorial integrity (without securing the recovery of Ukrainian territories unlawfully annexed by Russia as part of the war it started) as well as moral and values.⁴³ The EU moreover has to face challenges on its political model, with a rise of internal scepticism towards the European project⁴⁴ coupled with a rising trend of disinformation.⁴⁵

Rethinking the narrative around cultural relations

"The relationship between Africa and Europe is not simply a matter of economic and political domination, but a complex web of cultural exchanges, shared memories, and mutual influences. To engage with this relationship critically, we need to interrogate the ways in which Eurocentric narratives have shaped our understanding of history and culture, and to reclaim the agency of African societies in shaping their own destinies." Professor Achille Mbembé (2024)⁴⁶

Given their shared history and the challenges that lie ahead, culture remains a crucial component of the Africa–Europe partnership and should not be overlooked. Institutions and member states should continue working together—supported by vibrant cultural, artistic, and research communities—to renew both the framework and the narrative of Africa–Europe cultural relations. To achieve this, AU and EU policymakers must be willing to engage in open dialogue and

⁴⁰ Dudouet, Maïlis. "Trump, Poutine et l'Ukraine : comment les pays africains se positionnent à l'ONU." *Jeune Afrique*, February 28, 2025.

⁴¹ European External Action Service, Josep Borrell, Former High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission: "The War in Ukraine and Its Implications for the EU." March 14, 2022. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/war-ukraine-and-its-implications-eu_en (last accessed March 10, 2025).

⁴² The Economist, "Ukraine Has Fended Off Donald Trump, for the Moment," February 26, 2025, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2025/02/26/ukraine-has-fended-off-donald-trump-for-the-moment>.

⁴³ Anne Applebaum, "Against the Virus of Complacency," *ifa Forum for International Cultural Relations*, December 27, 2024.

⁴⁴ In the context of Germany's federal elections in February 2025, Germany's far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party is considering holding a referendum on Germany's exit from the European Union, RFI. "Allemagne: l'AfD veut un référendum sur la sortie de l'UE." January 22, 2024.

⁴⁵ 77% of Europeans agree that the existence of news or information that misrepresents reality, or is even false, is a problem in their country. European Commission, Strategic communication and countering information manipulation, https://commission.europa.eu/topics/countering-information-manipulation_en (last accessed March 10, 2025).

⁴⁶ European External Action Service, Press and Information Team of the Delegation to the African Union, "An Africa-Europe Initiative 'Strengthening African-European Museum Partnerships' Opened," July 9, 2024, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/african-union-au/africa-europe-initiative-%E2%80%99strengthening-african-european-museum-partnerships%E2%80%9D-opened_en?s=43.

redefine the framework, grounded in a genuine effort to understand one another. This redefinition should address both the scope—including a reconsideration of the geographical framework to highlight the natural bridges and connections through North Africa and the Mediterranean—and the approach, by actively involving civil society, cultural professionals, artists, and policymakers. The AU–EU dialogue and the people-to-people approach remain key assets in overcoming historical divides, which are often reinforced at the national political level. Cultural cooperation has long played a leading role in fostering regional, interregional, continental, and individual connections.⁴⁷ A strong cultural relations framework, rooted in mutual trust, is an essential precondition for the success of the partnership.

Farai Mpfunya, co-founding Executive Director of the Culture Fund of Zimbabwe Trust and co-author of *Culture as a Public Good: Navigating its Role in Policy Debates*⁴⁸, draws on Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's insight that "Culture does not make people. People make culture." He highlights how dominant Western theories in economics, social science, and political science—which shape current definitions of the public good—often fail to reflect the African worldview of "togetherness". This perspective emphasises communal values, the protection of biodiversity, and collective welfare. Such a worldview should prompt deeper reflection on the theoretical foundations of ICR, encouraging a shift toward approaches that are more aligned with the identities and values of all partners in a truly relational process.⁴⁹

Recognising culture's multiple values

At the time of the handover of the presidency between Brazil and South Africa, the G20 Rio de Janeiro Leaders' Declaration reaffirmed their belief in "culture's power and intrinsic value in nurturing solidarity, dialogue, collaboration and cooperation [in] fostering a more sustainable world" and called "countries to enhance international cooperation, collaboration and exchange towards the development of the creative economy".⁵⁰

Cultural relations can be approached from the diplomatic, trade, development and governance (regional and continental integration and approach of cultural policies and cultural policy makers) angles. Through these mechanisms, cultural cooperation initiatives are conducted jointly by European and African partners and benefit from European institutions and member states' financial support with joint efforts from the African Union, African Development Bank (AfDB), the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), the World Bank and private actors. Furthermore, youth and a vast swathe of civil society are integral to these initiatives. This report serves as a reminder for African and European policy makers of the richness that emanated from previous cultural cooperation and the possibilities that continuity will bring.

⁴⁷ In his book *Le Dialogue des cultures* (1977), Léopold Sédar Senghor defines intercultural dialogue and expresses his vision of a world in which cultures meet, understand one another, and enrich each other, with the ultimate aim of promoting peace and harmony among peoples.

⁴⁸ International Federation of Arts Councils, ed. Mujica, M. 2024. *Culture as a Public Good: Navigating its role in policy debates*, International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies, Sydney, Australia.

⁴⁹ In the report by Bénédicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr, "Restituer le patrimoine africain" (2019) that followed the speech delivered by President Macron in Ouagadougou on 28 November 2017, in which he announced that "within five years, the conditions will be met for temporary or permanent restitutions of African heritage to Africa.", the authors refer to "the establishment of new cultural relationships based on a reimagined relational ethics." (p.52).

⁵⁰ G20. Rio de Janeiro Leaders' Declaration. November 18, 2024, <https://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2024/241118-declaration.html>

Despite being marginalised from the Global Gateway, CCIs and culture have their place in the realisation of two of the five EU's Global Gateway priority sectors: digital and education & research. But for CCIs to achieve their full potential in terms of inclusion for - rural areas, unskilled workers, unemployed youth and women, education and training, and job creation, it should also be recognised their uniqueness and not systematically associated with other opportunities - no matter how strategic this may appear.

In 2021, AU Ministers for Arts, Culture and Heritage gathered to advocate for the implementation of the AU Summit decision which calls on member states to allocate at least 1% of their national budget to the arts, culture and heritage sector⁵¹ - an objective so far not reached. In light of this, efforts from research and civil society organisations to advise governments and monitor progress must be acknowledged. Selam, a Pan-African organisation headquartered in Sweden with regional offices in Addis Ababa and Nairobi, has conducted baseline studies and actor mapping for public investment in several States and advocated for the 1% target to be achieved through its initiative "Connect for Culture Africa". Since 2021, studies have been conducted in Ethiopia, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Zambia, and "a notable gap between policy priorities and practical implementation, with the cultural sector continuing to receive inadequate funding despite its recognised importance"⁵² has been documented.

Conclusion: A decisive moment for international cultural relations

This first part illustrates both the breadth and fragility of Africa–Europe cultural relations. Despite a long and complex shared history, these relations are evolving into a joint process of memory, reflection, and transformation. No matter how painful or difficult the past has been, cultural actors across both continents have demonstrated remarkable creativity and determination in turning historical divisions into meaningful cultural engagement.

From the return and restitution of artefacts acquired during colonial times to cross-continental museum alliances and collaborative research-artistic projects examining European involvement in Africa, the past few years have been rich with promising initiatives. These efforts signal a deepening maturity in how cultural heritage is handled—no longer as a divisive issue but as a shared space for healing, dialogue, and innovation.

What is achieved on the cultural front should also inform and inspire economic ambitions. UNESCO foresees the creation of 20 million new jobs and 20 billion USD in annual revenue from Africa's film and audiovisual subsectors. This remarkable expansion can be attributed to the growing ease of content production and distribution facilitated by the ongoing digital revolution. This rise in global interest in culture can, however, lead to new forms of extractivism⁵³, where external forces profit without meaningful reinvestment or recognition of local ownership.

⁵¹ African Union, Communiqué of the 2nd Virtual Forum of The African Union Ministers Responsible for Arts, Culture, And Heritage on The Launch of The AU Concept Note and Roadmap on The Theme of The Year For 2021, March 25, 2021, <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20210325/2nd-virtual-forum-au-ministers-responsible-arts-culture-and-heritage> ; African Union, "Ministers to Advocate for Implementation of AU Decision for member states to Allocate 1% of National Budget to the Arts, Culture and Heritage," March 10, 2021, <https://au.int/ar/node/40305>.

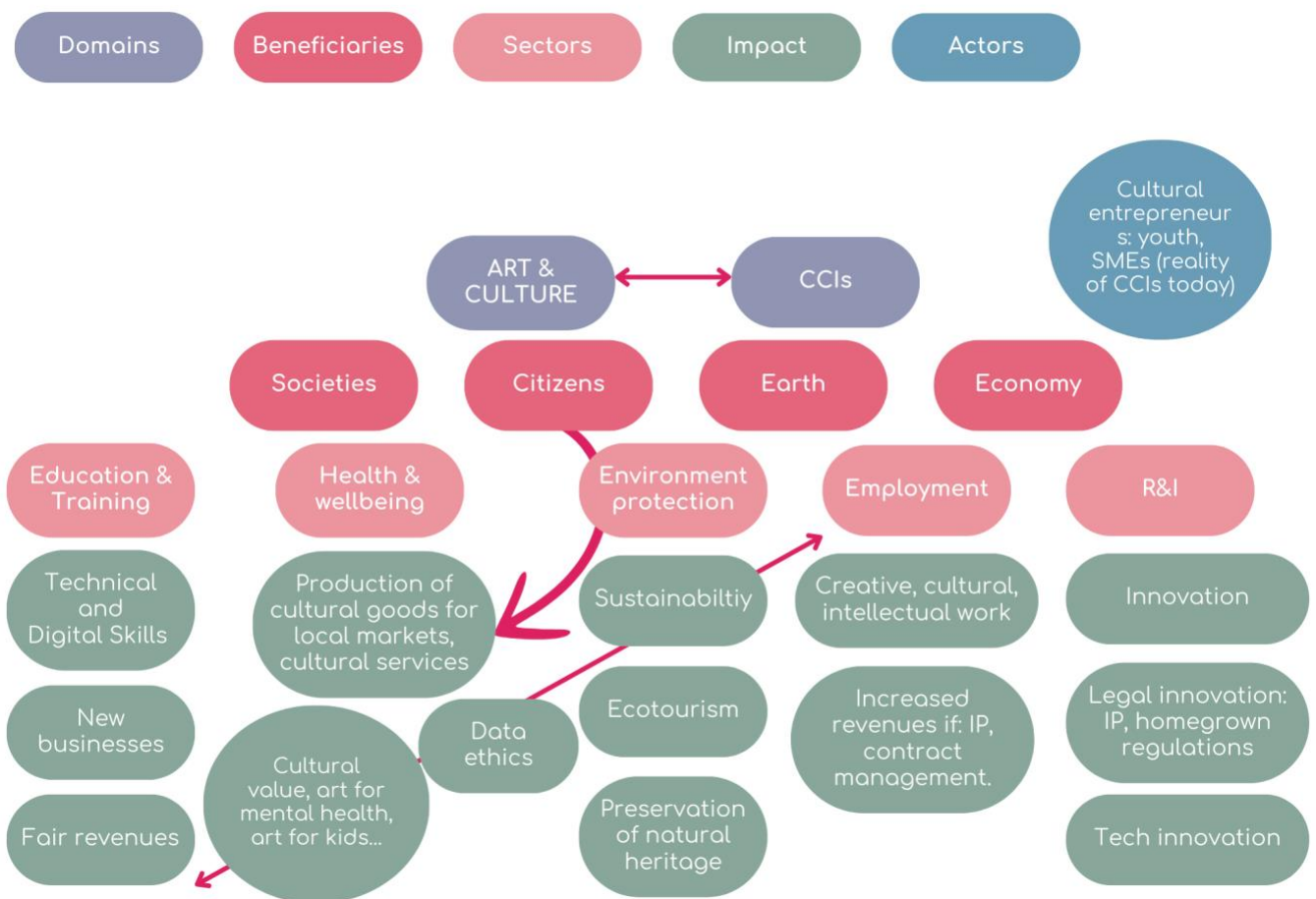
⁵²Connect for Culture Africa (2024). Tsige Yeshanew Y., Abebe T., MA and Yimer T. (authors), Baseline Study and Actor Mapping for Public Investment in Ethiopia's Culture Sector, Selam, in partnership with African Union.

⁵³ Interview with Alessandro Jedlowski, Associate professor in African Studies, Sciences Po Bordeaux on 22 October 2024

Africa and Europe now have a unique opportunity to jointly champion fair⁵⁴ and forward-looking international cultural relations. This demands a well-informed, holistic approach—one that understands the sector’s complexity and potential. Supranational institutions must play a central role, aligning efforts with long-term strategies such as the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the European Union’s 2016 strategy for international cultural relations. Only through such shared frameworks can both continents ensure that cultural cooperation becomes a sustainable driver of mutual growth, dignity, and innovation.

"I reaffirm my belief that the African creative industry has huge potential to be a source of employment and revenue to create the Africa we want – revenue from intra-African trade as well as revenue from the rest of the world." H.E. Albert M. Muchanga, Commissioner for Trade and Industry of the African Union Commission (2024)⁵⁵

Scheme: Cultural policy framework



culture Solutions (2025)

⁵⁴ See Avril Joffe and Matina Magkou’s chapter “The Payer, the Piper and the Fairness Tune: On EU–Africa Cultural Cooperation” in Damaso, M. (dir.). 2025. The European Union as a Global Cultural Power (Transnational Approaches to Culture Book 2), De Gruyter.

⁵⁵ Afreximbank, op.cit.

2- Trends influencing Africa-Europe cultural relations

In this part:

- **Preparedness for emerging digital trends**
- **A weakening international cooperation**
- **Youth engagement and priorities**
- **Culture's essential role in advancing sustainable development**
- **Pan-Africanism and democratic aspiration**
- **Conclusion: Culture, too big to be ignored**

Today, cultural cooperation is impacted not only by diplomatic relations, economic issues, but also digital transformations. CCIs have undergone three major waves of transformation: technological innovation, economic liberalisation, and geopolitical opening to new players.⁵⁶ In addition, there is a demographic factor that exerts pressure on economies and calls for the creation of sustainable jobs, enabled by adapted training and offering stable income resources for young populations. The geopolitical context is accompanied by reflections from actors in the cultural sector and cooperation who wish to recognise the role of culture in development. This approach aims to preserve the unique character of the CCIs. This first part outlines the economic, political, geopolitical, and societal tensions that weigh on the cultural and creative sector, which is often expected to deliver a great deal, while its fragility and the risks it faces as a sector are often overlooked.

Preparedness for emerging digital trends

"Adapting AI to African realities is critical. AI systems should be able to reflect inclusive AI ecosystem and a competitive African AI market that is adapted to our realities and meets our ambitions." AU Commissioner Aman Abou-Zeid, (2024)⁵⁷

Emerging technologies reshape international affairs and lead to increased competition.⁵⁸ There has also been an intrinsic link between CCIs' expansion and technological transitions. For instance, the arrival of the video cassette made its access easier and enabled the democratisation of access to production and forms of control over circulation that were not possible before.⁵⁹ This is true for both music and audiovisual content. Today, the impact of digital technology raises distrust among the cultural sector and issues related to platforms, distribution, monetisation, and AI.⁶⁰ Digital transformations of CCIs also risk to deepen divides and access to

⁵⁶ Interview with Alessandro Jedlowski, Associate professor in African Studies, Sciences Po Bordeaux on 22 October 2024.

⁵⁷ African Union, "African Ministers Adopt Landmark Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy, African Digital Compact to Drive Africa's Development and Inclusive Growth," press release, June 17, 2024, <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20210325/2nd-virtual-forum-au-ministers-responsible-arts-culture-and-heritage>.

⁵⁸ Helly, D. (2020), op.cit, p.22.

⁵⁹ Samuel Samiai Andrews, Developing a Copyright Curriculum for Nigerian Universities for the Creative Digital Space, GRUR International, Volume 71, Issue 4, April 2022, p.324.

⁶⁰ Interview with Alessandro Jedlowski, Associate professor in African Studies, Sciences Po Bordeaux on 22 October 2024.

opportunities⁶¹ across the continent, due to **access to the internet, digital literacy, and language gap** with software produced in the Global North and mostly coming from the US.

3.5.4.1 Relevant timelines in AI legislation

Figures 8 and 9 summarise the timelines of the development of AI legislation, policy, guidelines and frameworks globally (Figure 8) and on the African continent (Figure 9).

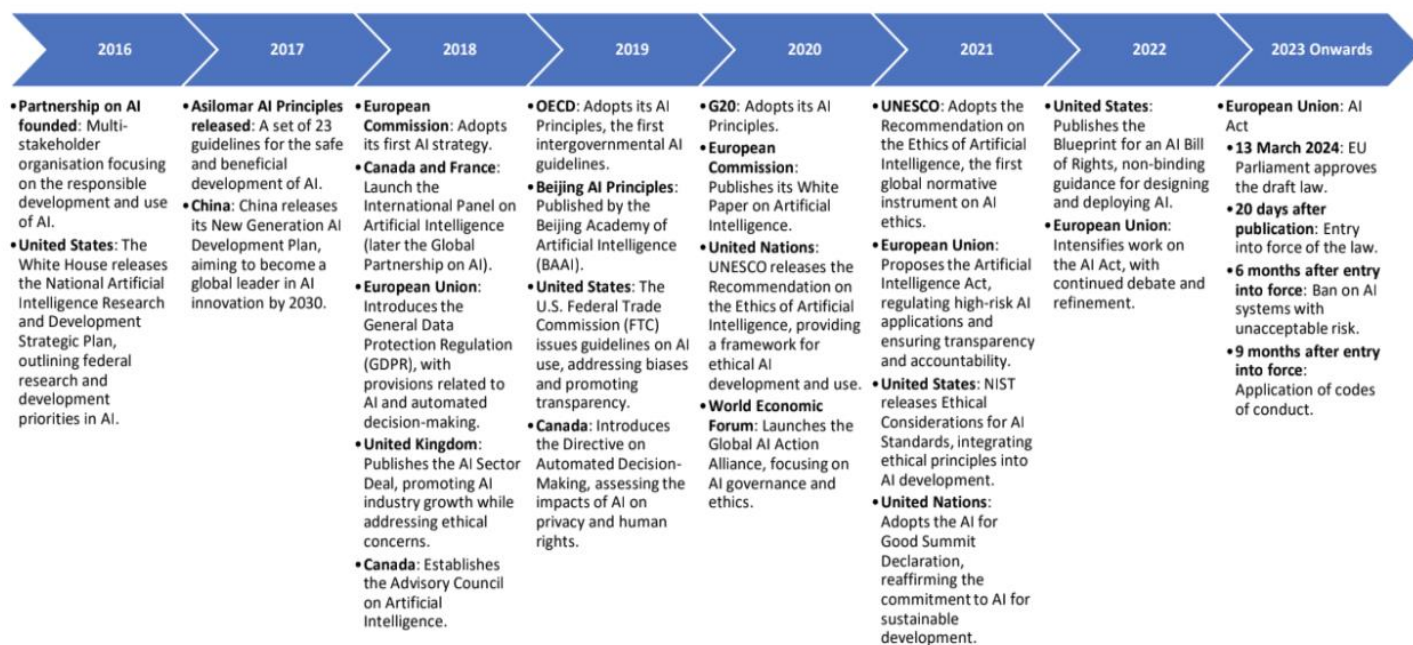


Figure 8: Summary of timeline of key developments among nations of the Global North and international organisations in the last decade. Source: SACO, 2024

Digital transformation is the process by which companies embed technologies across their businesses to drive fundamental change. The benefits? Increased efficiency, greater business agility and, ultimately, the unlocking of new value for employees, customers and shareholders. Digitalisation is the use of digital technologies to change business processes and projects—such as skilling employees to use new software platforms designed to help launch products faster. While digital transformation might include digitalisation efforts, it goes beyond the project level and affects the entire organisation.

⁶¹ This risk of gap widening also applies to audiences. The journal *New Media & Society* released a 2019 study conducted in the UK showing that digital media provide an important means of engaging new audiences, but that the engagement with museums and galleries both online and offline remains deeply unequal and that rather than helping increase the diversity of audiences, online access seems to reproduce, if not enlarge, existing inequalities. Source: Sabina Mihelj, Adriana Leguina and John Downey, *Culture is digital: Cultural participation, diversity and the digital divide*, *New Media & Society*, July 2019, p.1.

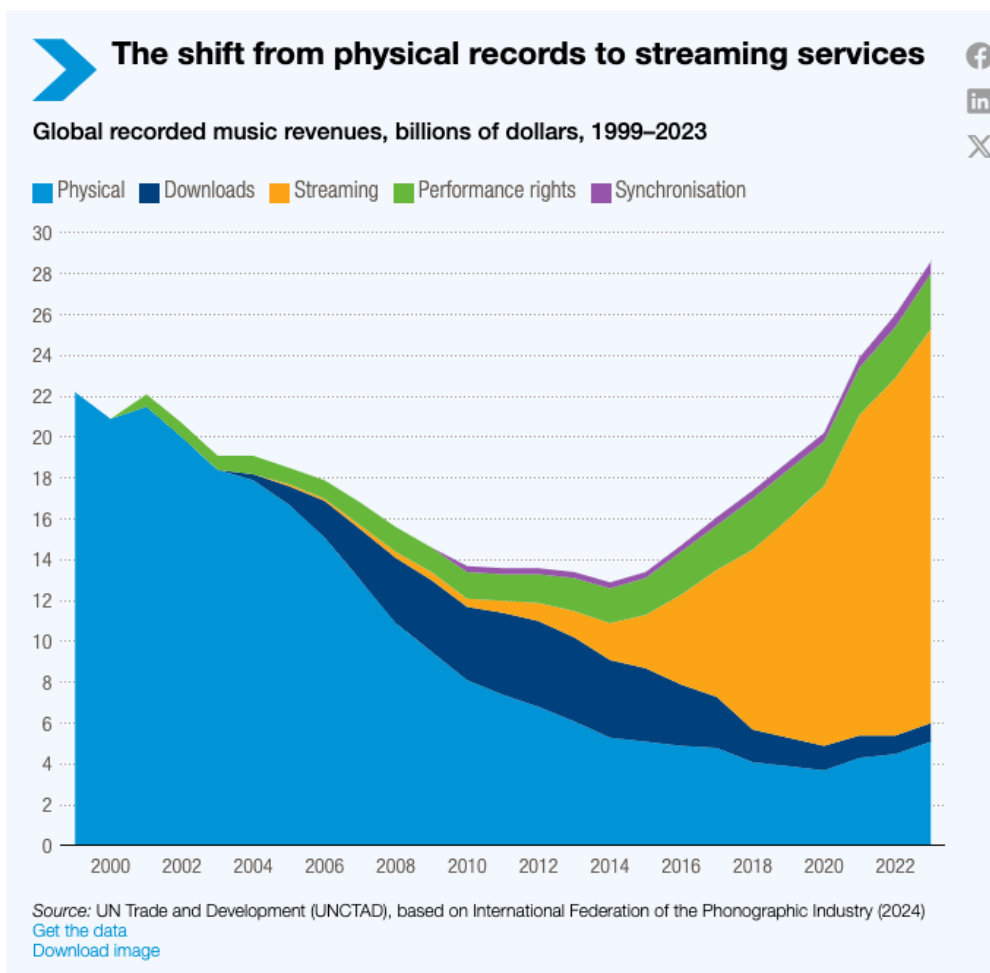
Digitisation is transforming the cultural and creative industries: in 2023, streaming services expanded their share by 10.4%, now accounting for more than two thirds (67.3%) of global music market revenues.⁶² A look at the UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics – graphic representation of cultural domains (2009) helps us to grasp how cultural domains are impacted by technological changes with which emerge new value chains.

Two angles are relevant when we mention digital trends and CCIs: the influence that technology and innovation has in general and how these are incorporated in CCIs (a shift provoked by external factors), and how CCIs are themselves embarking in digitalisation (an internal process).

AI in creation and media can support self-taught artists or young cultural and media professionals to create content and diffuse it more easily. Virtual reality and augmented reality are also new technologies that cultural sectors - video games of course but also museums are more and more looking at. A study by the journal *New Media & Society* from 2019 entitled "Culture is digital: Cultural participation, diversity and the digital divide", shows that digital media provide an important means of engaging new audiences, but that the engagement with museums and galleries both online and offline remains deeply unequal and that rather than helping increase the diversity of audiences, online access seems to reproduce, if not enlarge, existing inequalities.⁶³

⁶²UNCTAD 2024, op cit. (July 11, 2024). The interview of Marie Lora-Mungai "Learn The Harsh Truth About Africa Creative Industries" on Venture Valley Channel, 22 February 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mejSzapWMr0> shares perspectives on the current trends of audiovisual streaming in Africa.

⁶³Mihelj, S., Leguina, A., & Downey, J. (2019). Culture is digital: Cultural participation, diversity and the digital divide. *New Media & Society*, 21(7), 1465-1485. (Original work published 2019).



AU and EU efforts for ethical AI

Culture was not excluded from the recent Artificial Intelligence Action Summit, which took place in Paris from 10-11 February 2025.⁶⁴ Ahead of the conference, two days were dedicated to exploring the impact of AI on contemporary artistic creation. While creation is broadly influenced by digital technologies beyond AI, it represents significant shifts and legal challenges. The EU has demonstrated leadership in regulating and addressing the societal risks and disruptions posed by new technologies, particularly through the design and adoption of the AI Act, the world’s first comprehensive AI law.

African nations, too, have not wasted time in framing the debate around AI, with a particular focus on data ownership and equity. The African Union Commission adopted a continental data policy framework in February 2022.⁶⁵ It emphasises equitable access to digital and data-driven technologies for all Africans. Rwanda⁶⁶, South Africa⁶⁷ and Mauritius⁶⁸ have published national AI

⁶⁴ French Ministry of Culture, Sommet pour l’action sur l’IA (8-9 February 2025), Le Week-end culturel de l’IA: <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/fr/dossiers/le-week-end-culturel-de-l-ia> (last accessed March 10, 2025).

⁶⁵ African Union, AU Data Policy Framework, February 2022.

⁶⁶ Ministry of ICT and Innovation, Republic of Rwanda, The National AI Policy, November 2023.

⁶⁷ Department of Communications and Digital Technologies. (2024, August). South Africa National Artificial Intelligence Policy Framework (Draft). Retrieved from <https://techcentral.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/South-Africa-National-AI-Policy-Framework.pdf>

⁶⁸ Mauritius Artificial Intelligence Strategy, November 2018, produced by the Working Group on Artificial Intelligence.

strategies. Rwanda's regulation aims to harness AI to drive economic growth, enhance quality of life, and position the country as a global innovator in responsible and inclusive AI. Key recommendations include reskilling the workforce, establishing AI university education and research programmes, adapting education to empower young learners with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) skills, ensuring access to reliable infrastructure and computing capacity, preparing AI-ready data, strengthening AI policy and regulation, and supporting the private sector's adoption of AI.⁶⁹

"Africa seeks to create the most useful artificial intelligence, not the most powerful." Lacina Koné, Director General of Smart Africa (2025)⁷⁰

Lacina Koné's quote calls for African ownership of AI, emphasising the need for an approach rooted in local societies, economic priorities, and ethical values. In this effort, it is crucial to consider the perspectives of cultural actors and the preferences of citizens—particularly regarding their cultural identity, the protection of cultural products, and data ethics. SACO's latest report on the initial impact of artificial intelligence on South Africa's creative work and workers is a great resource to frame the debate around AI for creatives. It notes that "a balanced approach that prioritizes ethical principles in AI development and deployment is essential for navigating the AI era effectively."⁷¹ Africa and Europe may be aiming to do just that, prioritising a human-centred and ethical approach to AI that protects creators while showcasing their talent. Since 2013, African countries have partnered to reflect on a "Made in Africa" approach to technology. The Smart Africa Alliance⁷² stems from the Smart Africa Manifesto, signed by seven African heads of state (Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Mali, Gabon, Burkina Faso), who committed to playing a leading role in accelerating socio-economic development through ICT. It is, however, crucial to turn these discussions into projects of homegrown software and tools that can be used by cultural and creative entrepreneurs. Twelve years later, the Director General of the Alliance notes that the risks of non-investment in AI are evident and could lead to certain economic decline and an increasing technological dependence on the United States and China. He also observes that these risks are shared by both Africa and the EU.⁷³ The report investigating the impact of AI on the creative community in Kenya reveals that, of the 130 creatives surveyed (129 of whom are familiar with AI and 112 use it in their work), 73% of the AI tools they use are from the US, 4% from Europe, 2% from China, and none are from Kenyan AI products.⁷⁴ When put in perspective with the latest Creative Economy Outlook from UNCTAD (2024), the signs are clear: the most exported creative services in 2022 were software services (41.3%).⁷⁵

Knowing the inherent risks of digital transformations for CCIs will also be key in making strategic decisions for innovation. The Creative Economy Outlooks informs us that in 2021, three companies dominated 59% of the global streaming music subscription market. Digital

⁶⁹ South African Cultural Observatory (SACO) (2024). Artificial Intelligence – Rushed Revolution or Holy Algorithmic Grail?: The Initial Impact of AI on South Africa's Creative Work and Workers.

⁷⁰Velluet, Q., Lacina Koné (Smart Africa) : « L'Afrique cherche à créer l'intelligence artificielle la plus utile, pas la plus puissante », Jeune Afrique, 12 February 2025.

⁷¹ SACO (2024), op.cit., p.40.

⁷²Smart Africa, "Who we are", website: <https://smartafrica.org/who-we-are/> (last accessed March 11, 2025).

⁷³Velluet, Q., op.cit.

⁷⁴ Ngobi, Bukonola. 2024, op.cit.

⁷⁵ UNCTAD Creative Economy Outlook 2024.

transformation can lead to market concentration, which may, in turn, reduce the quality and creativity of creative work. UNCTAD highlights the importance of a level playing field to support a diverse and dynamic creative economy. It points to successful policies in some countries that have helped creative industries thrive by protecting intellectual property and maintaining fair competition.⁷⁶ This aligns with UNESCO's definition of CCIs as vehicles of cultural diversity and creativity.⁷⁷ The risk of monopolisation and homogenisation with digital transformations of CCIs is twofold:

- Digital monopolies with big companies like the GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook (Meta), Amazon, Microsoft) dominating the market - integrating more platforms and software in the quest for the high-performance AI (Google and Microsoft),⁷⁸
- and "AI algorithms may favour popular, mainstream content over niche or culturally diverse expressions, potentially leading to a homogenisation of cultural content and stifling cultural diversity".⁷⁹

Autonomy through investment

Private actors and innovators in the EU are now calling for investment and for a European digital industrial policy approach to reduce digital dependencies and create a resilient, autonomous, and socially inclusive digital framework. This approach holds the potential to bridge innovation and production within Europe with ethics and safety compliance ensured by the DSA and AI Act. A recent Foundation for European Progressive Studies study, entitled "Time to Build a European Digital Ecosystem", highlights geopolitical tensions and the growing reliance on foreign tech giants and underlines the urgent need for greater technological sovereignty.⁸⁰ The study stresses the importance of enforcing existing digital regulations and creating a European Digital Industrial Policy (EDIP) to drive innovation and protect European values. Regulators are being criticised for their cautious approach to AI innovation. The US is adopting a highly pro-business stance, calling for deregulation. However, such criticism must first acknowledge the significant inherent risks that AI poses to CCIs, creators, and young entrepreneurs worldwide, and the EU has demonstrated political innovation in anticipating these risks.

A study by US researchers Hui, Reshed, and Zhou (2023) on the short-term effects of generative AI on employment, along with the results of an online labour market survey, revealed that within just a few months of the launch of ChatGPT, copywriters and graphic designers on major online freelancing platforms saw a significant drop in the number of jobs they secured, with even steeper declines in earnings.⁸¹ SACO's 2024 report cites to UNESCO (2016; 2022) warning of the commercial logic of large platforms that "may lead to an increased concentration of cultural supply, data and income in the hands of only a few actors, with potentially negative implications

⁷⁶ UNCTAD, 11 July 2024, op.cit.

⁷⁷ UNESCO, Understanding Creative Industries, Cultural statistics for public-policy making, UNESCO and Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity, 2016.

⁷⁸ On the angle of cultural diversity and business strategies, see Hanania Richieri, L. and Helly, D., The role of business in promoting culture, culture Solutions, 25 January 2022, <https://www.culturesolutions.eu/articles/business-promoting-culture/>

⁷⁹ SACO (2024), op.cit, p.34.

⁸⁰ Rinse Oosterwijk G., M. Hasdenteufel, and J. Nogarede, eds., Time to Build a European Digital Ecosystem: Recommendations for the EU's Digital Policy (Brussels: Foundation for European Progressive Studies, December 2024).

⁸¹ SACO (2024), op.cit, p.32.

for the diversity of cultural expressions more generally, including the risk of creating a new creative divide and increasing marginalisation of developing countries".⁸²

Rapid technological changes can cause disruptions not only to the job market but also to the creative process itself. Culture is rooted in transmission, and its inherent value may not align with a purely technological approach. In a recent report focusing on the Kenyan music industry, one musician questioned whether recording and storing traditional sounds for AI to replicate might discourage local artists from continuing to learn traditional instruments.⁸³ There is a growing realisation that unless the African music industry embraces new technology, it risks losing control of its talent and heritage.⁸⁴

Digital companies shake up competition law, notably through software integrated into the purchased devices, greatly hampering the consumer's choice. China's Transsion Holdings and its Android devices "Tecno" targeting emerging markets represents 41% of the Africa market.⁸⁵ The streaming platform Boomplay is already installed on the phones, ensuring it a dominant position on the continent, with 60 million users, more than Deezer and Spotify.⁸⁶ It also offers freemium access, free with advertising, to consumers, making it appealing.⁸⁷ Being aware of the inherent risks of digital technologies and the competition in place is essential when favouring the development of a European and African market for CCIs.

Forward-thinking approach

Ending this part on a positive note, digitalisation cannot be separated from wider access and revenues for CCIs. For the African film industry, the new distribution system based on digital technology has also brought tremendous advantages like combating piracy and overcoming the negative impact of the Covid pandemic.⁸⁸ McKinsey⁸⁹ has estimated that tasks equivalent to 15% of all full-time employees (400 million people) could be automated by 2030, but that creative jobs will increase 32% globally, despite automation. The challenge is then to ensure that these jobs are also created in Africa and Europe.⁹⁰ The debate is therefore about how to train for these new technologies, which still lack a framework for their use.

⁸² SACO (2024), op.cit.

⁸³Ngobi, Bukonola. 2024. ARTificial Intelligence in Africa: Investigating the Impacts of AI on the Creative Community in Kenya. Creatives Garage, July 2024. <https://creativesgarage.org/aike-report-2024>

⁸⁴ Efemini, Claudia. 2024. "I May Not Be Human but I Sing from My Soul" – AI Divides African Musicians. BBC, November 17, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdenplz5j89o>.

⁸⁵ Hanna Ziady, "China's Tecno Sold Thousands of Smartphones with Malware in Africa," CNN Business, August 26, 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/08/26/tech/tecno-malware-africa/index.html>.

⁸⁶ Jedlowki, A., Bono, I. for Agence Française de Développement, op.cit, p.17.

⁸⁷ ibid.

⁸⁸ Andrews, Samuel Samiái. "Creative Disruptions and Digital Copyright Regime of an African Film Industry." WIPO-WTO Colloquium Papers, Special Edition, 2020.

⁸⁹ Manyika, J., Lund, S., Chui, M., Bughin, & al. (2017). "Jobs lost, jobs gained: What the future of work will mean for jobs, skills, and wages.", Mc Kinsey Global Institute.

⁹⁰ The study informs that most growth in creative jobs will take place in China (82%) and India (58%), while the United States will see creative jobs rise by 8%.

"Nollywood wouldn't be here today without digital technology. It democratised the space of creativity. It made making movies cheap. The economic boom in CCI started when the monopoly of telecommunications stopped." Samuel Andrews, Professor of Intellectual Property Law (2024)⁹¹

The creation of homemade African platforms for African content will also be crucial in enhancing African cultural production by ensuring the protection of its uniqueness and meeting the demands of an African audience. For this, determining viable business models for platforms offering African cultural content (music, film, series) will be an important task. So far, attempts to create African platforms for African content have not led to long-term business successes (such as Africa.tv, Moloko). YouTube remains the most frequented platform in Africa. Other international platforms, such as Amazon, which started a production studio model in Nigeria, have also not endured, creating an uncertain situation for creators.⁹² This highlights the need to establish viable companies dedicated to the production and distribution of African content. The sustainability of the industry is closely tied to job security and profitability for African creators. Iroko TV gained a great deal of attention as the "Netflix of Africa", but it also failed to find the right model for long-term success, relying heavily on the diaspora and eventually closing its Nigerian offices after being acquired by Canal+ in 2019.⁹³

"Challenges persist in ensuring equitable access to digital resources and preserving cultural authenticity in the digital realm. Key challenges include inadequate digital infrastructure, insufficient funding, and limited digital literacy." UNESCO (2024)⁹⁴

A weakening international cooperation

The Covid-19 pandemic, alongside ongoing wars, economic rivalries, and dependency on debt, does not create an economic environment conducive to growth. Governments are seeking to cut spending and increase trade revenues. This trend has raised questions about international cooperation in many Western countries, particularly in relation to budgets for culture. In Germany, several cultural institutions have been mobilising for months to warn of the dangers posed by budget cuts to the sector and to society as a whole, especially for independent artists (German Federal Budget Cuts Threaten to Halve Funding for Independent Art).⁹⁵ In the rest of the EU, France and Belgium recently announced budget cuts of 34% and 25%, respectively, to their public development aid. In the United States, the newly elected President Trump announced

⁹¹ Interview with Samuel Samiai Andrews, Professor of Intellectual Property Law, Al Yamamah University College of Law, Al Khobar, on 5 December 2024.

⁹² Interview with Alessandro Jedlowski, Associate professor in African Studies, Sciences Po Bordeaux on 22 October 2024.

⁹³ "Iroko TV: A Takeover, Not a Shutdown – Investors Make Their Move," Startup Lagos, March 11, 2024, https://www.startuplagos.net/post-detail/iroko-tv-a-takeover-not-a-shutdown-investors-make-their-move?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

⁹⁴ UNESCO, UNESCO Survey on Mondiacult, 2024.

⁹⁵ Artists at Risk, German Federal Budget Cuts Threaten to Halve Funding for Independent Art, 28 August 2024, <https://artistsatrisk.org/2024/08/28/german-federal-budget-cuts-threaten-to-halve-funding-for-independent-art/?lang=en>; Zayas, C., Cuny, E.,

cS internal dialogue #1: Democracy, elections and international cultural relations after 2024, 19 December 2024, culture Solutions, <https://www.culturesolutions.eu/articles/democracy-elections-and-international-cultural-relations-after-2024/>.

near-complete cuts to USAID funding,⁹⁶ the United States Agency for International Development, which had an annual budget of around 30 billion dollars for development aid,⁹⁷ a decision already impacting programmes and that will pose serious threats on the African continent.⁹⁸ This, along with President Trump's attacks on UN agencies,⁹⁹ has been flagged as a rise in nationalism and the resurgence of zero-sum and confrontational international politics.¹⁰⁰ This new climate in international relations can hinder cultural cooperation in two main ways.

Risks on cultural cooperation as we know it

Firstly, development cooperation budgets often include cultural cooperation projects. A reduction in these budgets could lead to a cut in future cultural projects. The ACP-EU Culture programme, the EU's primary funding source for culture in ACP countries since 2008, comes from the European Development Fund, now incorporated into the EU's general budget for 2021-2027 as "Global Europe".¹⁰¹ National development agencies have also funded major CCIs and cultural heritage projects. For instance, in Benin, the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) funded the construction of the Musée des Rois et des Amazones du Danhomè (MuRAD) in 2021 (approximately 23 billion CFA). A second funding agreement was made in November 2024 for the future Musée d'Art Contemporain de Cotonou (MACC) within the Cotonou Cultural and Creative Quarter (QCC). The total amount for this new project is 29.89 million EUR (19.6 billion CFA), of which 24.99 million EUR (16.4 billion CFA) is a loan and 4.87 million EUR (3.2 billion CFA). This announcement, alongside the launch of the "Africa-Europe Partnerships for Culture", a new programme worth 30 million EUR,¹⁰² funded through the EU budget for development, are nevertheless reassuring signs of European partners' commitment to culture in Africa.

The second risk is that culture is not prioritised for development support funding. As mentioned in the introduction, the new strategic framework defining the EU's priorities for international development does not specifically mention CCIs. The Global Gateway framework relies on the observation of "an ever-growing necessity for countries to invest and develop the infrastructure they need to create sustainable prosperity, jobs and services for their local communities".¹⁰³ In practice, it also aimed to provide partners across the world with an alternative to China's Belt and

⁹⁶ Cerullo, J., Hayes, O., "Accelerating USAID cuts devastate lifesaving programs, aid groups warn", NBC News, 28 February 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/usaaid-cuts-devastate-lifesaving-worldwide-hunger-rcna194173>: the US government plans to cut 90% of contracts held by USAID, which has been the world's largest single aid provider for decades.

⁹⁷ Le Figaro & AFP, France: la commission des Finances rétablit une grande part du budget de l'aide au développement, Le Figaro, 31 October 2024, Le Figaro, <https://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-eco/france-la-commission-des-finances-retablit-une-grande-part-du-budget-de-l-aide-au-developpement-20241031>

⁹⁸ "Some of the programs at risk support drought-prone populations in Africa, school feeding programs in West Africa, outreach to youth at risk of recruitment to extremist organizations like the Islamic State group, and public health efforts focused on HIV/AIDS" Cerullo, J., Hayes, O., op.cit.

⁹⁹ "Through an Executive Order, President Trump has ended US membership in the UN Human Rights Council, or UNHRC, and prohibited any future funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency for the Near East, or UNRWA and UNESCO is also targeted." VOA, Trump Ends Support for Anti-American UN Organizations, 6 February 2025, <https://editorials.voa.gov/a/trump-ends-support-for-anti-american-un-organizations/7965487.html>

¹⁰⁰ Anheier, Helmut K., and Edward L. Knudsen, with Sofia Todd-Tombini. 2024. The New Nationalisms and the Future of Cultural Relations: External Cultural Policy in an Age of Political Extremes, ifa ECP Monitor.

¹⁰¹ ACP-EU, « Panels presented at the 5th meeting of ACP Ministers of Culture », 29 October 2019, <http://www.acp-ue-culture.org/en/blog/programme-acp-eu-culture-towards-a-viable-cultural-industry/> (last accessed March 11, 2025)

¹⁰² EUNIC, EUNIC to Lead Part of New Africa-Europe Programme in Sub-Saharan Africa, 6 January 2021, <https://eunic.eu/news/new-africa-europe-programme-in-sub-saharan-africa> (last accessed March 11, 2025).

¹⁰³ European Commission. 2021. Joint Communication to European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank. The Global Gateway. JOIN/2021/30 final.

Road Initiative and to reinforce the EU's global influence.¹⁰⁴ It announces a shift and innovation in the EU's approach to its cooperation, by creating a favourable environment fostering investment for infrastructure and a new type of financial mechanism to be at the centre of EU's international cooperation. The 2022 European Parliament's (EP) resolution on the "Future of EU-African trade relations" echoes the Global Gateway new financial approach of investment, calling on "the modernisation of EU-AU trade and investment relations" to stimulate economic growth, regional integration, poverty reduction and job creation. It also underlined, however, that participation of civil society organisations should remain a cornerstone of the EU-AU strategy to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Cultural institutes operating abroad are currently facing uncertainty about their future budgets, which will directly impact the scope and nature of their activities. Expected budget cuts may require a focus on core priorities and a reduction of broader initiatives.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, the trend toward the Europeanisation of cultural relations appears to be slowing. The role of EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture) is not expected to expand in the upcoming cultural programme with Africa. For example, in the new Africa-Europe Partnerships for Culture programme (comprising three components: continental, Southern Africa and Western Africa), EUNIC has been assigned a limited coordinating role and budget of 2 million EUR out of a total 10 million EUR for the continental component (managed by Goethe Institut together with Expertise France). This is justified by a core strict mandate and capacity to manage bigger fundings, that does not allow for more. This however points to a paradox: while national cultural budgets are shrinking, there is also a move toward re-nationalisation and reduced European collaboration in cultural initiatives. This is happening in a broader trend that scholars have described as de-Europeanisation of foreign policy¹⁰⁶ described as "a progressive renationalisation of foreign policy in three dimensions: 'the structural disintegration of collective policy making institutions'; 'the reconstruction of professional roles in exclusively/predominantly national terms'; and 'a repudiation (implicit or explicit) of well defined and established foundational norms – either procedural or substantive.'"¹⁰⁷

New EU priorities: is Global Gateway all bad for culture?

The EU plans to invest around 150 billion EUR in Africa between 2021 and 2027, half the planned 300 billion EUR that it will invest around the world over the same period. The priorities identified to be targeted by this massive investment are the following: Digital, Climate and Energy, Transport, Health and Education and research.¹⁰⁸ Around half of the 72 projects in Africa are in the energy and climate sector. With so-called Just Energy Transition Partnerships, for example, the

¹⁰⁴ Teevan, C., and San B., *The Global Gateway at Two: Implementing EU Strategic Ambitions*. Briefing Note No. 173. Maastricht: ECDPM, November 2023.

¹⁰⁵ In 2022, the Bundestag instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Goethe-Institut to conduct a "critical inventory of assigned tasks," signaling the need for the Goethe-Institut to become more cost-effective and efficient. This was later reinforced by a Bundestag commission report, which Goethe-Institut President Johannes Ebert described as a "drastic cure." in Paul Ingendaay, "Schmerzlicher Prozess," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 19, 2024.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas, C. D. (2021) *The Return of Intergovernmentalism? De-Europeanisation and EU Foreign Policy Decision-making*, *Journal of European Integration*, 43:5, 619-635, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07036337.2021.1927013> ; Szalai, P. (2019). "There Is No Real 'European Foreign Policy', Says Former EU Diplomat." *EurActiv.com*, 14 June 2019.

¹⁰⁷ Tonra, B. (2018). "Europeanisation and De-Europeanisation of EU Member State Foreign Policies: Mirror Image or Discrete Phenomenon?" *Nortia*. <http://www.eufp.eu/europeanisation-and-deeuropeanisation-eu-member-state-foreign-policies-mirror-image-or-discrete>

¹⁰⁸ European Commission (2021) *Global Gateway*.

EU wants to support South Africa and Senegal in their energy transition.¹⁰⁹ The focus on Africa reflects Europe's long-term commitment to its neighbouring continent: between 2013 and 2021, the EU provided over 187 billion EUR (including Official Development Assistance (ODA) and long-term commercial loans with a term of more than one year) - significantly more than China (105,6 billion EUR).¹¹⁰

The urgency of cultural cooperation lies in reconciling the priorities of international development with the support for creative and cultural industries. Infrastructure for energy, electricity, and connectivity serves as key accelerators for CCIs. The cost of production, creativity, and innovation is high when access to power and electricity is limited. Internet access enables artists to sell their work online.

"Invest in infrastructure, that's what the governments should be doing."¹¹¹

It is also necessary to showcase and make use of the new financial mechanisms that were put in place specifically for CCIs. Development agencies have for some years prepared for a financial change towards the private sector and markets' investment, and this is also adapting specifically to CCIs. At the EU level, the EU Cultural and Creative Industries Financing Initiative (CreatiFI) is the first dedicated EU programme that uses financial instruments for CCIs in the EU's international cooperation. It focuses on building capacities of banks and financial intermediaries to engage with creatives, de-risking investment in CCIs as well as creating an enabling environment (See New funding approach: CreatiFI: blended finance and impact investment).

For the Global Gateway to positively impact cultural cooperation programmes—by promoting interregional approaches, strengthening sector structures, fostering dialogue, and enhancing people-to-people exchanges¹¹²—it is crucial to establish clear links between infrastructure investment, private sector opportunities, and the development of CCIs. In a tense context for international cooperation and a lack of recognition of projects with high social impact, policy makers will have to be more intentional in defending why investing in CCIs and supporting culture matters.

Four years after the launch of the Global Gateway, and in the context of a profound rethinking of international cooperation, EU-level actors must remain proactive in ensuring that the progress made in a common understanding of cultural relations is not lost. Reverting to a definition of cultural relations solely as cultural diplomacy would be shortsighted and fail to address the realities of the cultural and creative sectors on both continents.

Adopting a positive policy framework could imply highlighting opportunities arising for and from the CCIs in the context of economic and digital transformations. A cultural cooperation fit for the future would also look at innovative jobs, for instance in digital media,¹¹³ and support

¹⁰⁹ Emmrich Von Wolhelm, EU nominiert Vorzeigeprojekte für Global Gateway im Jahr 2024, Germany Trade & Invest (GTAI), January 29, 2024, <https://www.gtai.de/de/trade/eu/specials/eu-nominiert-vorzeigeprojekte-fuer-global-gateway-im-jahr-2024-1065244> (last accessed March 13, 2025).

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Interview with Samuel Samiai Andrews, Professor of Intellectual Property Law, Al Yamamah University College of Law, Al Khobar, on 5 December 2024.

¹¹² Interview with manager in the EU ACP Programme.

¹¹³ Interview with expert at the African Development Bank.

structuration of the sectors to allow for job creation and mobilisation of private sector, academic and education actors of both continents.

Youth engagement and priorities

Youth has been the focus of AU and EU policies and for the EU-AU partnership for a long time. As early as 2006, the AU declared in its African Youth Charter (2006): "States shall promote the development of youth media to effectively disseminate information to young people. Education should aim to develop their cognitive, creative, and emotional abilities, while also preserving and strengthening positive African morals, traditional values, and cultures." Youth is a cross-cutting priority of the AU Agenda 2063, which calls to empower youth, to nurture peace education¹¹⁴ and to enhance youth mobility on the continent.¹¹⁵

Youth and CCIs

The association is often made between youth, art, and creativity, but it is important to highlight the figures that demonstrate the economic reality behind it. Cultural and creative industries account for an estimated 50 million jobs worldwide and employ more young people (15–29-year-olds) than other sectors.¹¹⁶ This is also the case in Europe, where these industries typically employ more young people than any other sector. Creatives and cultural entrepreneurs tend to be self-employed: in the United States, creators and entrepreneurs in creative industries are 3.5 times more likely to be self-employed than an average worker in other sectors.¹¹⁷ Finally, SMEs represent 95% of all companies and generate 80 percent of jobs across the African continent.¹¹⁸ In terms of youth contribution to growth, Africa is now the fastest-growing global market for the gaming industry,¹¹⁹ and saw its number of gamers doubling over the past five years, mostly driven by youth gaming on their phones".¹²⁰

According to the International Labor Organization, Africa has the lowest unemployment rate globally among youth ages 15 to 24 (10.6 percent in 2021). However, these figures should not hide that most of Africa's youth either work informally, are underemployed or work in indecent conditions with low wages and no social safety net. "The African Development bank reported in 2016 that while 10 million to 12 million youth enter the workforce in Africa each year, only 3 million formal jobs are created annually, and it is common to see humanities and social sciences graduates driving taxis in Algiers and Cameroonian engineers ferrying passengers on commercial

¹¹⁴ African Union (2015), op. cit, p.8

¹¹⁵ African Union (2015), op. cit, p.17

¹¹⁶ Datta, N., Melchor, M. & Laclé, J. (2023), "Five ways creative and cultural industries respond to youth job challenges", World Bank Blogs, 5 Oct. 2023, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/jobs/five-ways-creative-and-cultural-industries-respond-youth-job-challenges> (last visited 6 Dec. 2024).

¹¹⁷ International Trade Centre (2019), op.cit.

¹¹⁸ IFACCA, ed. Sekhar, A. 2022. A Crisis of Sustainable Careers? Examining Working Conditions for Independent Arts and Cultural Workers. IFACCA, 2022, p.75.

¹¹⁹ In 2022, games sold in the region generated 862.8 million USD in revenue, up 8.7% year over year, according to Newzoo's research firm data: Ryan Browne, "Africa's Gaming Market Is Expected to Top \$1 Billion in 2024 — in the Face of a Global Slowdown," CNBC, July 14, 2023, <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/07/14/africas-gaming-market-is-expected-to-top-1-billion-in-2024-data.html>.

¹²⁰ Bonsundy-O'Bryan, T. & J. (2024), op.cit., BBC, Africa's video gaming boom, 11 April 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/audio/play/w3ct5zbp>.

motorcycles in Douala."¹²¹ This is a key challenge that an investment strategy, guided by an efficient policy framework for cultural and creative industries, can help address. By recognising the value of all career paths and fostering the creation of much-needed new jobs, African governments can make a positive impact on reducing underemployment. The cultural and creative industries are among the sectors where more jobs are possible, and needed for the sector. However, "many African parents discourage or even prevent their children from pursuing careers in these fields",¹²² often viewing them as hobbies rather than viable professions. This can be addressed by improving the alignment between skill-building, education and job creation in high-demand and successful sectors (see Part 5, [The way forward for a strengthened AU-EU partnership in culture](#)).

The EU has released numerous strategies, resolutions, reports and work plans to tackle youth's challenges and opportunities - both internally and in its external relations (see EU policy framework timeline). In 2022, on the occasion of the European Year of Youth, the Commission and the High Representative released the Youth Action Plan, a document guiding the EU external action for youth from 2022 to 2027: the "first ever policy framework for a strategic partnership with young people around the world"¹²³. The stated goals are "to shape external action in partnership with young people, to ensure their ownership and thus accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international commitments, such as the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda." It builds on the prior EU Youth Strategy formulated in 2019 targeting internal objectives for youth across the EU. Since 2021, the Directorate General for International Partnerships (INTPA) of the EU Commission has mobilised a "Youth Sounding Board" (2021-2023 and 2023-2025) advising on youth participation and empowerment in EU external action. The current board includes ten members from Sub-Saharan African countries (Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Uganda, Cameroon, Senegal, Ghana, Tanzania).¹²⁴

The relevance of the sector and of EU's support to CCIs to reach youth and women was reminded by Annica Floren, Deputy Head of Unit INTPA G3 insisting on the many opportunities created by the sector for women, youth and for societies as a whole to "promote open and diverse societies" that valorise heritage and create a space to debate.¹²⁵

Youth in AU-EU cultural cooperation

Concrete realisations have taken place in AU-EU cooperation for young creatives. The AU-EU youth cooperation hub was launched at the 5th EU-AU summit of Abidjan in 2017 and gathered 42 young experts from both continents including young professionals from the CCIs. The hub emphasised that "the culture sector is also increasingly a source of job creation, contributing to

¹²¹ Audrey Elom Donkor, Africa's Youth Unemployment Crisis Is a Global Problem, Foreign Policy, 19 October 2021.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. 2022. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU External Action 2022–2027, JOIN(2022) 53 final. Strasbourg, October 4, 2022.

¹²⁴ European Commission, "International Youth Day: EU Announces Youth Sounding Board for International Partnerships 2023–2025," press release, August 11, 2023, Brussels, retrieved from

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/ip_23_4125/IP_23_4125_EN.pdf

¹²⁵ European Commission. InfoPoint Conference: CreatiFI - The Cultural and Creative Industries Financing Initiative. 21 February 2024, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/events/infopoint-conference-creatifi-cultural-and-creative-industries-financing-initiative-2024-02-21_en. Accessed 11 Mar. 2025

growth, and an excellent conduit for promoting social inclusion." The cluster on culture aimed at supporting "young people working in creative industries, through local structures, investment in training, leadership, management, production and promotion of culture for young people." These objectives resulted in the project "ArtXChange. Connecting Young Creatives in Africa and Europe", a broad and impactful project that empowered young artists from Kenya, Somalia, Italy and Sweden, upgraded their knowledge of the cultural sector, gave them tools to make a living through art, and boosted their confidence. The project ran from 2019 to 2022. Despite very positive feedback given by youth and implementing agency,¹²⁶ the project has not continued and culture and CCIs are not mentioned in the new format of AU-EU Youth Lab. This is even though DG INTPA had in the past emphasised the success of cultural cooperation for youth:

"Our cultural cooperation has focused for some years on the professionalisation and competitiveness of cultural industries, because we are aware that the creative sector strongly involves young people, who are one of our priorities through our international partnerships." Agnieszka Skuratowicz, Head of Unit, Youth, Education and Culture, DG International Partnerships. European Commission (2022)¹²⁷

If youth remain a priority in the EU's new cooperation framework and the AU-EU partnership, the new strategic framework does not put culture nor CCIs forward, missing out on the opportunities it represents for youth. A new form of AU-EU youth cooperation was announced in the form of "the AU-EU Youth Lab". Launched in 2023, it benefits from a 10m call for proposals but the CCIs are not directly targeted.¹²⁸ However, no continuity was ensured between the AU-EU Youth Cooperation Hub for arts & culture and the AU-EU Youth Lab.

The Joint Report on "A Prosperous and Sustainable Africa and Europe" - that provides a concise overview of the progress made in delivering on the commitments from the 6th EU-AU Summit - focuses on education and skills benefiting from important Erasmus fundings but does not mention culture or CCIs.¹²⁹ Through the Team Europe approach, new projects for youth in the media and cultural sector have been supported, for instance with the Africa-Europe Youth academy (see Part 5, [How can culture support wider objectives of the AU-EU partnership?](#)). This focus should be further emphasised and applied to more channels of the Africa-EU relation, including as part of the AU-EU agenda with a clearer sectoral target.

Priorities for youth

The AEF Youth Survey conducted in the end of 2024 (with a total of 885 responses) informs us that 26% of African youth interviewed prioritise more balanced joint funding for cultural initiatives

¹²⁶ Interviews conducted with artists, cultural operators and programme managers as part of culture Solutions podcast series (Re)generating trust: Episode 3: "AU-EU Youth Cooperation breaks barriers through art", 25 October 2024 <https://www.culturesolutions.eu/podcast/AU-EU-youth-cooperation-breaks-barriers-through-art/>

¹²⁷ ACP-EU Culture Programme. Support to the Film and Audiovisual Sectors in ACP Countries. April 2022, p.5, retrieved from: <https://acp-ue-culture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Brochure-SUPPORT-TO-THE-FILM-AND-AUDIOVISUAL-SECTORS-IN-ACP-COUNTRIES-final.pdf>

¹²⁸ Joint report of the European Commission's DG INTPA, DG NEAR, African Union Commission and AUDA-NEPAD, "A Prosperous and Sustainable Africa and Europe", October 2024.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

between Africa and Europe and 29% see the lack of funding as the biggest challenge to the sustainability and inclusivity of cultural industries, a concern mirrored by 28% of the Europe-based sample.¹³⁰

Internet access and digitalisation is a top priority for youth on the African continent, with consequences on the media approach that are important to underline when talking about CCIs. "Four-in-five youth say internet connectivity is a fundamental human right, but only two-in-three have regular, private, internet access. (...) Social media apps are the most frequently used. (...) Television remains the top information source for youth but it is declining while Facebook remains in second and is climbing. (...) BBC and CNN are the most trusted news sources, but the proportion of people who say they encounter fake news at least once a week has risen to nearly half. Fake news is seen to be a serious problem as a range of organisations use it to advance their agendas, and over three-in-five people worry about the impact of fake news and misinformation on upcoming elections."¹³¹ Joseph Siegle, Director of Research at the Africa Centre of the United States Department of Defense, observes that "in environments where there is no established set of trusted media outlets, we see an explosion of unregulated and unfiltered social media"—a phenomenon particularly evident in the Sahel, where Russia is pursuing a strong strategy on social networks.¹³²

These data from the African Youth Survey 2024 (5,604 youth surveyed in Congo Brazzaville, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, Namibia, Chad, Cameroon, Tanzania, and Côte d'Ivoire) shows how technological changes combined with a rising young population (in 2050, more than half of the African population will be under 25 according to the latest UN predictions) are profoundly shaping media forms and news sources. "Facebook usage among young people has risen to 56% in 2024, up from 49% in 2020. WhatsApp and TikTok, channels included in the survey commissioned by the Ichikowitz Family Foundation for the first time, have become significant news sources for 41% and 32% of youth, respectively. This shift to digital media is underpinned by the widespread availability of smartphones and the internet. With the rise of digital media, fake news has become a significant concern. The 2024 survey shows that 44% of African youth encounter fake news more than once a week, up from 36% in 2022. This increase highlights the urgent need for strategies to combat mis and disinformation."¹³³

Digital media and social media has also become a powerful tool for communication and cultural exchanges among displaced and diasporic Africans and their countries of origin. Some scholars have noted how digital media "offer African diasporas an immediacy of connection to people and institutions in the homeland as well as to communities and compatriots in diaspora". This allows diasporas and displaced communities a tool to act and communicate across geographic and political borders.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ AEF Youth Survey 2024

¹³¹ Ibid

¹³² Holyoke, G., Que peut faire l'Europe face à l'influence croissante de la Russie dans le Sahel africain ?, Euronews, 18 April 2025, <https://fr.euronews.com/2025/04/18/que-peut-faire-leurope-face-a-linfluence-croissante-de-la-russie-dans-le-sahel-africain>

¹³³ Ibid, p.86.

¹³⁴ Bernal, V. (2020). African Digital Diasporas: Technologies, Tactics, and Trends: Introduction. *African Diaspora*, 12(1-2), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18725465-bja10007>

Youth attention on fake news and demand for accurate information is raised by the Goethe-Institut in its latest annual report 2023/2024 in Africa, mentioning that young people are "demanding transformation, freedom of opinion and participation."¹³⁵ The Goethe-Institut's answer to these concerns is to provide spaces for negotiation and integration of excluded groups, strengthen intra-African dialogue via mobility programmes such as "Moving Africa", residencies, and workshops, and promote transcultural participation within Africa.

Youth perception of foreign influence

African youth surveys bring interesting insights from youth perception. In light of the UN predictions that by 2050, more than half of the African population will be under 25, it is essential to appreciate the magnitude of this growth in policy making. The Ichikowitz Family Foundation Annual African Youth provides us with insightful data on youth perception.

In 2024, just over half of African youth (55%) viewed former colonial powers as having a positive influence on their country, while nearly one third (31%) considered their influence to be negative. The EU's influence has waned, with a 14-point drop in positive perceptions since the initial survey was conducted in 2020. Differences can also be noted among francophone and anglophone African regions, with 69% viewing France's influence positively, and the UK, now outside of the EU, garnering a much higher positive perception from 85% of respondents.¹³⁶ But what the youth survey brings to the fore is that African youths reject colonial as much as neo-colonial systems, might they be "new" or "old" powers. Seven out of 10 youth surveyed remain concerned about the influence of foreign powers, particularly China and the US, that are seen to have the greatest influence. This influence is also viewed positively driven by affordable Chinese products and Chinese investment in infrastructure.

Those who viewed the US's influence in a positive light point to the economic support it offered. Although Russia is not viewed as one of the most influential international powers in the region, an increasing proportion of youths negatively view the impact of this influence in their countries, mainly driven by the detrimental impacts being felt from Russia's engagement in conflicts. The youth believe their leaders should have a louder voice and can drive change on the global stage. They want to see their governments engaging directly on international issues both within the continent and beyond.

¹³⁵ The Goethe-Institut, Yearbook 2023/2024, retrieved from https://www.goethe.de/resources/files/pdf330/gi_jahrbuch_2324_gb_web-v1.pdf

¹³⁶ Youth African Ichikowitz Family Foundation & American Institute PSB. 2024. African Youth Survey 2024: A Turning Point for African Youth, Youth African Ichikowitz Family Foundation.

Culture to advance sustainable development

"Balanced development can only be ensured by making cultural factors an integral part of the strategies designed to achieve it" UNESCO (2013)¹³⁷

Both the AU and EU have been advocating for the links between culture and sustainable development, in line with UNESCO's framework. In a [declaration signed in Dakar on 27 April 2023](#), 60 African and European museum directors committed to "rethink together our practices by relying more on cultural knowledge and expertise to better adapt to climate issues and work on environmentally friendly spaces".¹³⁸

EU policy framework

The EU has been at the forefront of linking youth, culture, and development, and it would be a pity to lose sight of these efforts. In 2016, the Voices of Culture's report on "Developing the entrepreneurial and innovation potential of the cultural and creative sectors" already flagged how "the story of growth misses the full value of CCS and contribution to society, especially in Europe with mass youth unemployment. We believe that CCS is a cornerstone for a new narrative of Europe, which does not neglect growth, but is not limited to growth either. We need to ensure alternative stories of the (non-economic or not only economic) value of cultural and creative sectors are told and heard."¹³⁹

Building on this observation, the 2019 Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the member states meeting within the Council on the Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Development made a strong statement:

- "The three dimensions of sustainability (economic, social and environmental) are integrated and indivisible and culture is an inseparable part of all three";
- "The SDGs do not refer to all the policies and measures that can be used to achieve sustainability; however, all policies and measures, including cultural policies and measures, can – and should – be actively used to attain the SDGs";
- "Culture, as a sector of activity, can be understood as a self-sustaining pillar in Nairobi sustainable development".

The broader international community also recognises the importance of culture in driving development and empowering youth. The UN Pact for the Future adopted in November 2024 affirms that "culture (as well as sport) can contribute to more effective, inclusive, equitable and sustainable development and decides to "integrate culture into economic, social and environmental development policies and strategies and ensure adequate public investment in the protection and promotion of culture".¹⁴⁰ It is important that INTPA does not lose sight of the importance of cultural cooperation. As shared by a former EU Ambassador interviewed for this

¹³⁷ UNESCO, Declaration of the World Conference on Cultural Policies, 1982, Mexico ; Cunnigham, M., Culture: a pillar for development and good living, Culture & Development n°9, UNESCO, 2013, p.32.

¹³⁸ Africa Museum. 2023. The AfricaMuseum Signs the Declaration of Dakar. April 27, 2023.

¹³⁹ EU Voices of Culture. 2016. Voices of Culture 2016: Development and Innovation. European Commission.

¹⁴⁰ UN General Assembly (2024), op.cit.

research, "a euro invested in culture is worth a thousand euros invested elsewhere. Of course, we have to do other things and invest in other sectors, but culture must never be lacking".

AU policy framework

The AU has insisted on the links between culture and development as early as 1985 when it declared that "Cultural development should be closely aligned with Africa's economic development"¹⁴¹ and several times since then (see AU policy framework timeline). In 2005, it recognised its inherent political aspect and economic strength: "Culture can contribute to bringing together what politics has separated as well as to the hastening and consolidation of the process of restructuring in the economic field. On the other hand, cultural action can develop properly only on a solid material and economic basis, and it cannot be separated from the socio-economic reality, which constitutes its backbone."¹⁴² Capacity-building featured prominently in the training of cultural product producers in business and entrepreneurship, and involvement throughout the CCI value chain could aid in financial stability and cross-sectoral benefits. Other practical recommendations to support those involved in CCI include providing a favourable tax environment as an incentive to join the industry. Market access and distribution are identified as significant barriers to the success of CCI, providing an opportunity for an ICR intervention.

Culture, development and sustainability for rural areas

Recent estimates indicate that 57% of Africa's population lives in rural areas, though proportions vary significantly between countries—for instance, in Burundi, Niger, and Chad, more than 70% of the population is rural.¹⁴³ The overall trend points to rapid urbanisation, with rural populations gradually declining as cities expand. However, rapid urbanisation can cause significant harm to natural, cultural, and intangible heritage. UNESCO emphasised in 2019 how the great diversity and remarkable natural heritage of Sub-Saharan Africa formed "the basis of the overall approach to culture, that associates both the tangible and intangible dimensions of culture and reflects the links between people and their environment."¹⁴⁴ CCIs offer opportunities of sustainable jobs to rural communities that match the existing context and does not aggravate the divide between urban and rural areas.¹⁴⁵ An analysis of the Team Europe Initiative "Invest in Young Business in Africa" showed that most funded projects happened in urbanised English-speaking countries. CCIs can help leverage this gap and offer a more harmonious development.

¹⁴¹ Organization of the African Union, Declaration of the Chiefs of State and Government of OAU on the cultural aspects of Lagos Plan of Action for economic development of Africa (AHG/Dec 1 (XXI) adopted in 1985 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

¹⁴² African Union. 2005. Nairobi Plan of Action for Cultural Industries in Africa. African Union First Ordinary Session of AU Conference of Ministers of Culture, December 10–14, 2005, Nairobi, Kenya. AUC/MC/Min/Prog (I). https://ocpa.irmo.hr/resources/docs/AU_POA_Industries_2005-en.pdf. Accessed August 13, 2019.

¹⁴³ World Bank staff estimates based on the United Nations Population Division's World Urbanization Prospects: 2018 Revision, Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, pp. 1285–1455.

¹⁴⁴ UNESCO, Culture and Public Policy for Sustainable Development: Forum of Ministers of Culture, 2019, p.82.

¹⁴⁵ Other resources mentioned in the literature review provide an in-depth understanding. We can cite here to SACO's work on The Role of Cultural and Creative Industries in Regenerating Urban and Rural Space and Economies in South Africa (2016) and on Rural Cultural Policy (2017).

Development initiatives in rural areas, particularly in the cultural sector, through the promotion of a country's natural, touristic, and cultural wealth, can and should serve as an alternative to urbanisation—which, while natural and desirable, should not be the only path forward. Africa and Europe can also engage in joint discussions on these issues, adopting a shared approach to heritage conservation challenges. Furthermore, African cultural heritage is increasingly at risk due to climate change, which leads to population displacement and the loss of local cultures linked to the land. The IPCC highlighted nature-based tourism as a key source of revenue for Africa and warned several years ago that climate change was already having a negative impact on the continent's tourism sector.¹⁴⁶

Moreover, cultural actors have a role of knowledge transmission and professionalisation in rural areas. In West Africa, notably Mali and Burkina Faso, "cultural banks", exist since the 1980s. By establishing a new model of a "rural village museum" based on a participatory approach and citizen ownership, cultural actors have successfully forged a connection between local inhabitants, their cultural heritage, and its economic value. Cultural banks have also played a key role in fostering the concept of the "living object", essential for maintaining ties with heritage and ensuring the transmission of local knowledge. This approach has been supported by microcredits and loans, enabling citizens to lend their artifacts to the museum, thereby helping to combat cultural heritage looting. A similar model could be applied to enhance the value of natural heritage for local communities, preventing forms of tourism that cause environmental harm, fail to preserve the landscape, or solely benefit new investors without bringing positive impacts to residents.

The connection between culture, citizen participation, and environmental protection is particularly evident in rural areas. The AfricaMuseum actively supports citizen science initiatives, engaging broad audiences in both Belgium and Africa—particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda.¹⁴⁷ These programmes invite public participation in activities such as inventorying, digitisation, prediction, and research.

¹⁴⁶ Tourism contributed 8.5% of Africa's 2018 gross domestic product (GDP) (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019a) with wildlife tourism contributing a third of tourism revenue (USD 70.6 billion), supporting 8.8 million jobs (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019b), Trisos, C.H., I.O. Adelekan, E. Totin, A. Ayanlade, J. Efitre, A. Gameda, K. Kalaba, C. Lennard, C. Masao, Y. Mgaya, G. Ngaruiya, D. Olago, N.P. Simpson, and S. Zakieldean, 2022: Africa. In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegria, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, pp. 1285–1455, doi:10.1017/9781009325844.011.

¹⁴⁷ AfricaMuseum, Citizen science, https://www.africamuseum.be/en/get_involved/citizen_science (last visited 30 May 2025).

Social entrepreneurship: a model for commercialising the craft market

There are common challenges that rural areas face. Rural areas have particularly fragile economies. In some cases the discontinuation of farming subsidies and consolidation of farmlands have resulted in less involvement in agriculture, limiting income generation and food security. Urbanisation is a double-edged sword and as much as relatives may sell cultural goods and send money back, many people do not have the skills to survive in the rapidly changing world. The failure of the school and healthcare system is particularly detrimental to the rural population which already access half the government services that urban populations do. The high HIV prevalence in South Africa and the accompanying TB affect people's quality of life. Schools in rural areas are often under-resourced and have poor outcomes, limiting learners' progression to the next phase of their education and skills development.

It is within this context that Dr Nairne, an African American social development expert, hoped to make a difference. Dr Nairne sees the African diaspora as an untapped market for the continent's cultural products. Remittances to rural areas are a significant source of income, and her hope has been to empower impoverished communities through the commercialisation of the rural craft sector has had limited success, she still hopes that her vision will materialise.

Dr Nairne's efforts are not misguided, the crafts market remains untapped, providing an opportunity for an intervention. The blurred line between what constitutes "rural" and "urban" can work in favour of CCIs as cultural products from the countryside find their way to urban markets through rural-urban-rural migrations. Mobile connectivity has grown by 60.4% in the years 2001-2011 providing possibilities for developing visibility and marketing. Despite the rural-urban dynamics, the value chain of rural CCIs can be invisible and the involvement of rural communities in the entire value chain is limited.¹⁴⁸

Pan-Africanism and democratic aspiration

Agenda 2063 was launched under the leadership of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the first woman to serve as Chairperson of the African Union Commission (2012–2017). This agenda envisions an integrated Africa, reviving the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the concept of an African Renaissance—ideas which themselves underpinned the birth of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and later, the African Union.

Pan-Africanism emerged in the Caribbean during the 19th century, against the backdrop of slavery's abolition, and was profoundly influenced by the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804). At its core, Pan-Africanism represents an idea of solidarity among African peoples.¹⁴⁹

Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of independent Ghana, brought Pan-Africanism to the forefront of the African political stage. In 1963, alongside peers such as Julius Nyerere, the first President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Nkrumah initiated the OAU. During the 1960s,

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Dr Dorothy Nairne, Independent in the sector of Community arts and crafts support, on 3 December 2024.

¹⁴⁹ Boukari-Yabara, A. (2017), *Africa Unite ! Une histoire du panafricanisme*, Paris: La Découverte.

Ghana became a haven for Pan-Africanists from around the world, hosting notable figures such as Dr W.E.B. Du Bois and artists and intellectuals like the poet Maya Angelou.¹⁵⁰

To construct this political vision, intellectuals, authors, and artists have emphasised the need for an African Renaissance. The concept was put forward in 1948 by Cheikh Anta Diop, who called for the development of an African historical consciousness¹⁵¹—fortified by deep and autonomous knowledge of the continent's cultural past. His vision aimed to reconnect Africans with their own cultural heritage: encompassing "traditional dance, music, oral and written literature, aesthetic and social values, African languages, and fostering active participation in shaping the modern world through creativity".¹⁵²

Pan-Africanism views democracy as an ongoing process in which citizens collectively participate in transforming governance institutions. Today, African and Caribbean artists, writers, and thinkers continue to uphold the original ideals of Pan-Africanism—founded on the struggle against oppression and inequality, and for the liberation of peoples. Contemporary Pan-African movements observed across the continent are increasingly driven by popular calls for sovereignty and the mobilisation of civil society.¹⁵³ Young professionals are anchoring Africa's current democratic struggles in the intellectual foundations of Pan-Africanism.

"Books and all forms of writing have always been objects of terror to those who seek to suppress truth." – The Man Died, Wole Soyinka (1972)¹⁵⁴

Africa today faces a growing tension between nationalist movements and the broader continental project. Much like within the European Union, nationalist tendencies often reinforce one another, leading to paradoxical forms of political integration,¹⁵⁵ where ties between nationalist states deepen despite the criticism of supranational entities. These nationalist movements are frequently propelled by grassroots demands for genuine democracy and independence.

The latest Afrobarometer survey reveals that nearly 70% of Africans prefer democracy over any other system of governance. Over three-quarters reject military, one-party, or authoritarian regimes. Citizens aged 18 to 30 demonstrate the strongest commitment to democratic ideals, yet they frequently encounter resistance from elites who attempt to hijack democratic processes

¹⁵⁰ "Qui était Kwame Nkrumah, le père fondateur du panafricanisme ?", Geo, 31 December 2022, <https://www.geo.fr/histoire/qui-etait-kwame-nkrumah-le-pere-fondateur-du-panafricanisme-212972>

¹⁵¹ Diop Cheikh Anta (1990 [1948]), « Quand pourra-t-on parler d'une renaissance africaine ? », in C. A. Diop (dir.), *Alerte sous les tropiques. Articles 1946-1960. Culture et Développement en Afrique noire*, Paris, Présence africaine, pp.34-44.

¹⁵² Brener, E. De l'oralité à l'audiovisuel pour la Renaissance Africaine et du rôle de la femme pour cet objectif. 3e Congrès international de la Femme Noire – Kinshasa, 1 December 2009, cited on Ceafri, *Qu'est-ce qu'est la renaissance africaine ?*, 21 July 2010, <https://www.ceafri.net/site/spip.php?article144>

¹⁵³ Nantulya, P. Vers une renaissance du panafricanisme ?, Africa Center, 3 April 2024, <https://africacenter.org/fr/spotlight/renaissance-du-panafricanisme/>

¹⁵⁴ Silver, J. Book Review: *Africa Uprising: Popular Protest and Political Change* by Adam Branch and Zachariah Mampilly, Blog London School of Economics, 23 October 2015, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2015/10/23/book-review-africa-uprising-popular-protest-and-political-change-by-adam-branch-and-zachariah-mampilly/>

¹⁵⁵ Nissen, A. (2022). *Europeanisation of the Contemporary Far Right: Generation Identity and Fortress Europe* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003226604>

through fraudulent elections and authoritarian manoeuvres. As a result, only 43% of Africans report satisfaction with how democracy functions in their countries.¹⁵⁶

This widespread dissatisfaction has, paradoxically, led to growing public support for military coups. In 2024, Afrobarometer also reported that opposition to military rule has weakened by 11 percentage points across 30 countries—most significantly in Mali and Burkina Faso, where it dropped by 40 and 36 points respectively. Furthermore, over half of Africans (53% across 39 countries) now say they would accept a military takeover if elected leaders "abuse power for their own ends."¹⁵⁷

In this increasingly complex and evolving perception of democracy in Africa, the role of artists, cultural professionals, and writers should be recognised in their capacity to engage youth in dialogues on the perception and experience of democracies, with a capacity to convey the essence of Pan-Africanism and nurturing grassroots democratic movements across the continent (see [Cultural actors as drivers of solidarity](#) and [Culture and democracy](#)).

Conclusion: Culture, too big to be ignored

"If you want to destroy a nation, you attack its culture" Glenn Micallef, EU Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport (2025)¹⁵⁸

Culture is a reflection of our societies. This part has shown how culture is on the forefront of the trends shaping our economies and our societies, as well as having a great capacity to help cope these challenges. The rapid transformations driven by the digital sector have begun to seriously threaten cultural and creative workers, while also challenging us to redefine and protect human creativity itself and to mobilise legal framework and international organisations to act collectively. Threats to societies and communities are equally threats to their cultural - tangible and intangible - and natural heritage. In this context, heritage stands as both a witness to climate change and a hope for sustainable economies and future. For this reason, any future-oriented African-European partnership cannot overlook the central role of culture and cultural relations, for countries and peoples.

The global phenomena affecting culture and cultural ecosystems serve as a wake-up call to rethink cultural relations to make them more relevant. Whether from economic, geopolitical or technological points of view, cultural cooperation and support for CCIs' development, exchanges of best practices and capacity building of cultural actors and entrepreneurs, are strategic. Some have spoken of "tech-driven renaissance" to qualify the African creative economy. New technologies and digitalisation of the sector bring new revenue streams and better ways to

¹⁵⁶ Afrobarometer Network, Africans want more democracy, but their leaders still aren't listening , January 2023, Afrobarometer Policy Paper, 19 January 2023, p.85, <https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/pp85-africans-want-more-democracy-but-their-leaders-still-arent-listening/>

¹⁵⁷ Afrobarometer, African insights 2024: Democracy at risk – the people's perspective, 17 July 2024, Afrobarometer (2024). African insights 2024 Democracy at risk – the people's perspective, p.5.

¹⁵⁸ Pieter Haeck and Eddy Wax, "Funding Culture Is Key to EU Security, Commissioner Says," Politico, February 13, 2025, <https://www.politico.eu/article/funding-culture-key-eu-security-commissioner-glenn-micallef/>.

produce data and hence quantifying the sectors' gains. It also brings new actors, new influences and more livelihoods.

Cultural relations between Africa and Europe can be guided by diverse rationales—economic, creative, memorial, digital, societal—each involving different stakeholders. Despite these varied entry points, stakeholders will ultimately interact within shared cultural ecosystems. To support this evolving landscape, policy frameworks must be better equipped to facilitate the transition. They should recognise the interconnections between cultural sectors in both regions and help seize opportunities for mutually beneficial projects.

3- Actors of Africa-Europe cultural relations

In this part:

- **EU's framework for ICR**
- **AU's framework for ICR**
- **Cultural actors, shapers of intercontinental relations**
- **A closer look at displaced and diasporic communities**
- **Perception of institutions**
- **Conclusion: AU and EU expected to engage**

Africa–Europe cultural relations are shaped by a multiplicity of actors and overlapping processes of engagement—ranging from national and supranational institutions to private entities, civil society organisations, cultural professionals, citizens, diasporic and displaced communities all interacting in cultural ecosystems whose definition becomes larger and more complex. The 2025 revised UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics defines cultural ecosystem in the context of the CCIs as "a complex environment wherein artists, social groups, cultural communities, audiences, and a broad spectrum of public and private intermediaries engage in various relationships to generate diverse forms of cultural and economic value."¹⁵⁹ These actors are driven by diverse motivations and operate within various conceptual frameworks—from cultural diplomacy to international cultural relations, and from development cooperation to international trade.

At the institutional level, the EU and the AU are working together on a number of joint initiatives aimed at fostering artistic collaboration, cultural cooperation and diffusion of cultural productions across the two continents. These include artist residencies, joint exhibitions, and shared training programmes. Beyond explicitly cultural initiatives, other collaborative frameworks also influence the cultural sector and offer promising entry points for further integration with the CCIs. Notable examples include the AU–EU Innovation Agenda¹⁶⁰ and joint efforts to promote awareness of intellectual property legal framework and the development of ethical frameworks for artificial intelligence.

This section examines how the EU and the AU, as institutions, engage with broader cultural ecosystems and how the frameworks they have established are supported and shaped by cultural actors. Drawing on qualitative research, it explores how cultural actors perceive the EU and AU presence and action. The section begins by revisiting the roles of the EU and AU in the field of ICR highlighting the critical contribution of cultural actors in defining and advancing this domain. It also sheds light on diasporic and displaced communities, central actors in international cultural relations, and whose role and impact deserve greater attention.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ UNESCO. 2025. Draft revision of the UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics. UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

¹⁶⁰ European Commission. 2023. The EU-AU Innovation Agenda: Final Version. July 19, 2023.

¹⁶¹ The recent publication by On the Move, "Movements of Translation and Return: Art, Mobility and the Diaspora" addresses as a case study the topic of African diasporas in Europe and their connections to African-European cultural mobility flows. Ganza L., Gaylard J., Mutumba Y., Mudekereza P., Walgrave J, Wilson C.R, Movements of Translation and Return: Art, Mobility and the Diaspora, 2025, On the Move, available at on-the-move.org/resources and <https://deconfining.eu>.

EU framework for ICR

EU scope of action

International cultural relations is a difficult area to navigate within EU affairs, with EU member states remaining the prominent actors.¹⁶² Member states' national external cultural action long precedes EU ICR and culture remains a competence of member states for which the EU can have a supplementary role.¹⁶³ As reminded in culture Solutions' 2020 annual research report making sense of European actors involved in EU ICR, member states' governments are the main political authority. "On the basis of the subsidiarity principle and the treaties (culture is supplementary competence of the EU, member states have the primacy in cultural affairs), member states are supposedly entitled to draw a line between what is nationally cultural and what is Europeanly cultural. The stance they take in their collective statements in the European Council of heads of states and governments (EUCO) and more frequently in various Council configurations (Council conclusions and regulations) sets the tone of EU ICR and gives the direction of travel to all EU institutions in charge of policy design and implementation."¹⁶⁴

The role of the EU - understood here as the Union's institutions - as per the treaties (TFEU Article 167.2), is as followed:

- to protect and promote cultural diversity,
- to contribute to safeguarding and valorising Europe's rich cultural heritage,
- to foster exchanges of good practices between the member states as well as to support the development of the cultural and creative sectors and industries (CCSI),
- to bring common European heritage to the fore,
- and to foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the sphere of culture, in particular the Council of Europe.

The European Commission helps the member states to share policies and practices and to address common challenges such as the digital transformation, the impact of climate change on cultural heritage monuments, questions relating to sustainability, changing models of cultural governance, precarious working conditions of artists and cultural professionals, lack of skills in the CCIs, and the need to support the innovation potential of these sectors. The current EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026 agreed upon by the Council of the EU sets out four priorities for European cooperation, including strengthening the cultural dimension of EU external relations. The prevalence of member states coupled with the high symbolic weight of cultural cooperation can nevertheless make it difficult for policy makers at the EU level to navigate ICR and to be present, visible and leading on cultural cooperation.

¹⁶² For an extensive analysis of EU institutions and member states in cultural cooperation, see Helly, D. (ed.) (2020). composing Trust research report 2019-2020, culture Solutions, p.16: "National governments fund and support their national audiovisual broadcasting companies. Large national cultural organisations and institutions have their own cultural diplomacy led by autonomous international relations departments and teams. EU member states develop their own national educative and scientific external action and cooperation, with network of schools, universities, artistic residencies abroad, etc. member states' governments are the main political authority involved in EU international cultural relations. On the basis of the subsidiarity principle and the treaties (culture is supplementary competence of the EU, member states have the primacy in cultural affairs), member states are supposedly entitled to draw a line between what is nationally cultural and what is Europeanly cultural."

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

EU actors involved in ICR implementation

Within the EU institutions, EU ICR with Africa is the realm of DG INTPA for Sub-Saharan Africa, DG MENA for North Africa and the EEAS. DG INTPA is responsible for the allocation of funds for cultural cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁶⁵ The EEAS is active through the network of EU Delegations covering cultural cooperation in partner countries and managing fundings from bilateral and regional geographic envelopes.¹⁶⁶ As noted by EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture), the European Commission and the EEAS, EU Delegations "have a strong reputation and extensive knowledge in the preparation, programming and implementation of projects, particularly in the field of culture and development".¹⁶⁷

This commitment from the EU Delegations has been witnessed in Burkina Faso, where the EU is active with the Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO), which has established itself as one of the main events for showcasing African cinema on the world stage over the last 50 years.¹⁶⁸ The delegation announced a support of more than 297.000 EUR (195 million FCFA) to the 29th edition of the Festival that took place from 22 February to 1 March 2025. It was also responsible for implementing the Support Programme for Creative Industries and Cultural Governance (PAIC-GC), designed to support the implementation of Burkina Faso's national culture and tourism strategy. This programme was co-financed by the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) and the Burkinabè government. With a total budget of 16.714.000 EUR (nearly 11 billion FCFA), the programme ran for five years (2018-2023).¹⁶⁹ The head of the delegation announced discussions with the Burkinabè Minister of Communication, Culture, Arts, and Tourism, and government spokesperson, Pingdwendé Gilbert Ouédraogo, particularly regarding the programme's evaluation and new prospects for the "regional programme that will promote intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity, and mutual understanding between the peoples of Europe and Africa."¹⁷⁰

However, since 2021 and the shift in priorities announced with the Global Gateway and the so called "Geopolitical European Commission", the EU delegations have not been convincingly encouraged by EU (and particularly INTPA) headquarters and management to programme ambitious funding for cultural projects. The Global Gateway has not singled out culture and CCIs as strategic area for cooperation and no specific budget line in the NDICI has been created. Since the encouraging joint letter sent by the EEAS and DEVCO to delegations in 2016 and the 2018, 2019 and 2021 Council Conclusions, the EU has not managed to optimise the use of its external resources in support of ICR.

¹⁶⁵ EU Who is who, https://op.europa.eu/en/web/who-is-who/organization/-/organization/INTPA/COM_CRF_240795 (last accessed March 11, 2025).

¹⁶⁶ "The 2018 Council Conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022, the EU Global Strategy and other policy documents produced in Brussels provided a policy-base for EU Delegations to launch and implement activities linking more consciously culture with peace-building and development". European Council, "Draft Council Conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022", 13948/18 CULT 137, Brussels, 15 November 2018, cited in Helly, D. (ed.) (2020). composing Trust research report 2019-2020, culture Solutions, p.64.

¹⁶⁷ European Commission, Joint Guidelines: EUNIC - EEAS - EC Partnership, Brussels, January 2021 (second edition), p.5.

¹⁶⁸ European External Action Service, Delegation to Burkina Faso, Press release "Fespaco 2025: l'Union Européenne Annonce un Appui de Plus de 195 Millions de FCFA," EEAS, January 28, 2025, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/burkina-faso/fespaco-2025-l%E2%80%99union-europ%C3%A9enne-annonce-un-appui-de-plus-de-195-millions-de-fcfa_fr?s=86.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

AU framework for ICR

The AU has made strong declarations in support of culture for Africans, adopting a continental approach. This commitment has deep historical roots, with the Cultural Charter for Africa adopted in 1976. The charter aimed to rehabilitate, restore, preserve, and promote African cultural heritage while encouraging both intra-African and international cultural cooperation.¹⁷¹ Nine years later, African heads of state and governments reaffirmed their belief in culture's potential for development, moving beyond a narrow focus on economic growth. They asserted that "cultural identities, as a dynamic process of continuity, creativity, and adaptation to innovation, should be at the heart of development, promoting stability, cohesion, and the social advancement of communities."¹⁷²

The AU has since demonstrated both strength and vision in its ambition to promote culture, notably through the African Charter for Cultural Renaissance and by making culture a key pillar of its Agenda 2063 vision. Agenda 2063 seeks to foster cultural and historical knowledge among African youth through two flagship projects: the Great Museum of Africa and the Encyclopaedia Africana. However, progress on these initiatives remains limited.¹⁷³

Beyond the will to support culture, the AU lacks the leverage to encourage member states to collaborate more effectively on the legal and administrative frameworks affecting CCIs. In practice, the AU does not have the budget to implement transnational cultural projects, as funding depends on governmental decisions. However, successful examples of transnational projects happening outside the realm of the AU must be underlined: the rescue of the Timbuktu Scrolls that resulted from a bilateral cooperation between South Africa and Mali with the support from AUDA-NEPAD is a significant symbol of intra-African cultural cooperation and the shared vision for an African future building on an esteemed past.¹⁷⁴ The work of organisations such as Selam, which launched the Connect for Culture Africa initiative advocating for governments to allocate 1% of their national budgets to culture, will be essential in achieving this goal.

Despite the limited outcomes from AU declarations, cultural actors still recognise the organisation's potential. A shared understanding of a common African approach to CCIs is emerging, particularly concerning key issues such as intellectual property rights and mobility, both of which are vital for creative production and revenue generation. The AU is expected to play a leading role in removing barriers that hinder the growth and development of CCIs, and to step up its actorness.

Within the AU institutions, several bodies and agencies, not all permanent, are responsible for culture - directly or indirectly. The most direct one is within the Culture Division within the Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development Department of the AU Commission. Its mandate covers the harmonisation and coordination of "activities and policies across the continent, in

¹⁷¹ Organization of African Unity (OAU), 1976, op.cit.

¹⁷² Organization of African Unity (OAU), 1985, op.cit.

¹⁷³ African Union, 2015, op.cit. The Great Museum of Africa and Encyclopaedia Africana. In 2022, progress report on the completion of Africa 2063 vision reported that The Encyclopaedia Africana provides an African worldview of the people, culture, literature and history of Africa and is a key tool to be used to educate, inform and set the records straight regarding the history, culture and contributions of African people throughout the world.

¹⁷⁴ The South Africa-Mali Project: Timbuktu Manuscripts, South African Presidency, NEPAD Cultural Project, September 2014., retrieved from: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/potimbuktu0.pdf

order to build further structure and opportunities for using culture for integration and African renaissance, cultural development, promotion of creative and cultural industries"¹⁷⁵. The Division grounds its work on the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance, the Language Plan of Action for Africa, the AU Plan of Action for Cultural and Creative Industries and the AU Model Law on the Protection of Cultural Property and Heritage.¹⁷⁶ The main challenge of the Division remains the lack of human and financial resources - being of the smallest units within the AU.¹⁷⁷

Within the AU Commission, the Citizens & Diaspora Directorate (CIDO), addresses culture across groups including associations of artists, NGOs and cultural organisations. Its core mandate is to mainstream civil society contributions through all aspects of AU principles, policies, and programmes. Beyond the AU Commission, there are the Economic Social & Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), and two specialised agencies: the African Academy of languages and the African Audiovisual and Cinema Commission (located in Kenya and created in 2019). The African Union Development Agency of the AU (AUDA-NEPAD), as the implementing arm for the AU's Agenda 2063 development strategy, also has a role to play.

At the intergovernmental level, Ministers of Culture are scheduled to meet annually in a special technical committee, sometimes represented by Directors of Culture within their Ministry. While dialogue has been sustained, the implementation and follow-up remains the key issue.¹⁷⁸

Culture is supported by the Pan-African Cultural Congress (PACC), a non-permanent structure. Thus far, six Congresses have taken place between 2006 to 2024. PACCs welcome cultural experts, policy makers, private sector and civil society organisations working in the arts and culture sector. Congresses aim to take stock of the challenges and record good practices on harnessing cultural diversity to enhance development. One of the responsibilities of the PACC is to revise the AU Plan of Action on Cultural and Creative Industries. The last revision was supervised by the 5th PACC under the chairmanship of Daves Ghuza. Among the goals announced in the plan of action are:

- Enabling environment for the growth of the sector,
- Ensuring IP compliance with socio-economic development,
- Accelerating movement of cultural goods, services and people within the continent,
- And leveraging technology to develop & enhance global competitiveness of Africa's CCIs.

Cultural actors, shapers of intercontinental relations

Where would the cultural relations of Africa and Europe be today without writers, designers, curators, who through their work and their lives have captured the contacts between the continents, and make it visible to wider audiences through art? The role of artists is too often taken for granted, without recognising the pre-conditions required: ability to create, to move, to think freely, and the desire to understand oneself, and the other. The recent passing of Koyo Kouoh—a

¹⁷⁵ African Union, Division of Culture, <https://au.int/en/sa/dc>, (last accessed March 11, 2025).

¹⁷⁶ "Angela Martins – A Crusader for the Development of African Culture," CEO Africa, December 22, 2018, <https://www.ceoafrika.com/newsdetails.php?tabnews=57147>.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Daves Ghuza, Producer/Director, former Chairperson of the Bureau of the 5th Pan-African Cultural Congress, on 17 January 2025.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

leading figure in contemporary African art, head of the Zeitz Museum in Cape Town, the world's largest museum dedicated to contemporary African art, and curator of the upcoming 2026 Venice Biennale—reminds us of the immense influence artists wield through the vision they carry. Through their knowledge of their culture and their love of creation, they embody a power capable of transcending rigid frameworks and building bridges.

"Before writing, language, cities, and villages, we were already making art. (...) Everything began in Africa, and everything we do is part of that lineage. Certain fundamental, unchanging elements make us human. In a way, we are guided and shaped by writings and objects, but what truly matters are the people. Art is an extension of ourselves, because our lives alone are not enough. No other field offers this level of freedom and responsibility, this capacity for transformation." Koyo Kouoh (2025)¹⁷⁹

Understanding the value of art and culture—for societies, for young people, and for fostering harmonious relations between countries and continents—takes time. Policy frameworks must learn to adapt to this slower, more deliberate rhythm in order to truly support such an approach. As with environmental and sustainability policies, this may run counter to existing economic models. Yet a growing movement recognises artistic and cultural education as a vital force of hope—one that nurtures future generations and shields them from the most profound threats facing our societies. In February 2024, the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education was officially adopted. The text recognises that "learning in, through and with cultural diversity is vital for overcoming divisions and fostering mutual understanding" and "underlines the need for greater emphasis on local – and especially indigenous – cultures and heritage".¹⁸⁰

"At a time when we speak of a crisis in social bonds, the rise of extremism, and the erosion of shared values, artistic and cultural education offers a way forward (...) one that is deeply human. (...) To educate through art is to learn how to love: to love better, to love beyond, to love more truthfully." Emmanuel Éthis, Interministerial Delegate for Arts and Cultural Education in the French government (2025)¹⁸¹

Art has the power to bring together memories, even those rooted in painful histories. British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare has created an exhibition centred around the concept of "hybridity". Presented at Fondation H in Antananarivo, Madagascar, from April 2025 to February 2026, it features wax fabric as a central material—a pure product of cultural exchange, colonisation, and trade. This textile originated in Indonesia, was copied by Europeans, and later sold in large quantities on African markets by the Dutch, contributing to a Pan-African identity, "as the fabric is not tied to any particular African population and everyone claims it as their own."¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Translated from French. Flament, X., Décès de Koyo Kouoh, la commissaire de la Biennale d'art de Venise 2026, L'Echo, 11 May 2025, <https://www.lecho.be/culture/expo/deces-de-koyo-kouoh-la-commissaire-de-la-biennale-d-art-de-venise-2026/10606540.html>

¹⁸⁰ UNESCO, UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education, 23 May 2024.

¹⁸¹ Ethis, E. POINT DE VUE. « L'éducation artistique et culturelle, une politique du cœur et de la pensée », Ouest France, 26 May 2025, <https://www.ouest-france.fr/culture/point-de-vue-leducation-artistique-et-culturelle-une-politique-du-cur-et-de-la-pensee-7d982c06-3a27-11f0-9096-11e668431f68>.

¹⁸² Mourgues, E. « Le wax : itinéraire d'appropriations culturelles », France Culture, 28 November 2018, <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/le-wax-itineraire-d-appropriations-culturelles-3751451>

By incorporating wax into his work, Yinka Shonibare reclaims this material, embraces it as part of his identity, and, in doing so, transcends history.¹⁸³

Through their work, authors like Nuruddin Farah (Somali), Wole Soyinka (Nigerian, 1986 Nobel Prize in Literature), Chinua Achebe (Nigerian), and Nega Mezlekia (Ethiopian) have explored the themes of interracial and cross-cultural love, exile, colonialism, power in modern Africa, and war, broadening the understanding of continental historical and cultural relations on peoples and individuals. Their work carries an international resonance, offering insight into Africa through its past and its people, while shedding light on the relationships at the root of these phenomena. The historian Mamadou Diouf also emphasises the importance of African and Afro-descendant intellectuals, writers, artists, and activists in producing “counter-narratives” to the dominant colonial historiography—and in highlighting the plurality of cultural memories.¹⁸⁴

Artists, through their engagement with African identity and [Pan-Africanism](#), also help to revive art’s social and political function. In a 2010 interview, Koyo Kouoh emphasised the importance of society and collective experience as essential themes for artists to explore.¹⁸⁵ Her perspective underscores the idea that art plays a vital role in addressing societal issues and remains necessary for the health and development of communities. To think and conceptualise the cultural relations will require involving joint work between authors and artists. Future cooperation programmes could design specific initiatives more explicitly dedicated to the role of literature in the cultural relations between Africa and Europe.

Cultural actors as drivers of solidarity

Cultural actors have showcased important solidarity that has led to successes and strengthening of the cultural and creative sector. As Andre Le Roux noted, organisations such as Music in Africa and Concerts South Africa have been in existence for a decade, “not only because of donors’ support, but also due to tenacity, systems, procedures, and processes, as well as strong leadership.”¹⁸⁶ Other networks and organisations have contributed to creating a space for artists and cultural professionals from the continent to exchange.

Two examples of structures with a continental outreach are highlighted below:

1. **Arterial Network** was formed in 2007. As a Pan-African civil-society network of artists, cultural activists, entrepreneurs, enterprises, NGOs, institutions, and donors active in Africa’s creative and cultural sectors, it has produced important reports on cultural policy and toolkits for culture and the arts. Since September 2011, Arterial Network has had the status of “NGO in operational relations with UNESCO” under the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The network also supports training and capacity building and through advocacy and information dissemination.

¹⁸³ Fondation H, Yinka Shonibare: Safiotra [Hybridités/Hybridities] <https://www.fondation-h.com/exhibitions-fr/safiotra-hybridites-hybridities> (last accessed 27 May 2025).

¹⁸⁴ Diouf, M. L’Afrique dans le temps du monde, Carennac: Rot-Bo-Krik, 2023, p.14.

¹⁸⁵ CEC ONG, Hommage à Koyo Kouoh - Dans “Femmes d’Afrique” (2010, rebroadcast 3 June 2025), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zBCyrBN2Zw>

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Andre Le Roux, Managing Director, IKS Cultural Consulting on 3 December 2024

2. **The African Culture Fund (ACF)** is a pan-African organisation, created in February 2018 by Mamou Daffé, who was recently appointed Mali's Minister of Crafts, Culture, the Hotel Industry and Tourism (he was previously Director of the Centre Culturel Kôrè de Ségou). with the dual function of not only helping to professionalise the creative sector but also being an instigator in the creation of local African philanthropy through the stimulation of private sector investment. It has received support from the AU.

The solidarity and collective spirit observed in the cultural sector reflect its resilience and vitality. Creators do not wait for funding to share their knowledge and train the next generation. Mentorship is regarded as a key strength of the sector, occurring independently of formal funding streams.

Mentoring in digital arts: examples from Rwanda and South Africa

Dolph Bonza, a self-taught Rwandan visual artist and a trained engineer, founder of InkStain illustrations shared during an interview conducted for this research, how he annually trains several young artists to digital art. He currently is mentoring 15 people. Rwanda counts around 50 to 100 digital artists (not all of them doing it as their work), and among them, 15 are women. That is also due to a personal commitment and efforts pursued by actors of the sector. Together with a Rwandan fellow artist and curator, Jemima Kakizi, founder of Impundu Arts, they piloted a six-month mentorship programme for women to bridge the gap in the digital art field and make digital arts more accessible to women. They trained six women on the technology side of visual arts and soft skills to carry out a project.¹⁸⁷

In South Africa, three interviews with digital artists in South Africa brought several insights on the reality of the sector to the fore. Clyde and Anda are independent service providers, while Mazi works as a designer in a museum. Clyde and Anda lament the lack of funding and investment in digital art, a constant worry for artists as their livelihoods are not secure. Often projects are one-off, and pay is not fair as the hourly rates are not representative of the value of the artistic output. Clyde rightly states, "We need to invest in talent, not just the product". The invisible years of training and time spent conceptualising art are not fairly compensated. All three artists highlighted the need for mentorship as young people can find it challenging to break into the digital art field. Although noble, it is disheartening that artists have to learn through self-study and invest in expensive soft- and hardware. Mentorship and collaboration have been invaluable for the interviewed artists. They have built local, regional, and global networks that have led to collaborative projects and help in navigating the industry and training.

The solidarity observed within the sector is valid in continental dynamics, helping to shape a broader Africa–Europe cultural community. These dynamics give meaningful expression to the people-to-people approach prioritised in international cooperation. Through culture, Europe also finds a way to find new partners and interlocutors in Africa. European diplomats face criticism to primarily engage with elites, whether in politics or cooperation.¹⁸⁸ In answer to that, culture is one

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Jemima Kakizi, Artist, curator founder of Impundu Arts and Dolph Bonza, CEO InkStain conducted on 18 November 2024 in Kigali, Rwanda ; Eliane Irakoze, "Women Painters Embrace Shift to Digital Art," The New Times, September 27, 2024, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/article/20456/entertainment/art/women-painters-embrace-shift-to-digital-art>.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with former EU Ambassador.

way to connect with people on a deeper level and foster genuinely equal partnerships. The ACP-EU Culture Programme relied on regional cultural operators to support the creative and cultural industries. Each regional hub functioned based on a partnership of a European and an Africa organisation¹⁸⁹. Such a regional approach allowed also to move beyond traditional post-colonial frameworks. By promoting trans-regional projects and engaging multiple African countries, the focus shifts, paving the way for new collaborations and fresh creative visions. EU member states should embrace this evolving landscape rather than cling to past relationships.

"Connecting with artists and musicians who have a different way of listening to music because with music it goes all the way to the roots. I learned for example about the music business, the way it is all aligned operational wise, the whole intellectual skills around it. And I got to introduce Rwanda. I went as a Rwandese, it shows in the way I walk, the way I talk, the way my talent is expressed." Kaya Byinshii (2023)¹⁹⁰

Cultural actors as drivers of regional integration

The creative sector has in its core the ability to promote political views and projects while seeking independence from political constraints. Artists, driven by interaction and mobility, have shaped regional integration to make it concrete. Artists, poets, and writers have moreover played a pivotal role as staunch advocates of [Pan-Africanism](#) in its original conception across the African continent. Regional integration has been a positive approach taken and fostered by former EU fundings for cultural cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa, notably through the ACP-EU Culture Programme.

Abdramane Kamate, director of MASA, points out that integration in West Africa has already taken place at the level of artists.¹⁹¹ Linguistic groups also serve as key frameworks for cultural exchange across the continent. This is evident in institutions responsible for intellectual property rights, such as the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) for the English-speaking bloc and the Organisation Africaine de la Propriété Intellectuelle (OAPI) French-speaking countries. However, these blocs are not rigid. As seen with MASA, which was initially a francophone-focused event supported by the OIF, artistic events often transcend linguistic boundaries.¹⁹² Regional development is driven by artists who initiate movements and cultural operators who help consolidate exchanges. One such example is the Kôrè Institute of Arts and Crafts in Ségou, Mali, which specialises in training in cultural management and entrepreneurship. Supported by the AWA programme—jointly led by the Kôrè Cultural Centre (CCK) and the Institut Français—four training centres have been accredited as "IKAM" in West Africa (Mali, Mauritania,

¹⁸⁹ Western African hub: Institut français, Centre Culturel Kôrè ; Central African hub: Fondation Interarts, Association Culture et Développement, Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Institut national des arts de Kinshasa. The Central African consortium was the only one to integrate public actors, with an effort to involve public authorities in the strategy, but with limited success ; Eastern African hub: Heva Fund, British Council, with grants managed through the Ignite Culture fund ; Southern African hub: Music in Africa, Goethe-Institut.

¹⁹⁰ culture Solutions podcast series (Re)generating trust: Episode 1: Creating bridges for youth in culture, 12 April 2023, <https://www.culturesolutions.eu/podcast/creating-bridges-for-youth-in-culture/#transcript>. Kaya Byinshii joined the Rocher de Palmer for a two month residency sponsored by Institut français in Rwanda.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Abdramane Kamate, Director General of Marché des arts du spectacle africain (MASA), on 16 January 2025

¹⁹² Interview with Abdramane Kamate, Director General of Marché des arts du spectacle africain (MASA), on 16 January 2025

Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo). These centres provide training, including an introduction to copyright issues.¹⁹³

A closer look at displaced and diasporic communities

Displaced and diasporic communities are both receivers and shapers of cultural relations. Their financial and economic contributions are significant,¹⁹⁴ and they are formally recognised by both the AU and the EU as key stakeholders in cultural and developmental engagement.

The AU Charter for African Cultural Renaissance explicitly states that "African States should strengthen their ties with the African Diaspora worldwide in the areas of culture, education, science and technology, finance and economy."¹⁹⁵ Similarly, the European Parliament acknowledges the important role that the diaspora, as part of civil society, can play in advancing the SDGs and broader human development.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, during the most recent AU-EU Ministerial Meeting, ministers reaffirmed the value of diaspora engagement and recognised its "positive contribution to the sustainable development of the two continents."¹⁹⁷

Diasporic communities increasingly benefit from [digital platforms and social media](#), which enable sustained interaction with their countries of origin. These tools not only facilitate economic and political influence but also strengthen transnational ties and cultural exchange. Artists from the diaspora or from back home can harness these digital spaces to critique political developments in their home countries, amplify their messages among diasporic audiences, connect diaspora to the causes of the country and thereby attract broader international attention to domestic issues. An example is the widespread mobilisation both within Nigeria and internationally against the violent repression of peaceful protests targeting the Federal Special Anti-Robbery Squad (FSARS), a unit notorious for brutality in Nigeria. Artists based in Nigeria, such as Falz¹⁹⁸, as well as those in the diaspora—like UK-based Nigerian artists Burna Boy and Adesope Olajide¹⁹⁹—actively participated in the protests, including demonstrations held in London. Their involvement significantly contributed to the media amplification of the events.

The evolving role, influence, and reception of cultural relations among diasporic and displaced communities—particularly in the context of digital and social media and the role of artists—could

¹⁹³ Interviews with representatives of French external cultural agencies.

¹⁹⁴ "In 2023, the continent welcomed approximately \$100bn in remittances – nearly 6 percent of Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – highlighting the immense role these funds play in supporting families and driving sustainable economic growth." Africa Briefing, Diaspora remittances: Africa's economic powerhouse, 1 February 2025, <https://africabriefing.com/diaspora-remittances-africas-economic-powerhouse/>

¹⁹⁵ African Union (2006) op.cit., p.21.

¹⁹⁶ Pichon, E., Towards a new EU strategy with Africa, European Parliamentary Research Service, June 2020.

¹⁹⁷ Consilium Europa (2025), op.cit.

¹⁹⁸ Oladele, E., I Don't Regret Participating in #EndSARS Despite It Being One of the Toughest Times in My Life – Falz Reflects on Activism and Its Impact, 3 May 2025, 1st Afrika, <https://1stafrika.com/2025/05/03/i-dont-regret-participating-in-endsars-despite-it-being-one-of-the-toughest-times-in-my-life-falz-reflects-on-activism-and-its-impact/>

¹⁹⁹ Nelson C.J., Burna Boy's Strengths Have Always Been in His Music, Never His Politics, NewLines Magazine, 1 May 2023, <https://newlinesmag.com/spotlight/burna-boys-strengths-have-always-been-in-his-music-never-his-politics/>

be further examined and highlighted by cultural and research partners from both Africa and Europe.²⁰⁰

Perception of institutions

Perception is an important assessment of the relation between the institutions and the cultural ecosystems. The way institutions are perceived by cultural actors is a key factor in assessing the success and impact of cultural cooperation. Indeed, whether in the drafting of UNESCO's 1966 *Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Cooperation* or the EU's 2016 "Towards a strategy for International Cultural Relations", the notions of relations between peoples and interculturality are ever-present. Moreover, whether viewed through the lens of cultural diplomacy, cultural relations, or cultural cooperation, the relational dimension remains central to the purpose of these actions.

Since the EU-funded global study on the perceptions of the EU in early 2020, the EU and its Delegations worldwide have become increasingly aware of the importance of their target audiences' perceptions. Public diplomacy programmes now regularly include perception studies. What experience shows is that perceptions evolve constantly and are shaped by events and contexts. The same will apply in Africa-Europe cultural relations: to understand mutual perceptions, one needs to observe them regularly in a context-specific way. The ideal way forward therefore would be to invest in regular targeted perception surveys and studies to be in tune with local moods vis-à-vis specific events, actions and initiatives.

As part of this research, cultural professionals and experts were asked about their perceptions of both the EU and the AU in terms of their roles and actions in the cultural sector.²⁰¹ The questions addressed to the EU focused on its role as an international cultural actor and institution in partner countries. This included issues of visibility, clarity, and coherence in its actions. While the questions did not concern the actions of individual member states, respondents naturally tended to compare and link the two. Regarding the AU, the questions centred on its current and expected role in cultural affairs. As previously mentioned, while the AU is frequently referenced in discussions, it is often perceived as a *colossus with feet of clay*—a powerful entity that lacks the structural solidity to fulfil its potential. Expectations for the AU's cultural role are high, yet its

²⁰⁰ The recent publication by On the Move, "Movements of Translation and Return: Art, Mobility and the Diaspora" addresses as a case study the topic of African diasporas in Europe and their connections to African-European cultural mobility flows. Ganza L., Gaylard J., Mutumba Y., Mudekereza P., Walgrave J, Wilson C.R, Movements of Translation and Return: Art, Mobility and the Diaspora, 2025, On the Move, available at on-the-move.org/resources and <https://deconfining.eu>.

²⁰¹ The interviews aimed at complementing desktop research and literature reviews. They consist of a perceptions' snapshot with limited scope at a given time and should be treated with caution. Out of the 36 individuals interviewed for this research between October 2023 and February 2025, 22 are of African nationalities, 2 are located permanently in Africa and the others are Europeans. 13 interviewees have been asked specifically about their perception as experts of topics related to CCIs in Africa or actors involved in the design and implementation of the Africa-Europe cultural cooperation. Out of these 13, eight are African cultural stakeholders and five are Europeans. Out of the eight African interviewees, two work or worked within African continental institutions, four represent national or regional cultural public organisations, NGOs or private institutions, two are experts of CCIs in Africa. Out of the five Europeans, two represent European and national institutions, two represent structures in charge of managing cultural cooperation projects or programmes funded by the EU, one is a representative of a European cultural institution and one is an academic. Questions focused on how they see the role for AU and EU as institutions in supporting the cultural sector, the impact of the actions supported by the EU, where the AU and the EU are most expected and how visible their action is in the field. Follow up questions served to integrate this perception in a broader understanding of the ecosystems and the role of regional organisations in Africa. For the Sub-Saharan context, the role of member states within the AU was clearly addressed in the answers provided. For the EU, the answers focused on the effective cooperation between member states under a common European umbrella, and the visibility and leadership of EU institutions.

actual capacity remains limited. Urgent action is needed to align its vision with reality, focusing on future initiatives and programmes that can provide the African continent with the cultural leadership it requires.

Perception of the EU

The EU is represented abroad by the EU Delegations (EUDs). They are tasked with developing diplomatic relations and strategic partnerships with non-EU countries, under the mandate of the European External Action Service. EUDs also chair local regular member states' coordination meetings in partner countries in all policy areas, including culture. The EU's action in the field of cultural cooperation abroad relies on a certain number of funding instruments that are part of the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework following a thematic or geographic approach. Delegations coordinate activities based on a budget for a multi-annual indicative programme with the partner country and receive a small EEAS budget for cultural and public diplomacy activities (usually within the information and communication budget). Among the flagship cultural initiatives of the EU abroad, Europe Day and European Film Festivals were cited as successful events during interviews. They, however, represent the tip of the iceberg of the EU as an actor of cultural cooperation. It often falls on individual choices of representatives of the EU abroad (Heads of delegation) to maximise EU's funding capacities for the cultural sector. This can lead to an inconsistency in the understanding of the EU's positive action in support of CCIs.

The absence of systematic local EU cultural strategies implemented by EUDs has led to some discontinuity in EU local support for external cultural action and a lack of clarity about a Union culturally united towards global challenges. The Delegations are too often perceived as bureaucratic players, closer to the political elites and distant from the partner country's peoples' realities, even though development funds are earmarked for the country's priority needs. The absence of any mention of a European vision of culture abroad reinforces the impression of the EU in Africa as a distant, diffuse, and complex player, dominated by security and migration concerns.²⁰²

The visibility of the EU's actions in favour of culture, and of the EU as a cultural player, too often rests on individual personalities and efforts. Cultural interlocutors praise the commitment of some European ambassadors involved in culture,²⁰³ and these ambassadors emphasise their personal investment and conviction in these issues.²⁰⁴ But a long-term vision and strategy for the cultural and creative sector articulated with the EU's external action is still missing and lacking institutional buy-in.

EU member states' cultural institutes, such as the Institut français and the Goethe-Institut, steer support for creative work and are venues for the presentation of works and performances. As a result, they have a natural visibility. The actions of member states and the EU in support of cultural relations should be viewed as complementary.²⁰⁵ In practice, the EU approach to cultural

²⁰² Interview with Abdramane Kamate, Director General of Marché des arts du spectacle africain (MASA), on 16 January 2025.

²⁰³ Interview with Abdramane Kamate, Director General of Marché des arts du spectacle africain (MASA), on 16 January 2025.

²⁰⁴ Interview with former EU Ambassador.

²⁰⁵ McNeilly, N., Zayas, C., Valenza, D., Helly, D., #TeamEurope: A community of practice on culture for EU Delegations, culture Solutions, 1 July 2021, <https://www.culturesolutions.eu/events/teameurope-a-community-of-practice-on-culture-for-eu-delegations/>

cooperation is tangible - via EUNIC and funding capacity. However, the Union as a whole is not as visible and therefore fails to reap the benefits of these efforts. This affects relationships and the perception of the EU as an ally in cultural matters with artists, civil societies, and governments. Be that as it may, in the past, the cooperation programmes implemented by the EU in Africa have borne fruit. For example, the *Programme de soutien aux initiatives culturelles décentralisées* (PSIC), implemented from 2006 and financed via the European Development Fund for an eight-year period and renewed in Benin. It contributed "to a better assumption of responsibility for Benin's cultural development in its dual technical and geographical dimension, in particular by supporting the emergence and sustainable strengthening of decentralised cultural players as well as the structuring and organisation of the Beninese cultural sector". Years later, in 2025, the impact on the quality of Benin's cultural projects is still being felt. Thanks to a skills-building component, professionals have been supported over the long term, providing holistic assistance, not only financial support. Today, when selecting cultural projects in West Africa as part of the AWA programme, the quality of Beninese projects was obvious to the staff in charge of selection, with larger and innovative projects. This is proof that investment in training pays off, and that the success of a cooperative venture depends not only on the amount of money involved, but also on the long-term links forged with partners. As shared by Abdramane Kamate, Director General for the *Marché des Arts du Spectacle d'Abidjan* (MASA), "Only time can anchor an action."²⁰⁶

The EU Ambassador to Burkina Faso recalled, on the occasion of the latest edition of FESPACO, the Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou, which has existed for 50 years, that the EU had supported a total of 47 projects in the film industry between 2020 and 2024 through the *Burkinabè Cultural and Tourism Development Fund*, to which it contributes. FESPACO is a major event for promoting African cinematic creation, sharing artistic visions within the continent and internationally. In his opening speech, Burkinabè Minister of Culture, Gilbert Ouédraogo, emphasised that cinema is a "*mirror of society and a powerful vehicle for embracing our culture, values, and struggles*." He highlighted that FESPACO, beyond being a celebration of cinema, is a collective political commitment to Pan-African culture.²⁰⁷

There is an opportunity to apply a European dynamic to existing bilateral projects, where EU expertise and resources can be valuable for African partners and help scale up ongoing initiatives. This is particularly relevant in sectors such as democracy and media. In South Africa, the *Fondation de l'Innovation pour la Démocratie*—a pan-African organisation established under South African law with support from France—has been active since 2022 in promoting democracy across Africa through research, publications, webinars, and conferences. French stakeholders supporting the foundation hope that European involvement will help expand its activities.²⁰⁸ This would be especially significant as the foundation seeks to address digital threats to democracy and explore the role of digital technology in the media. Its work includes awareness campaigns and training programmes, particularly for journalists, making European support all the more relevant.

In terms of visibility and perception of the EU, much progress is yet to be made. Representatives of European institutions need to understand that Europe's image will be shaped by culture, and

²⁰⁶ Interview with Abdramane Kamate, Director General of *Marché des arts du spectacle africain* (MASA), on 16 January 2025.

²⁰⁷ Ibrahim Kalifa Djitteye, "FESPACO 2025 : Une 29e Édition Sous le Signe de l'Identité Culturelle Africaine," *Sahel Tribune*, February 23, 2025, https://saheltribune.com/fespaco-2025-une-29e-edition-sous-le-signe-de-lidentite-culturelle-africaine/#google_vignette

²⁰⁸ Interview with senior diplomat at the French Ministry of Foreign affairs.

that cultural cooperation is not philanthropy.²⁰⁹ member states will also have to seize the moment to highlight their European action, and the EU as an actor or supporter of their cultural action. This will reinforce the unity and visibility of the EU, and de facto benefit its member states. In the case of Africa, the European approach represents an opportunity to renew relations. It also makes it possible to integrate new players and to foster a new approach to cooperation, via the Team Europe approach and the emphasis on people-to-people relations.

Perception of the AU

"If culture is the one asset that unites us, why not invest in a dedicated office for it? As one of the fastest-growing sectors—if not the fastest—it only makes sense to fully equip and support it." Daves Ghuzza, former Chairperson of the Bureau of the 5th Pan-African Cultural Congress (2025)²¹⁰

Interviews conducted as part of this research have highlighted expectations focusing on AU's coordination and resource provision. At present, African cultural actors are somewhat disappointed yet realistic about the AU's limited capacities: *"The question is not whether the AU has a role to play. It obviously does. (...) We would love a functional African Union as much as there's a functional European Union, with all its challenges, but that's far off, and we hope that it will exist in the future."*²¹¹

In the absence of strong AU-led action to promote a continental approach to cultural challenges and support for the CCIs, cultural actors are operating within regional and linguistic frameworks that have proven effective.²¹² However, none of the interviewees in this study dismissed the AU's role altogether. On the contrary, the AU remains *"expected and necessary"*²¹³ in addressing these issues.

The main obstacles lie in the AU's lack of internal coordination on cultural policies, its resource constraints, and its leadership insufficiency. While the AU is not expected to manage large-scale investment (a role taken on by Afreximbank and the African Development Bank), it could still play a crucial role in facilitating initiatives, strengthening connections between regional entities, and enabling certain countries to take the lead on continental cultural matters.

On a practical term, Daves Ghuzza suggests that the Pan-African Cultural Congress, currently a non-permanent structure composed of cultural experts, policy makers, private sector and civil society organisations, could be the relevant body to play this coordination role.²¹⁴ This would entail formalising the PACC into a permanent secretariat to ensure the monitoring of measures and recommendations. Although the idea has been shared internally and has come to the ears of the Head of the Culture Division, Angela Martins,²¹⁵ it will require more internal advocacy and clear

²⁰⁹ Interview with Abdramane Kamate, Director General of Marché des arts du spectacle africain (MASA), on 16 January 2025.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Interview with Andre Le Roux, Managing Director, IKS Cultural Consulting on 3 December 2024 / with South African cultural expert.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Interview with Abdramane Kamate, Director General of Marché des arts du spectacle africain (MASA), on 16 January 2025.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid

demonstration of the need for a strong AU voice, a well-defined role, and genuine intergovernmental coordination would be mutually beneficial for both the AU and its member states. Another argument for this separate and overarching body in charge of culture within the AU is to do justice to the multiple domains that are concerned with culture. At the moment, culture is seen as a sub-area in the social affairs department. To realise the full potential of the sector, resources are required for optimal communication with the sectors' representatives.

A unique and better capacitated desk could also leverage better national capacities and governmental initiatives that can profit CCIs and trade on the continent. This translates to a clear misalignment with opportunities. As long as resources and national political will are lacking, benefits from continental cultural cooperation and CCI trade will be limited. However, this would require more strategic coordination between AU actors in charge of culture (that include the Culture Division, ECOSOCC, CIDO, and PACC)²¹⁶ and systematic follow-up on recommendations. To drive the continental integration of CCIs, the AU must recognise the urgent need for stronger leadership in this sector.

The AU is often perceived as distant and abstract, described as "*so far away*" and "*in another sphere*."²¹⁷ Cultural actors also highlight the lack of turnover among AU representatives and experts, stressing the need to involve younger professionals and address emerging issues such as intellectual property rights²¹⁸ and artificial intelligence.²¹⁹ The interviewees have reported limited collaboration with the AU, despite acknowledging its importance. Many struggle to establish contact, secure AU representatives at key events, or receive institutional support—evident, for example, in the AU's absence from the last MASA (Market for African Performing Arts). Similarly, European partners express a desire for greater collaboration.²²⁰

Experts have insisted that implementation of the AU's cultural agenda is urgent, and it is time to move beyond the "*Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing, Exhibitions*" (MICE) approach.²²¹ Some professionals have also criticised the AU for operating in a closed circle, tending to support the same stakeholders repeatedly rather than providing opportunities for a broader range of actors. In response to these concerns, new advocacy groups have emerged, pushing for greater national investment in the cultural sector—particularly by encouraging AU member states to uphold the organisation's target of allocating 1% of national budgets to culture (see previous mentions of Connect for Culture Africa initiative). The AU can also serve as a platform for certain states to take the lead and set an example, which could, in turn, invigorate trust in the body.²²² However, there is currently a lack of leadership in this regard, and stronger national-level advocacy will be necessary to drive change.

This is not to say that the cultural sector cannot function without the AU but failing to strengthen its role risks deepening regional divides and missing valuable opportunities for cooperation. Such

²¹⁶ Interview with Daves Ghuza, Producer/Director, former Chairperson of the Bureau of the 5th Pan-African Cultural Congress, on 17 January 2025.

²¹⁷ Interview with Director, African cultural institution.

²¹⁸ Interview with Manager from the cultural sector.

²¹⁹ Interview with Abdramane Kamate, Director General of Marché des arts du spectacle africain (MASA), on 16 January 2025.

²²⁰ Interview, Director of European museum.

²²¹ Interview with Samuel Samiai Andrews, Professor of Intellectual Property Law, Al Yamamah University College of Law, Al Khobar, on 5 December 2024.

²²² Interview with Daves Ghuza, Producer/Director, former Chairperson of the Bureau of the 5th Pan-African Cultural Congress, on 17 January 2025.

missed opportunities would affect civil societies, economies, and cultural sectors alike. If common working methods and exchange platforms are not established from the outset, the African Continental Free Trade Area will struggle to deliver on its promises. Some countries may be left behind, and the initiative may fail to support development and create opportunities for the most vulnerable populations—particularly young people, women, and rural communities. When Daves Ghuza asks, *"You build a road network, and then what?"* he highlights the need for investment plans to be grounded in reality rather than speculation. His statement underscores the importance of starting from the existing cultural wealth in Africa as a foundation for equitable and sustainable development across the continent.

Recent positive developments are worth highlighting. In February 2025, Eddie Hatitye, Director of Music in Africa and the Music in Africa Foundation, announced a partnership agreement with the AU, with further concrete initiatives to be unveiled. He stated: *"Together with the AU, we will work strategically to strengthen the African music sector, protect artists, and advance the role of music in driving economic and sustainable development in Africa."*²²³ Such a partnership had long been anticipated and is warmly welcomed by stakeholders in the sector.

"I know that they've got a big agenda for the next 20 years. (...) They can make a difference."
Eddie Hatitye, Director of Music in Africa (2025)²²⁴

Conclusion: AU and EU expected to engage

This part highlighted how both the AU and the EU have faced criticism regarding their visibility and leadership in the cultural sector. Both institutions still have significant progress to make in establishing themselves as influential players in cultural relations—especially given the dominance of national frameworks under the principle of subsidiarity. But these institutions have introduced new frameworks of ideas and values, and their presence is increasingly expected by cultural stakeholders. However, there remains significant room for improvement in consolidating their impact and clarifying their role. Some joint initiatives have demonstrated their potential to collaborate effectively on high-impact cultural actions. EU delegations have also played an important role in supporting cultural actors.

A compelling example of the EU's cultural capacity is its support for Ukrainian cultural heritage and the cultural sector following Russia's full-scale invasion. This case clearly demonstrates what is possible when strong political will is present. Such an approach could be replicated in other regions—both at the continental level in partnership with the AU, and bilaterally—to strengthen institutional and sectoral capacities.

Cultural actors are actively seeking collaboration and ensuring that people-to-people connections remain strong. These connections need to be reinforced by a supportive and coherent policy framework. If the AU and EU aim to meet their societal and sustainable development objectives, continued and strengthened support for civil society and the cultural

²²³ Eddie Hatitye, LinkedIn post, February 2025, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/eddie-hatitye-63407146/recent-activity/all/> (last accessed March 11, 2025)

²²⁴ Interview with Eddie Hatitye, Director of Music in Africa / SA music organisation director, 2 December 2024.

sector is essential. As CCIs gain interest from investors, knowledge and understanding of cultural ecosystems and cooperation with long-term established cultural actors is essential. When integrating new actors and funding streams for cultural ecosystems, it is essential to keep in mind the long-term goals of societal benefit, the protection of cultural values, and support for youth in building sustainable careers.

4- Funding Landscape

In this part:

- **A rising African public investment**
- **Scenario of multiple funding streams**
- **Foreign influence in culture**
- **A closer look at investment in media and press**
- **An evolution of EU programming and funding mechanism**
- **How can culture support wider objectives of the AU-EU partnership?**
- **Conclusion: Partnering with cultural actors amid changing funding dynamics**

In the context of Africa-Europe relations, funding is shaped by differing understandings of ICR (see [EU framework for ICR](#) and [AU framework for ICR](#)). For the AU, ICR primarily focuses on promoting and valorising the continent’s rich and diverse cultures, putting “culture, heritage and a common identity at the centre of its strategies with the aim to facilitate a Pan-African approach”.²²⁵ In contrast, EU ICR cover actions with international partners, outside of the EU. This divergence in definition sets the tone for differing programming.

African public funding tends to concentrate on supporting the continent’s CCIs, highlighting regional and continental trade and integration. EU cultural cooperation funding focuses on Africa–EU projects that support African CCIs and link them with European cultural actors and sectors, through public or private actors (e.g. cultural institutes and institutions, private sector, international cooperation agencies...).

The EU ICR has gradually aligned its objectives with local needs and AU’s vision, including regional integration and sectoral structuration. However, changes are anticipated within the broader framework of international cooperation. The shift from grants to investment strategies for EU’s support is informative of the new ways of international cooperation, gradually being processed. Mobilising private investment seems now a priority for international cooperation, and the type of funding has an obvious impact on what is funded, but also who and how.

This section presents the funding landscape of Africa-Europe ICR by highlighting three key dynamics: the rising trend of African public investment, the broader context of long-standing international actors contributing to a diverse funding ecosystem, and the EU’s cultural programming—focusing on the most recent and newly launched programmes dedicated to Africa-Europe cultural relations.

A rising African public investment

CCIs directly benefit from intra-African cooperation and the exchange of expertise among African professionals. This dynamic supports the structuring of the cultural and creative sectors and fosters the emergence of new initiatives across the continent. In recent years, African

²²⁵ Joffe & Magkou, *op.cit.*, p.37

development and financial institutions have begun taking the lead in establishing new investment pathways for CCIs. This part insists on the importance for African public actors to mobilise investment for a greater autonomy of CCIs on the continent, but also capacity of consumption of the cultural products. This section highlights key announcements and support initiatives from the African Development Bank and Afreximbank.

This part focuses on public investment, but it is also important to note traction among private investment for African CCIs. For example, the private media group Trace has played a significant role in shaping and promoting the African and Caribbean music scenes. Its impact has been especially visible through high-profile events such as the recent Trace Awards.²²⁶ In 2018, 75% of Trace was acquired by the American investment fund TPG Growth,²²⁷ following a previous acquisition of the same share by the Swedish Modern Times Group in 2014.²²⁸ Technologies have facilitated international investment in CCIs. New media and social networks are also redefining the value chains of the cultural industry.²²⁹ Investment infrastructure impacts access to CCIs and their capacity for expansion. The diffusion of African music and films is subject to platforms majorly owned by non-African enterprises like Boomplay (China), Deezer (France), Spotify (Sweden) for music and Canal+ (France) and StarTimes (China) for movies and series. This is reinforced by the logic of platforms, omnipresent for CCIs, that tend to favour large players. Canal+ recently became the first shareholder of MultiChoice, a South African broadcasting operator.

African Development Bank (AfDB)

The African Development Bank has cemented its role in support to CCIs over the last years. This role covers policy, funding and sectoral opportunities' analysis. In terms of recent policy impulse, the Bank's Ten Year Strategy (2024-2033) mentions media, tourism, creative industries, art and fashion among the sectors to be supported for youth, skills, entrepreneurship and job creation. The Bank aims to establish Youth Entrepreneurship Investment Banks (YEIBs) across Africa to finance youth entrepreneurship and innovation with a focus on emerging economic sectors including the creative industries. The bank follows a sectoral approach to maximise its investment effort and impact.

From 2015, the Bank has supported the fashion industry on the continent. It started with a 10 million EUR investment in Madagascar supporting small and medium enterprises mostly run by women and youth.²³⁰ In 2016, the Bank released the Fashionomics report²³¹ sharing important information on why and how to invest in the fashion industry, specifically looking at Ivory Coast and Ethiopia. The Bank noted how the fashion industry was a sector with high-growth potential as well as capacity to promote women's economic empowerment and create 25 million jobs over

²²⁶Boussion, Mathilde. "A Zanzibar, la crème de la scène musicale africaine célébrée aux Trace Awards." *Le Monde*, February 27, 2025.

²²⁷ Ahougnon, S. Le fonds d'investissement américain TPG Growth acquiert 75% des parts de Trace, Agence ECOFIN, 22 January 2018, <https://www.agenceecofin.com/operateur/2201-53669-le-fonds-d-investissement-americain-tpg-growth-acquiert-75-des-parts-de-trace>

²²⁸ Maury, F. Jeune Afrique, MTG rachète 75% des parts du groupe TRACE TV, 14 March 2014, <https://www.culturebene.com/8500-mtg-rachete-75-des-parts-du-groupe-trace-tv.html>.

²²⁹ Interview with Alessandro Jedlowski, Associate professor in African Studies, Sciences Po Bordeaux on 22 October 2024.

²³⁰ African Development Bank Group, "Madagascar - Investment Promotion Support Project", Map Africa, 2015-2020, <https://mapafrica.afdb.org/fr/projects/46002-P-MG-K00-009> (last accessed March 11, 2025).

²³¹ African Development Bank Group, Report on the Feasibility Study for the Development of the online Fashionomics Platform, Final External Report, AfDB, 2017.

the next decade (2016-2026). To note that in 2016, the textile and apparel market as a whole amounted to more than 31 billion USD in Sub-Saharan Africa and was the second largest provider of employment in developing countries – after agriculture.²³² The launch of the report was followed by capacity building programmes for entrepreneurs and designers. An announcement of 66.73 million EUR investment in loan was made, including 4.85 million EUR from the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD)²³³ for the fashion industry in Sub-Saharan Africa. The support culminated in the launch of a B2B (Business to Business) platform for creators to sell their products online - a first on the African continent. The platform has been tested with creators all around the continent and is now available with the goal "to stimulate regional integration, intra-African trade, entrepreneurship development and forge more equal societies".²³⁴ The platform also includes an education feature with - limited - free online masterclasses in English on the sector's digital and sustainable transition.²³⁵ The launch of the Fashionomics report was followed by capacity building programmes for entrepreneurs and designers.

Since late 2021, the Bank has taken the turn of the digital and creative sector by extending a loan of 170 million USD to the sector's enterprises in Nigeria. It supports an initiative from the Federal Government of Nigeria, "to create more sustainable jobs for the teeming youthful population".²³⁶

"Governments have a much greater role than just policy making. They need to be innovative and create an enabling environment that includes infrastructure and de-risking to harness private sector investments in key growth sectors." African Development Bank President Akinwumi A. Adesina, 16 December 2021²³⁷

Afreximbank

The African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) is the multilateral financial institution that supports intra- and extra-African trade, industrialisation and export development. Its investment capacity in CCIs has increased greatly over the last few years. In 2020, it announced a 500 million USD Creative Industry Support Fund to provide lines of credit to banks as well as direct financing to operators.²³⁸ In 2022, the Bank increased its financing to the creative sector from 500 million to one billion USD and had a pipeline of over 600 million USD in film, music, visual arts, fashion, and

²³² African Development Bank Group, With Fashionomics, the AfDB plans to raise the profile of African fashion and textiles on the international, AfDB, 24 August 2016, <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/with-fashionomics-the-afdb-plans-to-raise-the-profile-of-african-fashion-and-textiles-on-the-international-stage-16023> stage.

²³³ That covered equity and technical assistance. European Commission, Directorate-General for International Partnerships, EFSD, The European Fund for Sustainable Development. Operational report 2020 (Latest edition), retrieved from <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6c93ad22-d299-11ed-a05c-01aa75ed71a1>.

²³⁴ Fashionomics platform: <https://fashionomicsafrica.org/community> (last accessed March 11, 2025).

²³⁵ Fashionomics platform: <https://fashionomicsafrica.org/masterclasses> (last accessed March 11, 2025).

²³⁶ African Development Bank Group, African Development Bank Board approves \$170 million for investment in Nigeria's digital and creative start-ups, 16 December 2021, <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/african-development-bank-board-approves-170-million-investment-nigerias-digital-and-creative-start-ups-48015>

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ African Development Bank Group, Africa Investment Forum: closing the technology gap promises significant gains for Africa's creative industries, AfDB, 26 October 2022, <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/africa-investment-forum-closing-technology-gap-promises-significant-gains-africas-creative-industries-55797>

sports deal.²³⁹ During the 2023 Creative Africa Nexus Programme (CANEX),²⁴⁰ its Vice-President announced an additional one billion USD fund for cinema that was recently launched.²⁴¹ Subsequently, during CANEX 2024, Afreximbank announced a doubling of its funding capacity to creative industries, to reach two billion USD and a doubling of the funding allocated to CANEX (amounting 500 million USD at its creation in 2021). The two billion fund targets infrastructure development: Afreximbank plans to invest in film production studios, stadiums and sports facilities, music arenas and fashion production centres.²⁴²

Scenario of multiple funding streams

"The brave new world must break out of the old patterns of dialogue and open itself up to questions and inspiration from all sides. (...) The more impossible it is, the more powerful the beginning." Yang Lian, poet, 2011²⁴³

The landscape of funding and investment for African CCIs is increasingly characterised by a growing diversity of actors, countries, and funding sources. Benin is an interesting case of multiple foreign interests looking at funding the country's CCIs. Looking at recent projects funded in Benin helps understand who is doing what and why diversified investment streams are not a bad thing and can be beneficial to CCIs. This however requires the governmental capacity to secure national and local interests. As mentioned previously, France and Benin have initiated important projects supporting the museum sector, with AFD funding the construction of the *Musée des Rois et des Amazones du Dahomey* in 2021 and the future *Musée d'Art Contemporain de Cotonou* in 2024. In 2021, China announced a loan of 40 million USD to Benin to help fund a broadband project (484 kilometres of fibre in four districts of Benin and 204 kilometres of metropolitan broadband network covering ten urban areas). Six years before, China had already loaned 69 million USD at a preferential rate to fund a similar telecoms infrastructure project.

"The digital economy and digitization are experiencing more and more progress capable of making Benin the digital platform of the sub-region." Peng Jingtao, Chinese Ambassador to Benin, 16 September 2021²⁴⁴

²³⁹ Afreximbank, "Afreximbank Announces \$1-Billion African Film Fund," press release, October 11, 2023, <https://www.afreximbank.com/afreximbank-announces-1-billion-african-film-fund-%ef%bf%bc/>

²⁴⁰ CANEX is an initiative from Afreximbank to facilitate the development and growth of the creative and cultural industries in Africa and the diaspora. The programme provides a range of financing and non-financing instruments and interventions aimed at supporting trade and investment in Africa's creative sector.

²⁴¹ Afreximbank, Afreximbank launches US\$ 1 Billion Africa Film Fund to transform the continent's creative industry, 5 July 2025, <https://www.afreximbank.com/afreximbank-launches-us-1-billion-africa-film-fund-to-transform-the-continent's-creative-industry/>.

²⁴² Invest Afrique Rédaction, "CANEX WKND 2024: Afreximbank Doublera Son Financement des Industries Créatives à 2 Milliards \$," Invest Afrique, October 21, 2024, <https://investafrique.info/2024/10/21/canex-wknd-2024-afreximbank-doublera-son-financement-des-industries-creatives-a-2-milliards/>.

²⁴³ EUNIC Yearbook 2011, Culture Report, Europe's Foreign Cultural Relations, p.19, retrieved from <https://on-the-move.org/files/Europes%20foreign%20cultural%20relations.pdf>

²⁴⁴ Alan Burkitt-Gray, "China Lends Benin \$40M to Densify Its Broadband Infrastructure," Capacity Media, September 16, 2021, <https://www.capacitymedia.com/article/29otdhk3j2ycxun8xtr7k/news/china-lends-benin-40m-to-densify-its-broadband-infrastructure>.

Some countries have marked the turn to be more vigilant on foreign takeover in the CCIs, to avoid situations of monopoly and unfair competition.²⁴⁵ This is the case of South Africa, with its Electronic Communications Act that prohibits foreign entities from owning more than 20% of companies. That act for instance impacted the deal of Canal+ Group and MultiChoice, through which Canal 45,2% of company shares. Under the deal, Canal+ will spin out MultiChoice SA's broadcasting licence which includes DStv as an independent entity. New shareholders set to enter the transaction include Afrifund Investment and Identity Partners that will form an entity known as LicenceCo to handle the operations in South Africa and give it 51% economic interest with the remaining 49% for Canal+ ("To obtain the government's approval for its takeover of MultiChoice, the French media giant plans to create, with Sonja De Bruyn Sebotsa and Siphon Maseko, a new South African consortium to which it will hand over its local television licence.")²⁴⁶

We saw earlier how the development of CCIs was linked to technological transformations and internet infrastructures and how digital transformations can make CCIs more dependent on foreign influences. If cultural actors share a certain enthusiasm for the new platforms that allow for the opening of international circulation, they are nevertheless aware of the risks to sovereignty as they see the system becoming more pyramid-like. "Everything becomes very vertical with American or Chinese franchises controlling the entire environment. It becomes very difficult for local platforms to truly carve out space and control the distribution sector."²⁴⁷ As shown in the introduction, the cultural and creative sector and the products and services that emanate from it contain a unique value that must be safeguarded - as they contain a part of tradition and culture forming heritage and to be passed onto next generations. There is tension between the political and economic visions of CCIs. There is an underlying concern of political economy about who will hold power over this industry, and a bitter realisation that globalised cultural production could lead to a new form of Western extractivism over emerging riches. However, CCIs are the origin of social ties and value chains and encompass forms of political participation that can only be expressed through culture.²⁴⁸

While foreign investment in CCIs will not be prevented, in Africa and around the world, it is still necessary to recognise the influence that CCIs have on society, and to prepare countries and officials with a legal framework capable of defusing situations of excessive imbalance.²⁴⁹ In this regard, the role of regional and international organisations is essential. One should however not rush into protectionism as the magic solution, as it inherently stifles creative momentum, and isolates artistic freedom from value creation. The isolation makes it more fragile and easier to target—especially by states whose objectives may be at odds with free expression. By linking freedom of expression to wealth creation, it becomes more resilient and less vulnerable to political interference. This is ultimately about achieving independence through economic empowerment, supported by a robust legal framework tailored to the creative sector.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁵ Interview with expert at the African Development Bank.

²⁴⁶ PointAI, "Canal+ to Restructure MultiChoice Operations with Launch of Independent Entity LicenceCo," TechPoint Africa, February 4, 2025, <https://techpoint.africa/news/canal-to-restructure-multichoice-licenceco/>; "South Africa: How TV Giant Canal+ Aims to Reorganise MultiChoice with South African Partners," Africa Intelligence, February 17, 2025, https://www.africaintelligence.com/southern-africa-and-islands/2025/02/17/how-tv-giant-canal_-aims-to-reorganise-multichoice-with-south-african-partners,110375832-art.

²⁴⁷ Interview with Alessandro Jedlowski, Associate professor in African Studies, Sciences Po Bordeaux on 22 October 2024.

²⁴⁸ Interview with Alessandro Jedlowski, Associate professor in African Studies, Sciences Po Bordeaux on 22 October 2024.

²⁴⁹ Interview with expert at the African Development Bank.

²⁵⁰ Interview with expert at the African Development Bank.

The liberalisation and the entry of new players has allowed the CCI to develop, as is the case, for example, with music streaming, that was not introduced into Ghana "until 2018 when Boomplay, a Chinese owned music streaming service focused on promoting African music set up a country office in Ghana".²⁵¹ Until then, "spirited fans of music artists who had knowledge about the growth of streaming in the Global North had to rely on the use of virtual private networks (VPNs) to access Spotify and Apple Music". What is, however, essential is that platforms, whether they emulate from the countries where they are active, respect fair revenues for creators. This is even more essential as revenues' prospects for the music industry in SSA remains very important²⁵² (see the scheme of African cultural ecosystems to see private actors and institutions involved in music revenues). A report released by the *Agence française de développement* suggests that "the positioning of Chinese players like Boomplay is far more complex than the alarmist picture often painted by Western cooperation agencies and institutions."²⁵³ Chinese private companies active in the cultural sector (such as StarTimes in the audiovisual sector and Boomplay in the music sector) are driven by divergent logics. They have to take into account the economic constraints and commercial specifics of this sector in Africa, the political directives imposed by the Chinese government's soft power policy, and the legal and economic frameworks set by the national contexts in which they operate. The report also suggests that what China aims to develop is more of a heterogeneous, ambivalent, and unpredictable relationship rather than a monolithic political project of cultural influence.²⁵⁴

While this report does not aim to analyse the broader presence of foreign powers in Africa, it does highlight other actors investing in the CCI. These contributions are recognised for their value in diversifying funding sources and enriching cultural relations.²⁵⁵ A growing number of foreign actors—extending beyond China and the EU—are increasingly active on the African continent. An analysis of Turkey and Saudi Arabia's engagement with the cultural sector and their respective investment strategies provides a valuable perspective on the plurality of interests influencing contemporary cultural relations.

²⁵¹ Aisha Salaudeen, "How China's Boomplay Beat Spotify and Apple to Corner Africa's Streaming Market," CNN, June 5, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/06/05/africa/boomplay-music-africa-intl/index.html> ; Jedlowki, A., Bono, I. for Agence Française de Développement, op.cit, p.18.

²⁵² Arthur, R., Anku-Tsedde, O., Sanda, M.-A., Belfiore, E., & Langevang, T. (2023). Conceptualizing the Influence of Digital Musicpreneurs on the Music Streaming Ecosystem in the Global South: An Actor-network Perspective. In T. Ahram, & W. Karwowski (Eds.), *Application of Emerging Technologies: Proceedings of the AHFE International Conference on Human Factors in Design, Engineering, and Computing*. AHFE 2023 Hawaii Edition, p.58.

²⁵³ Jedlowki, A., Bono, I. for Agence Française de Développement, op.cit, p.18.

²⁵⁴ Citing to Voci P. et Luo H. (2018), « Screening China's soft power: Screen cultures and discourses of power », In Voci, P. et Luo, H. eds) *Screening China's Soft Power*, Londres, Routledge, p.7.

²⁵⁵ National contributions to UNESCO are also a factor in understanding funding trends for CCI; however, they are not covered in this report.

Turkey: active in events' infrastructures and popular for TV shows and tourism

Turkish investments in event infrastructures are important: Kigali Arena in Rwanda, East Africa's biggest stadium built by a Turkish construction firm, and the Olympic swimming pool in Senegal are two examples. Turkish Airlines is another key player involved in the tourism industry. By connecting countries with each other and the rest of the world, it boosts business ties and tourism and increases Turkey's popularity across the continent. The carrier flies to 51 destinations in 33 African countries, 26 of them in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). In 2003, it only flew to North Africa.²⁵⁶ Turkish cultural products, music, gastronomy, dances and TV shows seem to be appreciated over the continent. DStv, a leading South African content provider (recently acquired by Canal+) with a footprint across the continent, has a channel dedicated to Turkish content. "Turkish soap operas have a huge following in Africa (...) That redefined the way in which people began to see Turkey."²⁵⁷ Turkish series are widely popular. Between 2020 and 2023, the global demand for Turkish series increased by 184%, positioning Turkey as one of the biggest exporters of TV shows around the world, the 3rd after the US and the UK according to some sources.²⁵⁸ They contribute to the promotion of Turkish culture and traditions and they also support tourism by enhancing Turkey's image, and trade by advertising for Turkish products in the countries they are exported: one of the most important benefits of these shows is their contribution to the label of "Made in Turkey". Turkey's investments and cultural products make it an appealing partner to African countries.²⁵⁹ However, longer-term ambitions behind Erdogan's Africa strategy remain unclear to experts.²⁶⁰

Saudi Arabia: a discrete player with a growing commitment to cultural heritage²⁶¹

Saudi Arabia was until recently the Gulf country with the greatest number of diplomatic missions in Africa²⁶² (now surpassed by Qatar). Experts have portrayed Saudi economic investments in Africa at "the early stages" and seem to think that Africa is not a "major projection area for its economy".²⁶³ The Kingdom nevertheless managed to forge solid alliances, by providing consistent fundings to some countries, and its new investment strategy for cultural heritage could become an asset in its involvement in SSA. Indeed, Saudi Arabia has built a vision to turn away from its reliance on oil for national economic development and wants to become a hub for cultural heritage and tourism, part of the Kingdom's Vision 2030. The Saudi Public Investment Fund extends this vision internationally, notably by developing hotel chains (for now, in Europe).²⁶⁴ The

²⁵⁶ Charlie Mitchell, "Erdogan's Ambition Drives Turkey's Africa Surge," African Business, March 17, 2021, <https://african.business/2021/03/trade-investment/erdogans-ambition-drives-turkeys-africa-surge>.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Robert Badendieck, "Booming Turkish TV Drama Industry Captures Hearts and Minds Worldwide and Boosts Tourism," AP News, July 13, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/turkey-tv-drama-series-istanbul-tourism-dizi-d9b908cad575755e1118312cbb0187ad>.

²⁵⁹ "Turkish TV Series Export Race to the Top," BusinessDiplomacy, January 29, 2021, <https://businessdiplomacy.net/turkish-tv-series-export-race-to-the-top/>.

²⁶⁰ Charlie Mitchell, op.cit.

²⁶¹ The projects and investment showcased below do not cover religious influence and networks.

²⁶² "Turkish TV Series Export Race to the Top," BusinessDiplomacy, January 29, 2021, <https://businessdiplomacy.net/turkish-tv-series-export-race-to-the-top/>.

²⁶³ Ibid

²⁶⁴ In August 2024, PIF acquired a 49% minority stake in Rocco Forte Hotels, a luxury hotel chain, valuing the company at £1.4 billion. This investment will facilitate the development of five new hotels in Europe, including properties in Milan, Sardinia, Noto, and Naples. "Saudi Arabia's PIF Expands Tourism Investments Beyond Riyadh," The Arabian Post, 2024, <https://thearabianpost.com/saudi-arabias-pif-expands-tourism-investments-beyond-riyadh/>.

Tourism Development Fund is another fund through which Saudi Arabia plans to facilitate private investments in the tourism sector. With an initial capital of four billion USD, it collaborates with various stakeholders to finance projects that align with the Kingdom's tourism objectives.²⁶⁵ But these have not yet targeted SSA.

SSA has so far been targeted through the Saudi Fund for Development (through loans or grants). Since its foundation in 1975, the fund has given 52% of the amount paid out to Africa (not SSA but the whole of Africa), namely seven billion USD, among which 60% went to Maghreb, and 40% to Egypt alone. Djibouti receives one fifth of the total of loans attributed to East Africa, three times more than Ethiopia and as much as Kenya. In West Africa, Mauritania received more than a quarter of the amount and has been a pillar of SSA Saudi strategy. Senegal comes second. The other funding mechanisms rely on the Islamic Development Bank, out of which 23% of total funding goes to Africa with mostly Senegal for SSA, and through OPEC that now includes Nigeria, Angola, Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea in SSA. Saudi Arabia is becoming a strong support for cultural heritage protection through its contribution to the Aliph foundation. Founded in 2017 Geneva on the initiative of France and the UAE,²⁶⁶ the foundation targeted heritage threatened by war and conflict, and has since then broadened its scope to any threats weighing on heritage (tangible and intangible).

The foundation recently launched a call for cultural heritage endangered in SSA with a focus on threats caused by climate change (their 2023-2027 comprehensive strategy targets climate change and cultural heritage), for a total amount of 10 million EUR. member states represented within Aliph are France, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Luxembourg, China, Morocco, Cyprus. Among them, Saudi Arabia is the second largest donor, for an amount of 50 million USD (France is the first with 60 million USD). In 2022, Saudi Arabia had already committed to a 30 million USD donation to the organisation²⁶⁷.

Foreign influence in the CCIs

The development of CCIs has been closely linked to technological transformations and internet infrastructure, bringing with it new risks of dependency and foreign influence. If cultural actors share a certain enthusiasm for the new platforms that allow for the opening of international circulation, they are nevertheless aware of the risks to sovereignty as they see the system becoming more pyramid-like. "Everything becomes very vertical with American or Chinese franchises controlling the entire environment. It becomes very difficult for local platforms to truly carve out space and control the distribution sector."²⁶⁸ As shown in the introduction, the cultural and creative sector and the products and services that emanate from it contain a unique value that must be safeguarded - as they contain a part of tradition and culture forming heritage and to be passed onto next generations. There is tension between the political and economic visions of CCIs. There is an underlying concern of political economy about who will hold power over this

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ "Inside ALIPH: The Organisation Racing to Save the World's Heritage," The Art Newspaper, November 29, 2024, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2024/11/29/inside-aliph-the-organisation-racing-to-save-the-worlds-heritage>.

²⁶⁷ "Saudi Culture Minister Announces \$30M Funding Commitment for ALIPH Foundation." Art & Deal, February 10, 2022. <https://artanddeal.in/saudi-culture-minister-announces-30m-funding-commitment-for-aliph-foundation/>.

²⁶⁸ Interview with Alessandro Jedlowski, Associate professor in African Studies, Sciences Po Bordeaux on 22 October 2024.

industry, and a bitter realisation that globalised cultural production could lead to a new form of Western extractivism over emerging riches. However, CCIs are the origin of social ties and value chains and encompass forms of political participation that can only be expressed through culture.²⁶⁹

While foreign investment in CCIs is intrinsic to the sector's growth and existence in the current international economic context, it is nevertheless necessary to assess the influence that CCIs have on society, and to prepare countries and officials with a legal framework capable of defusing situations of excessive imbalance.²⁷⁰ In this regard, the role of regional and international organisations is essential. One should however not rush into protectionism as the magic solution, as it inherently stifles creative momentum, and isolates artistic freedom from value creation. The isolation makes it more fragile and easier to target—especially by states whose objectives may be at odds with free expression. By linking freedom of expression to wealth creation, it becomes more resilient and less vulnerable to political interference. This is ultimately about achieving independence through economic empowerment, supported by a robust legal framework tailored to the creative sector.²⁷¹

A closer look at investment in media and press

The media and press sectors deserve particular attention, with Africa and Europe suffering from disinformation, fake news targeting youth on social media and weakening democracies. The EU's latest report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)²⁷² released by the EEAS has shown great threats on the digital infrastructure deployed by foreign actors, mainly by Russia, but also by China, to manipulate and interfere in the information space of the EU and partner countries. Those threats are common to African partners and the protection of media freedom was given a lot of attention during the last AU Media Convention that took place in Ghana from 15 to 17 May 2024, labelled "The African Media We Want: Enhancing Freedom, Innovation, and Sustainability in a Dynamic Media Landscape". Among the recommendations it adopted, the Pan African Lawyers Union called for "robust legal support for the protection of media freedom and the rights of journalists".²⁷³

When searching to achieve media freedom, journalists and civil societies often face problematic political interferences at both the national and international level. Media sector is seen as a strategic sector of the CCIs, as it can be used as a spearhead for foreign states looking to increase both their presence and influence on the continent. By doing so, foreign influences hamper the exactitude and veracity of information, causing misinformation or disinformation, that in term cause great damage to conditions for democracy. For African youth, the concern over fake news is important, and this can impact their choices of information media. Currently, television remains the top information source for youth but it is declining while Facebook remains in second

²⁶⁹ Interview with Alessandro Jedlowski, Associate professor in African Studies, Sciences Po Bordeaux on 22 October 2024.

²⁷⁰ Interview with expert at the African Development Bank.

²⁷¹ Interview with expert at the African Development Bank.

²⁷² European External Action Service, 3rd EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats, March 2025.

²⁷³ African Union, The 3rd African Media Convention Action Plan, 4 June 2025, retrieved from https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/reports/43781-rp-The_3rd_African_Media_Convention_Action_Plan_-_June_4_2025_1-1.pdf

and is climbing.²⁷⁴ However, the control of information over social media platforms is hardly managed and the social media vehicles as much misinformation and can also be used as tools for disinformation.

A significant challenge lies in ensuring the provision of accurate and equitable sources of information to African citizens—particularly the youth, who will become increasingly exposed to mobile technologies and the internet in the coming years. This issue should be prioritised by both the African Union and African societies more broadly. The AU–EU Summit could also serve as a valuable platform to explore how to build the necessary technological and creative skills to effectively counter misinformation. A positive example of cooperation in this area among civil society organisations is the recent training initiative launched by the *Fondation de l’Innovation pour la Démocratie* (a pan-African organisation incorporated under South African law that received support from France at its creation). It recently launched a call to offer Digital Content Creation Training Programme to 25 young professionals (aged between 20-35) who are either journalist, communicator, communications or marketing expert, blogger or activist. This is the first edition of what they call the "Atelier Pro – Démo" Creation Programme, that they organise in partnership with the Tchadinfos media group, for Chadians or for nationals of Central Africa and Great Lakes region living in Chad. The call notes "a regional context of democratic decline, escalating crises and conflicts, and worsening disinformation that poses a serious threat to freedom of expression, press freedom, and the right to information". The workshop will support the development of innovative digital content in Central Africa through capacity-building activities, mentorship, experimentation, and the dissemination of information.²⁷⁵ Discussions are on their way to encourage a scaling up of this type of projects, for instance through EU support to the Foundation. A scaled up initiative and ownership by African media actors could help address the needs and aspirations of African youth, particularly in response to the troubling rise of government-driven disinformation in the region.²⁷⁶

The programme for Radio Ndeke Luka in Central Africa has also shown EU’s capacity and interest in promoting reliable, independent, and widely accessible information for African societies. In its 2021 Annual Action Programme, the EEAS highlighted the fight against disinformation in conflict-affected contexts and the support for initiatives aimed at safeguarding peace processes from disinformation and other harmful online content as key priorities under Peace, Stability, and Conflict Prevention.²⁷⁷ Infrastructures' building effort should be accompanied by support to build such media, relying on existing forces within civil society. It is urgent that media and press too are considered as part of viable business projects and incorporated into a larger EU effort linking infrastructure with culture. More projects like these ones could be promoted as part of the AU-EU cooperation, on a larger scale and encourage cross-border cooperation and reflection of challenges on freedom of press. In developing such programmes, the AU and the EU should be

²⁷⁴ AEF Youth Survey 2024

²⁷⁵ Fondation de l’Innovation pour la Démocratie, "Appel à Candidatures : 25 Lauréats pour la 1ère Édition du Programme de Formation en Création de Contenus Numériques" (deadline 7 March 2025), <https://www.innovationdemocratie.org/event/appel-a-candidatures-25-laureats-pour-la-1ere-edition-du-programme-de-formation-en-creation-de-contenus-numeriques/> (last accessed March 11, 2025).

²⁷⁶ Nwonwu, C., Burkina Faso : deepfakes, célébrités et fausses informations utilisées pour glorifier le chef de la junte, BBC, 15 May 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/articles/c3rpw8n0zvxo>.

²⁷⁷ European External Action Service, Global Europe Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention - thematic programme 2021-2027; 22 December 2021, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/global-europe-peace-stability-and-conflict-prevention-thematic-programme-2021-2027_en

particularly attentive to fostering genuine cooperation and co-construction efforts, ensuring equal involvement of journalists from both regions.

It is essential to adopt an approach rooted in ICR, rather than one driven by influence or soft power. Constant efforts to safeguard freedom of the press should be undertaken on both continents, in a spirit of shared practices. This principle should underpin any media investment strategy on the continent. Without such a framework, the risk of opinion manipulation for commercial or political interests becomes significant. Such examples have been seen in the past. The Guardian revealed six years ago that "Beijing was buying up media outlets and training scores of foreign journalists to 'tell China's story well' – as part of a worldwide propaganda campaign of astonishing scope and ambition."²⁷⁸ The investigation by the Guardian recalled the Chinese announcement after the 2008 Olympics "when Chinese leaders were frustrated with a tide of critical reporting, in particular the international coverage of the human rights and pro-Tibet protests", to spend 6.6 billion USD to strengthen its global media presence. Its first major international foray was the China Central Television (CCTV) African branch, which tried to recruit highly respected journalism figures from the continent. The 2023 ifa report on "China's Institutionalised Cultural Presence in Africa" outlines that "the Chinese government's investment in the media landscape is an important component of Chinese cultural sector investment in Africa."²⁷⁹ In an April 2024 article, the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies noted how "China's ruling party is leveraging its funding of African media outlets, content sharing, and training of African journalists to advance Chinese narratives, policies, and norms on the continent."²⁸⁰

This ultimately comes down to a voluntary investment and vision of what happens when media is underfunded, that can affect the intercultural understanding between continents. China's biggest media conglomerate, Xinhua, has 37 bureaus in Africa, more than any other African or non-African agency.²⁸¹ By comparison, Radio France Internationale (RFI), for which Africa remains the main audience pool with 33.1 million listeners, including 24.5 million in French-speaking African countries - counts three out of a total of seven permanent special envoys in Sub-Saharan Africa (Abidjan, Dakar, Nairobi).²⁸² Through funding and training, China is looking to encourage Chinese-supported media entities "to report favourably on the local regime and amplify their political projects and narratives", as well for Chinese investments, "regardless of local misgivings that frequently arise."²⁸³ Freedom House gives a detailed portrait of Chinese influence in Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa in its 2022 country reports "Beijing's Global Media Influence 2022", ranking Beijing's media influence efforts as well as the local resilience and response. According to the research, Nigeria is most targeted by a "very high effort of influence". The country report mentions:

- "Several new indications that the Nigerian government viewed the Chinese regime as a model for its suppression of local free expression, and that it was using technology operated by China-based companies for this purpose."

²⁷⁸ Louisa Lim and Julia Bergin, "Inside China's Audacious Global Propaganda Campaign," The Guardian, December 7, 2018, <https://u.osu.edu/mclc/2018/12/08/inside-china-global-propaganda-campaign/>.

²⁷⁹ Avril Joffe, China's Institutionalised Cultural Presence in Africa, ifa, Edition Culture and Foreign Policy (2023), p.49. The report analyses Chinese strategy of media investment and influence in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.

²⁸⁰ Nantulya, Paul. "China's Strategy to Shape Africa's Media Space." Africa Center for Strategic Studies, April 16, 2024. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/china-strategy-africa-media-space/>

²⁸¹ Ibid

²⁸² RFI, Les chiffres clés, 16 January 2024, <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/entreprise/chiffres-cles>

²⁸³ Nantulya, Paul, op.cit.

- "Chinese government training programmes for journalists are highly sought after in Nigeria because they are well funded and offer capacity-building opportunities. The trainings have been successful in cultivating pro-Beijing voices in Nigerian media houses."
- "The Chinese embassy frequently reaches out to editors at major news outlets about news content and appears to be paying journalists not to cover negative stories about China."
- "StarTimes, a privately owned Chinese satellite company that has close ties to the Chinese Communist Party, plays an active role in the digital television infrastructure of Nigeria. StarTimes offers access to inexpensive subscription television packages that favour Chinese state media over other international broadcasters, though it has lowered the cost of digital television in the country. The state-run Nigerian Television Authority operates a joint venture with StarTimes. Huawei, a China-based company with close ties to the Chinese Communist Party and a record of building censorship and surveillance systems in China and abroad, has a dominant position in Nigeria's digital infrastructure."²⁸⁴

An evolution of EU programming and funding mechanism

Examining EU funding of Africa–Europe ICR is a delicate exercise, requiring careful navigation to avoid falling into a narrative of soft power or of a donor–recipient relation, a development model of the past²⁸⁵. This calls for a critical reflection on the existing frameworks and the vocabulary.²⁸⁶ To its credit, the EU's ICR framework has demonstrated openness to constructive criticism, leading to improvements in programming and funding mechanisms. This ability to reflect could earn the EU greater recognition as a trusted partner in ICR. By nature, ICR are fluid and evolving, and funding instruments must adapt to the needs of cultural actors and the realities of the sector. What must remain constant, however, is the solidarity built between the continents and within the Africa–Europe cultural ecosystem.²⁸⁷ The section below illustrates how the EU has adapted its programmes, and how new initiatives are addressing emerging needs and realities—from both European and African perspectives.

Over the years, programmes have been designed specifically to support Africa-EU cultural cooperation as part of EU ICR. For the period 2019-2026, these include:

- Culture@Work (2018-2021) co-funded by DG DEVCO (77%), European and African partners, and other sources
- the ACP-EU Culture Programme (2019-2025) funded by the ex-European Development Fund with the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States and EU member states,
- EUNIC Cluster Funds (2020-2024) mobilising member states budgets,
- EUNIC Spaces of Culture (2020-2025) funding through Creative Europe,
- the Cultural Relations Platform (2020-2026) funded by the Foreign Policy Instrument,

²⁸⁴ Angeli Datt and Emeka Umejei, *Beijing's Global Media Influence 2022: Nigeria*, Freedom House, 2022, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/nigeria/beijings-global-media-influence/2022>.

²⁸⁵ These words are taken from Jean Van Wetter, director general of the Belgian international cooperation agency Enabel, during the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FF4D) that took place in Sevilla from 30 June to 3 July 2025.

²⁸⁶ Avril Joffe and Matina Magkou refer to the work of *Africa No Filter*, which has developed practical suggestions for decolonising aid and funding practices. They highlight the importance of language, "that can be hurtful or revealing of ways of seeing that are deeply steeped in coloniality" (Joffe & Magkou, op. cit., p. 41.)

²⁸⁷ The recommendations put forward by the EU-funded project *Deconfining Arts, Culture & Policies in Europe and Africa* emphasise the importance of networking and the preservation of spaces for dialogue within African-European cultural ecosystems.

- the EU Bekou Trust Fund (2020-2023) with joint funding from the EU and member states (Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands) and Switzerland.

Among the programmes listed above, EUNIC Spaces of Culture and the Cultural Relations Platform (CRP) are maintained. The CRP will be renewed from 2026. EUNIC Spaces of Culture, which was previously funded through Creative Europe and covered all regions of the world, now focuses solely on Sub-Saharan Africa and is funded as part of the newly launched Africa-Europe Partnership for Culture.

2019-2026: ACP-EU Culture Programme

The ACP-EU cooperation has been the main approach through which the EU contributes to supporting the CCIs in SSA (48 countries out of the total 79 of the African-Caribbean-Pacific group). The ACP-EU Culture programme (under different names) has existed since 2008 with important and increasing amounts to support CCIs and audiovisual co-production. The last programme will end formally in 2026, and the EU is going out of the intra-ACP logic.²⁸⁸ Taking stock of what was done and successful in the last ACP-EU Culture Programme (2019-2026) will help advise the design of future programmes. The programme is also significant in the scope of ACP-EU relations, having the largest budget of the intra-ACP programme. It has proven impactful and most successful in SSA.²⁸⁹ It is co-funded by the European Commission through the Global Europe fund, formerly the European Development Fund, that has now been incorporated in the EU's general budget for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework. EU funds cover from 50% to 90% of the total funding for these programmes. The Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States Department of Political Affairs and Human Development in charge of Culture contributes to the strategic direction implementation and co-funding designated for African cultural sectors (see infographic on funds, programmes and projects).

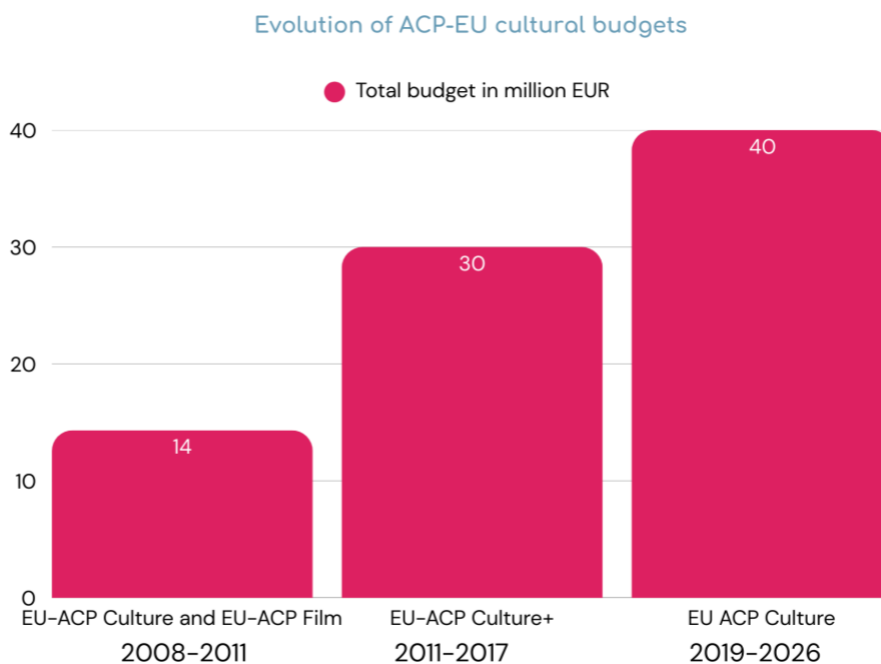
"The ACP-EU Culture Programme has been designed, jointly with the Secretariat of the Organisation of ACP States, to sustainably strengthen the potential of the sector, ensure a better understanding of the economic and social role it can play and thus stimulate entrepreneurship and self-reliance by boosting creativity." Henriette Geiger, current EU Ambassador to Kenya and former Director of Human Development, European Commission, 2021²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ Interview with manager in the EU ACP Programme.

²⁸⁹ Interview with manager in the EU ACP Programme.

²⁹⁰ "EU-ACP Cooperation: A Strengthened Partnership," ACP-EU Culture Programme, January 21, 2021, <https://www.acp-ue-culture.eu/en/blog/eu-acp-cooperation-a-strengthened-partnership/>.

ACP-EU Programmes for CCI and Audiovisual Co-Production have seen their budgets increased over the three phases of the programme, with the third one ending in 2026 and marking the end of the ACP-EU programme for culture:



culture Solutions (2025).

The 2019-2026 programming covered:

- ACP-EU Culture Regional Hubs: 26 million EUR to support the regional hubs in the six ACP regions (4 regional hubs in Western, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa),
- Audiovisual co-production (cinema, documentaries, series), through notably the CLAP ACP Fund (6 million) and the DEENTAL ACP Fund of 4 million for co-production also launched in 2021.

The ACP-EU Culture programme for regional hubs has relied on both public and private actors for projects' implementation, with an open process of selection based on the quality and relevance of the proposal. This led to a diverse landscape of organisations in charge of coordinating and managing the programmes, with well-established national cultural institutes like the Institut français, the Goethe-Institut and the British Council, along with private sector actors of SSA like the Music in Africa Foundation based in South Africa, non-governmental organisation like the Centre Culturel Kôrè in Mali, younger structures with an more start-up identity like the Heva Fund based in Kenya and public actors and institutes likes the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Institut national des arts de Kinshasa. The programme supported organisations already active in the cultural sector in an effort of delegation of capacity that turned out efficient both in terms of grants' management and projects support, but also in terms of strengthening of cultural operators in their capacity and networking:

- Western African hub: Institut français, Centre Culturel Kôrè,

- Central African hub: Fondation Interarts, Association Culture et Développement, Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Institut national des arts de Kinshasa,²⁹¹
- Eastern African hub: Heva Fund, British Council, with grants managed through the Ignite Culture fund,
- Southern African hub: Music in Africa, Goethe-Institut.

The implementation of the ACP-EU Culture programme has proven that among the African Caribbean and Pacific regions, African cultural actors were best prepared to receive and make the best use of this funding. Among these, East, Southern and West African hubs have proven to be the best performing ones and the highest number of projects was funded in West Africa, with more than 120 projects. Sectors that were supported through the regional grant mechanisms happened to be the performing arts' sector (theatre, music, visual arts, digital arts, *arts de l'oralité*) and many projects were oriented towards capacity building. The main objective of the programme was to support entrepreneurship and cultural operations in being more performant.²⁹²

Did it support the private sector?

The ACP-EU Culture programme, although not openly targeting the private sector, was very business oriented. It encouraged new funding approaches, focused on up-skilling cultural operators and creating new jobs as well as connecting cultural professionals, improving the quality and the distribution of audiovisual co-productions. Above all, it really encouraged the entrepreneurship aspect of CCI's development. In practice, most projects were managed by civil society organisations, but some private companies were also involved.

Were cultural actors equipped with digital skills?

Digital skills and readiness of the sector for digital transformations was a clear priority of the programme. Each project had to have a technological and digital dimension, something that happened in practice (notably with virtual reality or extended realities). The enforcement of digital technologies in the CCIs was mostly achieved by private companies. It seems that cultural actors and private actors did not react the same to the focus on digital transformations of the programme. Insights gained from the realisation of the AWA Programme, which granted the most projects and covered West Africa,²⁹³ revealed that although digital was a transversal priority,²⁹⁴ it has not been specifically targeted in the calls. Even though sectors relying on digital are developing, like video games, cultural actors supported through the AWA Programme expressed

²⁹¹ The Central African hub also suffered from Interarts' end of activity that happened before the end of the programme and could not deliver on the last round of funding for projects.

²⁹² Interview with manager in the EU ACP Programme.

²⁹³ 16 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Mauritania.

²⁹⁴ ACP-EU Culture Program: Support for the cultural and creative sectors in West Africa – AWA, <https://awafrika.org/en/presentation-of-the-awa-programme/> (last accessed March 11, 2025),

"support the development of cultural and creative industries in West Africa by enhancing their competitiveness and contributing to the growth of the region's digital economy."

different needs in relation to digital transformations, focusing more on the adaptation and preparedness.²⁹⁵ This nuance is essential to understand that objectives have to adapt to field realities if they are to support existing actors and ecosystems. It highlights the importance of designing cultural support programmes in close collaboration with stakeholders from the cultural ecosystem. Engaging with them from the outset helps identify the most relevant digital skills needed to support their entrepreneurial projects.²⁹⁶

How did it support sectors' structuration?

The success of the ACP-EU Culture programme was driven by the solid foundation, vision, and leadership of regional partner structures, which already had strong networks and influence. This made it easier to identify, connect, and support cultural projects. Such was the case with the Centre Culturel Kôre (CKK), deeply embedded in the field with a long history of supporting CCIs. ACP-EU funding enabled the expansion of this work through its grants mechanism.

In West Africa, the Institut Français oversaw overall coordination, while CKK handled grant management and interactions with projects. In July 2023, Mamou Daffé, Director of CKK and later appointed Mali's Minister of Culture, highlighted how ACP-EU support—across funding, skills development, and networking—sparked synergies and dynamism in the region's cultural sector. The strategic fund management not only strengthened cultural operators' capacities but also encouraged them to reinvent themselves and scale up their ambitions.²⁹⁷

The programme played a key role in raising awareness and expanding knowledge on the challenges faced by artists and CCIs in relation to intellectual property (IP) and copyright, as well as collective management organisations (CMOs). To ensure the transfer of this knowledge, a dedicated training curriculum was developed and implemented in four centres accredited by CKK across the region ("IKAM centres" in Mali, Mauritania, Ivory Coast and Togo).²⁹⁸ The impact on the strengthening of partner structures often relied on the initial solidity, vision and leadership of these structures, with an already established aura and network in the region, making it easier to tap into this to flag, connect and support cultural projects. However, one criticism directed at the ACP-EU programme is that it could have been more inclusive by allowing local partners—such as the HEVA Fund and the Music in Africa Foundation—to follow their own reporting and financial frameworks, rather than adopting those of the European cultural institutions. This issue highlights the delicate sense of distrust that can arise and potentially hinder cultural relations.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ Interviews with representatives of French external cultural agencies.

²⁹⁶ This research project develops such an approach with a survey conducted by the South African Cultural Observatory (January-March 2025) among young South African creators to understand the skills gained through cultural cooperation projects and how to anticipate the digital skills that will be useful to them.

²⁹⁷ "Mamou Daffé, Directeur du Centre Culturel Kôre, Évoque l'Avenir du Programme AWA," Institut Français, July 19, 2023, <https://www.institutfrancais.com/fr/rencontre/mamou-daffe-directeur-du-centre-culturel-kore>.

²⁹⁸ Interviews with representatives of French external cultural agencies.

²⁹⁹ Joffe, A., Magkou, M., The Payer, the Piper and the Fairness Tune: on EU–Africa Cultural Cooperation, in: Dâmaso, M. (Ed.) (2025) *The European Union as a Global Cultural Power*. De Gruyter. Series: Transnational Approaches to Culture.

How were public actors involved?

The programme indirectly facilitated dialogue between national public institutions, cultural stakeholders, and private actors. Among the four African regions, the Central African hub was the most proactive in engaging public authorities, but with limited success. Four regional meetings were held with regional authorities invited to participate in discussions, though their involvement remained largely consultative - in line with a limited operational capacity. No active participation was recorded in follow-up or implementation phases, nor funding or co-funding. The African Union was consulted during the identification and formulation of the latest ACP-EU programme, but not the African Development Bank.

Evolution of budgetary framework and priorities

2021 brought a lot of institutional and budgetary adjustment for the EU's international action. The new strategy guiding the EU's international presence, "the Global Gateway" was adopted for the period 2021-2027. The Directorate General for International Partnerships (INTPA) of the European Commission is the new name for "DEVCO" (Directorate General for Development Cooperation) from January 2021. INTPA, like DEVCO, is in charge of the programming for international funding in partner countries. In 2021, the European Development Fund was incorporated into the EU's general budget for 2021-2027 and rebranded "Global Europe". In this new configuration, experts have shared that INTPA was still figuring out how to activate new cultural initiatives under the Global Gateway. Culture seems to have become a crosscutting dimension rather than a clear area of action, making it difficult to promote structured, long-term programmes of cultural cooperation.

Within Global Europe, the EU's geographic programming for Africa focuses on Sub-Saharan Africa and separates it from North Africa. North Africa is covered through other envelopes – thematic of course, but also a specific envelop for the neighbourhood (total envelop of 19.3 billion EUR for 2021-2027) and Southern Neighbourhood (additional 3.6 billion EUR for the Southern Neighbourhood allocated during mid-term review of the Multi-Annual Financing Framework).³⁰⁰ Cultural projects are found across different priorities. Since 2021, the EU for instance seeks “to integrate the protection of cultural of cultural heritage in all other areas of the EU's external action and in appropriate financial instruments, including (...) Global Europe”³⁰¹ and this had led to meaningful and important project both in North³⁰² and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Funding for cultural projects in Sub-Saharan Africa is allocated through the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) for the region, which totals €29.18 billion under “Priority 2: Governance, Peace and Security, and Culture”. EU Delegations draw from this envelope to support cultural initiatives. For each partner country, the EU develops a country-specific MIP, which serves as a joint

³⁰⁰ European Commission, DG Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf, Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI – Global Europe), https://north-africa-middle-east-gulf.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/neighbourhood-development-and-international-cooperation-instrument-global-europe-ndici-global-europe_en (last accessed 31 August 2025).

³⁰¹ Council of the EU, op.cit, 2021.

³⁰² Cuny, E. Recentering the human and cultural dimension in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership: the Pact for the Mediterranean, a not-to-be-missed opportunity, Policy Brief, culture Solutions, July 2025, <https://www.culturesolutions.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/cS-Brief-14-Euro-Mediterranean-partnership.pdf>

framework document between the EU and its Member States. These programmes are based on assessments of each country's policies and define priorities and funding allocations for the 2021–2027 period, aligning with the EU's strategic objectives under the Global Gateway.

Among the countries' MIP, culture is integrated into broader development priorities. For example:

- In Djibouti, support is aimed at promoting women's employment in the craft and cultural sectors.³⁰³
- In Ethiopia, cultural rights are addressed within the wider framework of human rights.³⁰⁴
- In Burkina Faso, culture is treated as a cross-cutting theme, alongside areas such as digitalisation.³⁰⁵

The budget allocated to EU delegations has led to significant projects promoting Africa-Europe cultural cooperation. Previously cited examples included the Delegation to Burkina Faso supporting the FESPACO film festival, and the EU Delegation to the African Union supporting the ArtXChange project as part of the AU-EU Youth Cooperation Hub, highly successful among European and African youth.

New programming

Launched in 2025, the Africa-Europe Partnerships for Culture represent an envelope of 30 million EUR in the current MFF as part of the Sub-Saharan Africa MIP Priority 2 (Governance, Peace and Security, and Culture). It stands among the newly launched programmes by INTPA for Africa-Europe ICR.

It is composed of two continental, two Southern African and one Western African programmes (5 in total):

1. Continental: Connect & Create Programme (2025-2028) receiving 8 million EUR from NDICI and implemented by the Goethe Institut, Institut français and Expertise France.

The programme covers 4 areas:

- **Mobility:** a mobility scheme primarily addressing intercontinental (Africa-Europe) and secondarily transcontinental (Africa-Africa) short-term mobility from all sectors, for which a first call was just launched.
- **Capacity:** by supporting cultural organisations to enhance their capacity as platforms for creation, co-production, incubation with dedicated opportunities for both institutional development and professional exchange.
- **Performing Arts:** by focussing on circulation and co-creation.
- **Visual Arts:** adopting a value chain approach, including creation, production, and dissemination as well as documentation, discourse and publication on artistic practices and research to inform artistic practice and conceptualisation.

³⁰³ EU Delegation to Djibouti. 2021. Joint Programming of the European Union and EU Member States in Djibouti 2021–2027. European Union, 1 September 2021, p.25.

³⁰⁴ EU Delegation to Ethiopia. 2023. Multiannual Indicative Programme (2024–2027): Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. European Union, 3 October 2023, p.16.

³⁰⁵ EU Delegation to Burkina Faso, Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 for Burkina Faso - annex, 8 March 2022, European Union, p.4.

2. Continental: Africa-Europe Spaces of Culture (2025-2027) receiving 2 million EUR from NDICI and maintained as continuation of EUNIC Spaces of Culture but focusing on Sub-Saharan Africa. The Action will finance 3 yearly calls for proposals, of 7 projects each (21 projects in total). A first selection of projects was made for 2025.

3. Southern Africa: Promoting Culture and Heritage-based Sustainable Tourism in Southern Africa (2025-2028) receiving 4 million EUR from NDICI and implemented by UNESCO. The programme covers Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. It seeks to stimulate and promote sustainable tourism practices around the network of selected UNESCO-designated sites and UNESCO Creative Cities in these countries. It will encourage the public and private sectors to work together to better identify strategies, plans and actions that fully unlock the value of culture and heritage as tourism attractions. Furthermore, it will utilise enhanced cultural production capacities to develop engaging digital content and products, including using virtual and augmented reality, reflecting new multivocal narratives.

4. Southern Africa: Preserving the Past, Inspiring the Future (2025-2028) receiving 6 million EUR from NDICI. It has the same geographical scope as the above and focuses on developing narratives that provide meaning to tangible and intangible heritage, using an innovative approach. The project will select 16 non-governmental, non-profit organisations that are intimately linked with heritage sites or practices. These organisations will identify the broader themes and issues that give meaning to their heritage in today's society.

5. West Africa: Creativity in Clusters (2025-2028) receiving 10 million EUR from NDICI. It covers 15 West African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo. The objective of the programme is to strengthen Western African cultural regional integration, to support stronger partnerships between cultural platforms, structures, events, as well as cooperation with European actors. The programme includes activities and funding schemes to support:

- The internationalisation of festivals through sectoral, trans-national clusters,
- The internationalisation of large festivals to the EU,
- Short and long-form capacity building for festival workers,
- The internationalisation of artists.

The other programmes are:

- **Creative Africa: Audiovisual (2025-2029)** with 15 million EUR to support cooperation between actors of the African and European audio-visual industry along the value chain, with a continental outreach.
- **Strengthening Africa-European Museum Partnerships (2025-2031)** with 19.9 million EUR from co-funding EU and member states (Belgium, France, Germany, The Netherlands), bringing museums from whole Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe (UK & Switzerland included) together. This programme is implemented as an innovative "Africa-Europe Initiative" with co-implementation by the Goethe Institut and Expertise France³⁰⁶.

³⁰⁶ European External Action Service. 2024. An Africa-Europe Initiative: Strengthening African-European Museum Partnerships Opened. Press and Information Team of the Delegation to the African Union, July 9, 2024. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/african-union-au/africa-europe-initiative-%E2%80%9Cstrengthening-african-european-museum-partnerships%E2%80%9D-opened_en?s=43.

- **Procultura II PALOP-TL (2025-2029)** receiving 10 million EUR from NDICI and covering Portuguese-speaking African countries (Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe) and Timor-Leste.

Moreover, at the global level, the EU signed the UNESCO convention on cultural expression and supports progress on this agreement's objectives and INTPA supports the UNESCO Expert Facility with 5 million EUR from NDICI (for 2023-2026). CREATIFI is a new financing initiative amounting 20 million EUR and declined in three programmes that target the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific group of States (see below: [CreatiFI: blended finance and impact investment](#)).

An overview of cultural cooperation programmes receiving EU funding for the period 2019 until today can be found in [annex 5](#).

New funding approach

ACP-EU Culture: cascading grants

The ACP-EU Culture Programme has operated using a system of "cascading grants", managed by regional partners to support cultural operators and entrepreneurs in their artistic projects and development. Grants were awarded for periods ranging from six to eighteen months, with amounts varying between 20,000 and 180,000 EUR. At least 75% of the total grant amount had to be redistributed to third parties, while at least 15% was allocated to supporting activities, capacity building, and monitoring and evaluation.³⁰⁷ For audiovisual co-production support, the programme's grants were allocated to existing co-production funds, complementing the financial support these funds typically provide to the sector through their calls for proposals. This decentralised approach was designed to facilitate access to joint financing (combining traditional support with a programme "bonus"), and to encourage the circulation of ACP works across national and international markets.

The cascading funding model appears to have benefited cultural professionals, and regional operators effectively took ownership of the system. This enabled a transfer of management capacities at the regional level, which in turn contributed positively to energising and structuring the sector. The main benefit of cascading grants is to reach individuals and organisations that really need them, without having to deal with large and complex EU grants. However, the exclusive availability of traditional grant-based funding remains an area for improvement within the programme.³⁰⁸ This area for enhancement also aligns with a broader trend in development, which seeks to diversify funding sources by involving private sector actors, ensuring long-term impact by strengthening financial partnerships, and de-risking the sector to encourage more investors to contribute funding.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ ACP-EU

³⁰⁸ Interview with manager in the EU ACP Programme.

³⁰⁹ Creafund and CreatiFI: Proparco. CREA Fund: Proparco soutient, avec l'appui de l'UE, le financement des industries culturelles et créatives en Afrique. 15 February 2022, <https://www.proparco.fr/fr/actualites/crea-fund-proparco-soutient-avec-lappui-de-lue-le-financement-des-industries-culturelles> (last accessed March 11, 2025) ; European Commission. InfoPoint Conference: CreatiFI - The Cultural and Creative Industries Financing Initiative. 21 February 2024, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/events/infopoint-conference-creatifi-cultural-and-creative-industries-financing-initiative-2024-02-21_en. Accessed 11 Mar. 2025

During the ACP-EU Culture programme's final phase, stakeholders had the opportunity to gather cultural operators' views, which highlighted the need for a diversified approach of funding. For example, young and emerging organisations will still require grants, as they lack the initial financial capacity or robustness to take on loans. However, more experienced organisations can manage loans, which could be granted progressively as their projects scale up. This diversified approach can also be applied to different phases of a project. One key takeaway from the ACP-EU programme review is that if the success is to be sustained, new EU follow-up programmes should replicate ACP-EU best practices that enabled creators to launch their entrepreneurial projects.

Overall, cultural cooperation encourages a longer-term and more structural approach to funding, based on a blended finance model. In this way, the ACP-EU programme represents a strong example of resilient development aid, adapting over time and benefiting from the strengthening of the banking sector.

CreatiFI: blended finance and impact investment³¹⁰

The EU has taken a significant step forward by launching *CreatiFI*, the first dedicated EU programme that leverages financial instruments to support cultural and creative industries within its international cooperation efforts.³¹¹ With an EU contribution of 20 million EUR, *CreatiFI* is a new blending initiative aimed at leveraging impact investment in the CCIs across ACP countries. Its main objectives are to improve access to finance for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and CCI organisations, strengthen local financial systems, and enhance market access for CCIs by increasing the business capacities of different sub-sectors.

It offers financing through three complementary access streams:

1. **Creafund:** implemented by the European Commission and Proparco, the financial arm of the Agence française de développement (AFD), it receives a budget of 7 million EUR coming from the 11th EDF for 2021-2035.³¹²

Creafund enables banks and financial intermediaries to support creative professionals by fostering stable and de-risked investment conditions. It also contributes to the development of a regulatory environment and governance framework that reassures investors, thereby facilitating greater investment in the sector. It acts through two components to do so:

- a financial instrument: an “Underlying Guarantee” of 5 million EUR made available for providing a guarantee, specifically dedicated to cover a limited number of investments in CCI Companies, which will be available to eligible funds to encourage and unlock investment in this very new sector,

³¹⁰ Impact investment is best understood as an investment philosophy that can both be supported by and contribute to blended finance. Blended finance, by contrast, is a funding approach designed to encourage private investment, particularly in sustainable development. According to the OECD, it is commonly used in low- and middle-income countries by leveraging official development funds. This innovative model mobilises capital by combining the public sector's willingness to take on greater initial risk with the significantly larger financial capacity of the private sector.

³¹¹ Proparco, *op.cit.*

³¹² PwC, Restless Global, TFCC. 2024. Success Stories in the Creative Industries in Africa and other Emerging Markets, October 2024.

- and a technical assistance mechanism to contribute to a better understanding of the CCIs market specificities and highlight potential investment opportunities for finance providers.

2. **C-JET Umbrella Trust Fund**³¹³: implemented by the European Commission, the World Bank through its Finance for Development (F4D) Umbrella Program and the C-JET, it aims to foster private sector growth and receives 5 million EUR from the 11th EDF for the period 2023-2026.

This component supports a global knowledge component, leveraging Finance, Competitiveness and Investment (FCI) expertise to provide insights on global CCI trends, success factors, and best practices. This component supports six ACP countries including Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Kenya and Senegal in Africa, with complementary private and financial sector development activities.

3. **Fashionomics**: emanating from the African development bank's Fashionomics³¹⁴ (see [A rising African public investment](#)), it will start from the second semester 2025. The action will focus on the Fashion Value Chain, enhancing access to finance through both private and public capital, while providing training, connecting with investors, and creating a digital marketplace to boost business growth and global visibility. This will be achieved by:

- Access to Finance and Mobilising Investment,
- Capacity Building and Technical Assistance,
- Market Access and Knowledge Dissemination (Ie: market studies and activities to increase access to markets).

CreatiFI embodies the connection between the EU's cultural cooperation initiatives, its support for CCIs, and the *Global Gateway* priority of developing the private sector.³¹⁵ In February 2024, the *Music in Africa Foundation* announced a training programme, implemented by the *World Bank* as part of *CreatiFI*, to support musicians with modules on Music Management and Entrepreneurship as well as Technical Production.³¹⁶

Team Europe Approach for Culture

Team Europe is the new flagship approach of the EU's external action, put forward as the preferred method to realise *Global Gateway's* objectives (projects and funding goals) and as "an

³¹³ World Bank, *CreatiFI: Empowering Creative and Cultural Industries to Drive Job Creation*, Brief, 12 March 2025, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/competitiveness-for-jobs-and-economic-transformation/brief/creatifi-empowering-creative-and-cultural-industries-to-drive-job-creation>

³¹⁴ <https://fashionomicsafrica.org/>

³¹⁵ Based on research conducted for this project - to be verified with EC sources, *CreatiFI* was initially an EU-funded accelerator supporting digital startups in the creative and cultural industries. It was part of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) and later linked to Horizon 2020 under the FIWARE initiative. The FI-PPP (Future Internet Public-Private Partnership) was a major European research and innovation programme with a budget of 600 million EUR that ran from 2011 to 2016. It aimed to advance internet technologies and drive innovation in various sectors using open digital platforms. EBN Innovation Network. *CreatiFI*. <http://www.creatifi.eu/>. (last accessed March 11, 2025).

³¹⁶ Music In Africa Foundation. "Call for Trainers: Music Management & Technical Production Course in Mozambique." 24 February 2025, <https://www.musicinafrica.net/magazine/call-trainers-music-management-technical-production-course-mozambique> (last accessed March 11, 2025).

integral part of the EU's external action toolbox".³¹⁷ Defined in the Joint Communication "Building sustainable international partnerships as a Team Europe" of 2 October 2024, it takes stock of "a paradigm shift in the way the EU approaches its international partnerships beyond the EU's immediate neighbourhood" and an "increasingly contested international environment". Facing this more hostile context, Team Europe Approach was thought to support a leverage of private investment to maintain the level of EU funds dedicated to international partnerships.

Judging by the amounts announced with the Global Gateway, mobilising investments of up to 300 billion EUR between 2021 and 2027, this approach should deliver. The October 2024 Joint Communication however, acknowledges that Global Gateway does not cover the "full breadth" of EU's international partnerships. Team Europe approach is here to maintain cooperation, hence EU action, over priority themes that would not be covered by Global Gateway's objectives. For EU cultural actors and partners,³¹⁸ the Team Europe approach may have some (although not always recognised) advantages as it helps overcome the obstacles the EU faces in managing cultural projects alone. However, member states should not attempt to instrumentalise or monopolise the Team Europe approach only in their own national interest but instead engage in fair and genuine cooperation open to all member states.

So far, 17 regional Team European Initiatives (TEI) have been listed by the EU in Sub-Saharan Africa. Out of those, none focus solely on culture nor have support to CCIs in the scope of their objectives. However, when looking more closely at some of projects supported by TEIs, CCIs are indirectly covered. This is for instance the case with TEIs "Investing in Young Businesses in Africa (IYBA)", "Digital for Development (D4D) for Digital Economy and Society in Sub-Saharan Africa", and "Opportunity-driven Skills and VET in Africa (OP-VET)". The latter one, OP-VET, comprises the Africa-Europe Youth Academy that identifies the cultural sector among its focus. We analyse below how these initiatives can benefit CCIs through the support to young creatives' skills, education and entrepreneurial projects and how in return cultural cooperation can amplify and enhance the success of these initiatives.

A new form of programming: Africa-Europe Initiative

The project "Strengthening African-European Museum Partnerships" is still in its early stages but has roots in a previous desire for cooperation impelled by African and European museums. It seems to fall under a new format of Africa-Europe cultural cooperation. It is not listed among TEIs, but it relies on a Team Europe approach for implementation, with Expertise France and the Goethe-Institut as co-implementing agencies.³¹⁹ Moreover, the launch of the project has referred to it as an Africa-Europe Initiative, relying on a real co-ownership of the project.

In April 2023, 60 African and European museum directors -representing 38 countries- met at an international forum organised at the Museum of Black Civilisations in Dakar, Senegal that ended with "the signing of the Declaration of Dakar, which aims to strengthen partnerships between

³¹⁷ European Commission. 2024. Joint communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, and the European Investment Bank, Building sustainable international partnerships as a Team Europe, JOIN/2024/25 final.

³¹⁸ interviews conducted with Directors of EU and African cultural institutions

³¹⁹ The condition of having two implementing agencies -France and Germany- reflects the attraction around the theme of cultural heritage and artefacts, and this even if the total budget is not very high.

museums in Africa and Europe".³²⁰ The goal of this partnership is to give museums greater weight in cultural exchanges between Africa and Europe to open museums up to civil societies, and for the ethnographic museums in Europe to work "with Africans" rather than "on Africa".³²¹ This effort has already been made and is visible at the AfricaMuseum, which reopened in 2018 after five years of work and after rethinking the presentation of and relationship with collections from Belgian colonisation of Central Africa (DRC, Rwanda, Burundi).³²²

*"Uniting 60 museum directors from Africa and Europe is an historic event. A network was born in Dakar; a forum allowing museums and partners to forge a shared future. A big step forward, with a long and exciting road ahead of us to foster mutual understanding" said Hamady Bocoum, Director of the Museum of Black Civilisations of Dakar and Chairman of the Steering Committee, and Guido Gryseels, Vice-Chairman of the Steering Committee.*³²³

The project now has two implementing agencies -Expertise France and the Goethe-Institut- that will organise a series of activities around this declaration and museum partnerships. The condition of having two implementing agencies -France and Germany- reflects the attraction around the theme of cultural heritage and artefacts, and this even if the total budget is not very high. This attraction can also come from the sensitive aspect of this sector, relating to the shared African-European past and collective memory, remaining high on the political agenda of member states. Restitution is however not covered in the museum partnership. Museums will work together upstream or downstream, to build capacity through peer-to-peer cooperation. The aim of the declaration is first and foremost to empower museums.

The precise implementation work plan of the project has not yet been made public. The total amount of funding is 16 million EUR, co-financed by the EU and member states. The project is headquartered in Addis Ababa, hosted by the EU Delegation to the AU.³²⁴ A training and peer-to-peer learning component will be included, an element much appreciated by African partners. Implementation will be carried out with local partners such as the Beaux Arts de Kinshasa and the Ecole du Patrimoine Africain in Benin, already involved in training.

The project is interesting in several aspects:

- It places museums as central actors of cultural relations in connection with civil societies: The goal of this partnership is to give museums greater weight in cultural exchanges between Africa and Europe to open museums up to civil societies, and for the

³²⁰ Africa Museum. 2023. The AfricaMuseum Signs the Declaration of Dakar. April 27, 2023.

https://www.africamuseum.be/en/about_us/partnerships/declaration_of_dakar. The declaration was signed by 60 museum directors from 28 African countries participated including Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, but also from 10 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and United Kingdom).

³²¹ Interview with Director of a European museum.

³²² Africa Museum, Rethinking Collections:

https://www.africamuseum.be/en/see_do/temporary_exhibition/current/ReThinkingCollections (last accessed March 11, 2025)

³²³ Africa Museum, op.cit.

³²⁴ Press and Information Team of the Delegation to the African Union. 2024. "An Africa-Europe Initiative 'Strengthening African-European Museum Partnerships' Opened." European External Action Service, July 9, 2024. Accessed March 11, 2025.

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/african-union-au/africa-europe-initiative-%E2%80%9Cstrengthening-african-european-museum-partnerships%E2%80%9D-opened_en?s=43.

ethnographic museums in Europe to work "with Africans" rather than "on Africa". This effort has already been made and is visible at the AfricaMuseum, which reopened in 2018 after five years of work and after rethinking the presentation of and relationship with collections from Belgian colonisation of Central Africa (DRC, Rwanda, Burundi).³²⁵

- It connects cultural and scientific actions: the AfricaMuseum (Tervuren, Belgium) and the Museum of Black Civilisations (Dakar, Senegal) announced their intention to develop new cultural and scientific projects, such as a travelling exhibition to highlight the cultural connections within the Bantu language region, for which the AfricaMuseum is lending three objects to the Museum of Black Civilisations.³²⁶
- It opens a space to talk about the common past: the programme is not designed to cover the aspect of artefacts' restitution but to accompany museums who will work together upstream or downstream, to build capacity through peer-to-peer cooperation.
- It relies on local partners for implementation, such as the Beaux Arts de Kinshasa (DRC) and the Ecole du Patrimoine Africain (Benin).
- The programme is deeply rooted in the present, highlighting contemporary creation and providing it with the international visibility and mobility it deserves.
- It is also turned towards the future and mindful of the broader strategic context: "The project is in line with the priorities of the Global Gateway, because today's museums cannot do without citizen science and AI."³²⁷ In many respects, digital technology and AI make it possible to bypass administrative and logistical problems (like customs and borders) that previously seemed almost insurmountable, like digitisation of collections making it possible to hold simultaneous exhibitions in several capitals.

How can culture support wider objectives of the AU-EU partnership?

As mentioned earlier, in the new configuration of EU's international partnerships, culture appears as a crosscutting dimension rather than a clear area of action. AU and EU can ensure that projects funded in Africa through EU and AU-EU cooperation are leveraged at the continental level and lead to a greater recognition of culture and CCIs' assets for the continents' partnership, economic development and benefitting civil society, as well as marginalised populations. The European Commission should take a more deliberate approach in positioning CCIs as a key sector for economic growth, sustainable development and support to civil societies across its strategies and programmes. The section below highlights AU-EU strategies and programmes receiving EU funding where the role of culture and CCIs could be further strengthened to support mutual benefits and a strategic Africa-Europe partnership. Culture can indeed support key priorities for both the AU and the EU:

- Job creation, skills development and youth employment,
- Women's entrepreneurship and gender equality,
- Sustainable development for rural areas,
- Digital, tech & and innovation,
- Civil societies' strengthening and protection of media freedom.

³²⁵ Africa Museum, Rethinking Collections:

https://www.africamuseum.be/en/see_do/temporary_exhibition/current/ReThinkingCollections (last accessed March 11, 2025)

³²⁶ Africa Museum, op.cit.

³²⁷ Interview, Director of a European museum.

Job creation, skills and youth employment

CCIs employs more young people (aged 15–29) than any other sector globally³²⁸ and attract youth who turn to the entrepreneurial model. The term "cultural entrepreneur" is now widely used. SMEs represent 95% of all companies and generate 80 percent of jobs across the African continent. It is essential to integrate and recognise CCIs' importance in business and financial support initiatives. This need was highlighted by the EU Ambassador to Kenya during the *Stakeholders' Dialogue: Investing in Young Businesses in Africa (IYBA) Initiative*, where she noted that "CCIs represent the strongest economic growth in Kenya (...) but that this is a sector where it is difficult to raise capital".³²⁹

TEI Opportunity-driven Skills and VET in Africa

The Opportunity-driven Skills and VET in Africa (OP-VET) objective is to "complement Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes financed by the European Commission or by member states at the country level by helping these to orient towards concrete employment opportunities created by (EU) investments, trade, (regional) value chain development and other market dynamics in partner countries".³³⁰ It is co-financed by the EU with 75 million EUR and was launched in April 2024.³³¹ Its objective can clearly benefit CCIs that represent numerous job opportunities with sectors structuring nationally and regionally.

By integrating CCIs into a value chains' support, the EU can have a chance to maintain its relevance in terms of economic and technological support with its African partners. This approach has been already chosen by China, South Korea, Japan and Gulf countries, and receives positive feedback from African countries. So far, the EU had a tendency to remain focused on classic jobs in the cultural sector, and on creation. The two are not incompatible. Cultural institutes, present in local art and cultural life, interact with artists and create bridges with African and European artists. The EU trade strategy could also create interesting dynamics with African partners in investing in CCIs' value chains and move to a renewed cooperation by supporting innovative jobs linked to digital.³³²

As part of the OP-VET initiative and the flagship Youth Mobility for Africa (970 million EUR that includes Erasmus+ funds), the Africa-Europe Youth Academy aims to contribute to strengthening the skills through "training, mobility, exchanges and networking" and places focus on the media and cultural sector along with education, research, entrepreneurship and civil society.³³³ The programme was launched on 11 April 2024 on the occasion of the Global Gateway High-Level

³²⁸ Datta, N., Melchor, M. & Laclé, J. (2023), "Five ways creative and cultural industries respond to youth job challenges", World Bank Blogs, 5 Oct. 2023, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/jobs/five-ways-creative-and-cultural-industries-respond-youth-job-challenges> (last visited 6 Dec. 2024).

³²⁹ European External Action Service, EU in Kenya, Stakeholders' Dialogue: Investing in Young Businesses in Africa (IYBA) Initiative, 17 October 2024, intervention available in replay at: <https://www.youtube.com/live/O8WQuNEMIQI>

³³⁰ European Union, TEI Opportunity-driven Skills and VET in Africa - Infographics, August 2024, retrieved from <https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/system/files/documents/2024-08/Infographic%20-%20TEI%20OP-VET.pdf>

³³¹ European Union, Team Europe, Opportunity driven Skills and VET in Africa, <https://tei-op-vet.grantplatform.com/> (last accessed March 11, 2025).

³³² Interview with expert at the African Development Bank.

³³³ Expertise France. Global Gateway : au sein de l'équipe Europe, Expertise France mobilisée pour l'éducation. 11 Apr. 2024, <https://www.expertisefrance.fr/actualite?id=903729>. (last accessed March 11, 2025).

Event on Education that took place in Brussels,³³⁴ and a support of 15 million EUR from the EU was announced by then European Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen, for four years.³³⁵ The programme hence holds great promise to directly support CCIs - among which media and culture specifically.

Erasmus+

The international dimension of Erasmus+ has seen a tremendous increase for Sub-Saharan Africa, from 122 million EUR in the framework 2014-2020 to 584 million for 2021-2027. Among the actions funded for the overall international actions of the Erasmus+ programme, Higher Education represents 88,6% of the total 2.2 billion EUR.³³⁶ According to DG EAC sources, 896 projects of international credit mobility have taken place, with the participation of 800 Sub-Saharan African Universities and concerning 14,200 African students and 6,700 Europeans. Other actions include Erasmus Mundus,³³⁷ Capacity-building for Higher education and Capacity-building for Vocational Education and Training. Although these actions do not target CCIs specifically, they cover skills that are relevant to the needs of young creatives to foster mutual understanding of the cultural and creative sector. The Erasmus+ increase is in line with the Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package's objective "to increase strategic engagement between the EU and Africa on learning mobility and youth on both continents", the Youth Action Plan in External Action (2022-2027), and the commitments made at the 6th EU-African Union Summit in 2022.

The initiative Capacity Building in the Field of Youth in Sub-Saharan Africa funded as part of Erasmus+ targets skills' strengthening and objectives that will benefit the careers of young creatives, promoting:

- Entrepreneurial and innovative capacities,
- Ability to work transnationally while ensuring inclusiveness, solidarity and sustainability,
- Good use of digital means to stay connected under all circumstances even in situations of remoteness, isolation or confinement,
- Innovative ideas to replicate and scale up.
- Inclusion and accessibility of target groups and individuals with fewer opportunities.³³⁸

³³⁴ European Commission, Directorate-General for International Partnerships. Global Gateway: The EU Launches New Regional Initiatives in Africa to Boost Youth Mobility and Skills, Including the Unique Africa-Europe Youth Academy. 11 Apr. 2024, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/global-gateway-eu-launches-new-regional-initiatives-africa-boost-youth-mobility-and-skills-including-2024-04-11_en (last accessed March 11, 2025)

³³⁵ The project is implemented by Expertise France in cooperation with the Italian cooperation agency AICS and should cover several African states - Senegal, Guinea, Togo, Benin, Cameroon, Mauritania, DRC, Congo Brazzaville, Rwanda.

³³⁶ European Commission, DG EAC, presentation, Unimed week, Brussels, 20 February 2025.

³³⁷ Erasmus Mundus are international masters, jointly designed and delivered by a group of higher education institutions. They involve at least 3 institutions from at least 3 different countries, and multiple associated partners from the academic and non-academic world.

³³⁸ European Commission, EU Funding & Tenders Portal: Capacity Building in the Field of Youth in Sub-Saharan Africa (ERASMUS-YOUTH-2025-CB-SSA), <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/ERASMUS-YOUTH-2025-CB-SSA?isExactMatch=true&status=31094501,31094502,31094503&callIdentifier=ERASMUS-YOUTH-2025-CB&order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=startDate>.

Women entrepreneurship and gender equality

A 2023 study by the German international cooperation agency GIZ highlights how women in the CCIs face the “detrimental effects of gender-based labour division”. It reports: “They are significantly underrepresented in roles and positions traditionally associated with male occupations. This gender segregation becomes further compounded by vertical segregation, wherein women, within the same sub-sectors, encounter lower-paid jobs and limited representation in managerial positions. This disparity is evident across various domains, including music production, animation film direction, and more.”³³⁹ The relevance of the sector and of EU’s support to CCIs to reach women was reminded by Annica Floren, Deputy Head of Unit INTPA G3 insisting on the many opportunities created by the sector for women, youth and for societies as a whole to “promote open and diverse societies” that valorise heritage and create a space to debate.³⁴⁰

Women Entrepreneurship for Africa

The Team Europe Initiative “Investing in Young Businesses in Africa” (IYBA), launched in 2021 with a budget of 4.6 billion EUR, focuses on helping women and young people (ages 18–35) start, grow, and strengthen sustainable and inclusive businesses, while creating decent jobs. Within this initiative, the Women Entrepreneurship for Africa (WE4A) programme received 25 million EUR to support women entrepreneurs by boosting their business capacity and access to finance. During the pilot phase launched in 2021, women entrepreneurs supported by WE4A created over 6,000 new jobs — nearly 4,600 of them held by women and 2,700 by youth. A virtual acceleration programme was also designed to support 99 women entrepreneurs. Although CCIs are not listed as a distinct sector in this programme, they are indirectly included under categories such as services, consumer products, education & training, and marketplaces. This is achieved by promoting products derived from creative work or inspired by traditions as part of cultural heritage, supporting young creatives in developing their skills, and strengthening the tourism and events industries. This programme could be strengthened by targeted support for CCIs, promoting their growth and enhancing their economic impact.

Sustainable development for rural areas

Rural areas have particularly fragile economies. In some cases, the discontinuation of farming subsidies and consolidation of farmlands have resulted in less involvement in agriculture, limiting income generation and food security. Urbanisation is a double-edged sword and as much as relatives may sell cultural goods and send money back, many people do not have the skills to survive in the rapidly changing world. The failure of the school and healthcare system is particularly detrimental to the rural population which already access half the government services that urban populations do.

³³⁹ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Cultural and creative industries. Breaking barriers, driving change: unveiling gender dynamics in the cultural and creative industries, Gender Study, August 2023, GIZ,p.6.

³⁴⁰ European Commission. InfoPoint Conference: CreatiFI - The Cultural and Creative Industries Financing Initiative. 21 February 2024, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/events/infopoint-conference-creatifi-cultural-and-creative-industries-financing-initiative-2024-02-21_en. Accessed 11 Mar. 2025

The second phase of WE4A II, mentioned above, has been announced with a particular focus on ecotourism. Ecotourism that highlights Africa’s cultural and natural heritage offers a valuable opportunity to create new prospects for rural areas — which must not be left behind. To ensure equitable development, it will be crucial to provide training led by local cultural and tourism actors (such as local guides and rangers), helping ensure that the benefits of job creation reach rural populations (see [Culture, development and sustainability for rural areas](#)).

Public investment in CCIs holds the potential to bridge the widening gap between urban and rural areas across African countries — where there is significant disparity and diversity in terms of access to knowledge, opportunities linked to digital transformation, and the ability to apply digital skills within culturally specific contexts. Public funding should also ensure equivalent opportunities for rural and urban areas. As shown earlier, urban areas tend to be more covered than rural areas in the TEI Invest in Young Business in Africa, where most projects funded happened in urbanised, and English-speaking countries. CCIs can help leverage this gap and offer a more harmonious development.

Digital, tech & innovation

Research has shown growing interest in the links between CCIs and innovation. Findings suggest that firms within the CCIs tend to outperform those in non-CCIs in terms of product innovation and R&D intensity, though not necessarily in process or organisational innovation.³⁴¹ While some studies argue that creative industry firms are not inherently more innovative than those in other sectors, they highlight the crucial role of individuals in creative occupations as drivers of innovation.³⁴² Others emphasise the importance of collaboration between traditional tech-sector professionals—such as those in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)—and individuals in creative fields, suggesting this cooperation is essential for innovation.³⁴³

Technologies used within the creative sector often feature low barriers to entry, enabling broader accessibility and more efficient diffusion.³⁴⁴ This, in turn, creates tangible opportunities for creatives by translating skills into innovative employment prospects. What is certain is that innovation is taking place within the CCIs, and increasingly strong connections are forming between culture and technology—fostering environments in which technology can thrive within creative ecosystems. Both the AU and the EU have the potential to promote greater recognition of these synergies.

TEI Digital for Development (D4D)

The TEI Digital for Development (D4D) is supported by nine member states. Its transformational potential lies in driving Africa’s digital transformation by fostering multi-stakeholder dialogue, partnerships, and investments in the digital sector. Like for IYBA, the initiative does not target CCIs directly but CCIs will indirectly benefit for better infrastructure and connectivity to diffuse

³⁴¹ Protogerou, A., Kontolaimou, A., & Caloghirou, Y. (2016). Innovation in the European creative industries: a firm-level empirical approach. *Industry and Innovation*, 24(6), 587–612.

³⁴² Lee, N. & Rodríguez-Pose, A. 2014. Creativity, cities, and innovation. *Environment and Planning A* 46(5), 1139–1159.

³⁴³ Rodríguez-Pose, A. & Lee, N. 2020. Hipsters vs. geeks? Creative workers, STEM and innovation in US cities. *Cities* 100: Article 102653.

³⁴⁴ CrossBoundary. 2024. "Tech-Driven Renaissance: Unleashing Africa’s Creative Economy." CrossBoundary, May 10, 2024. <https://crossboundary.com/tech-driven-renaissance-unleashing-africas-creative-economy/>.

and consume products and sell products online, as shown with platforms of marketplaces for cultural products.³⁴⁵

STARTS Africa

The priority of digital brings new actors to the field of culture in Africa-Europe partnership. In 2024, the EU Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT) launched a special edition of STARTS - an initiative of the European Commission to foster alliances of science, technology, and artistic practice - for Africa. Now in its second edition, the S+T+ARTS Prize Africa "highlights and awards regional best practices in the field" and "has been a major contributor in building the foundations of a community interlinking artists, companies, scientists, researchers, and businesses". The prize is co-funded by the EU and consists of a total budget of 30.000EUR (one grand prize of 15.000 EUR and 5 Awards of Distinction each 3.000 EUR).³⁴⁶ Although this is far from matching the budgets under the ACP-EU Culture Programme and the Erasmus+ Sub-Saharan Africa funding, it nevertheless represents an interesting evolution of actors involved in the realm of cultural and artistic creation in Africa and represents an effort to link art and culture to innovation and society as well as recognising creativity as a driver of positive change. Most recently, a programme of ten residencies was announced as part of the new S+T+ARTS initiative, "Afropean Intelligence," alongside Prize Africa. These residencies are scheduled to take place in Nigeria, Egypt, Tunisia, South Africa, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The stated objective is to "critically explore the uses of AI by identifying its impacts and collectively addressing its challenges within local contexts." The residencies will bring together experts from the cultural and creative industries (CCI), artists, technologists, and scientific professionals.³⁴⁷

AU-EU Innovation Agenda

Finally, the AU-EU Innovation Agenda is gaining traction and increasingly relevant for CCIs. The AU-EU latest Ministerial Meeting Joint Communiqué "took note of the adoption of the AU-EU Innovation Agenda and encouraged researchers and innovators to continue driving their scientific discoveries and innovative solutions for the benefit of sustainable economies and societies."³⁴⁸ The agenda is built around four objectives:

- 1. Make it real:** Translate innovative capacities and achievements of AU and EU researchers and innovators across sectors (...) into tangible outputs supporting sustainable growth and jobs (...)
- 2. Generate impact by design:** Foster and/or strengthen innovation ecosystems to enhance socio-economic impact on the ground through the exchange of knowledge, technology, competences, human resources and experience between and within AU and EU countries. (...)
- 3. Strengthen people, communities, and institutions:** Develop sustainable, long lasting and mutually beneficial higher education, research and innovation partnerships between AU and EU countries as foundations for resilient knowledge economies and societies, preventing or mitigating, among others, the effects of major crises. (...)

³⁴⁵ Example of African Development Bank Group's Fashionomics platform.

³⁴⁶ Starts, Grand prize of the European Union promoting the S+T+ARTS approach to digital innovation in Africa, <https://starts.eu/starts-prize-africa/> (last accessed March 11, 2025).

³⁴⁷ Starts, S+T+ARTS Afropean Intelligence, <https://starts.eu/afropean-intelligence/> (last accessed 27 May 2025).

³⁴⁸ AU-EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs of member states of the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU). 2025. Joint Communiqué of the 3rd EU-AU Ministerial Meeting, 21 May 2025, p.3.

4. Learn, monitor, and scale it up: Scale-up instruments that can take forward existing successful bilateral or multilateral programmes and projects between AU and EU partners, enable and/or strengthen the knowledge triangle of education, research, and innovation, and place special focus on public participation, transparency, and inclusion, mainly through capacity empowerment, particularly for the youth, women and vulnerable groups also starting to recognise the links to establish with CCIs. Piloted from the DG Research and Innovation of the European Commission."

In 2023, CCIs ranked as the third most represented sector on the EuroQuity ENRICH in Africa Virtual Community Platform, accounting for 8% of registered companies—behind agri-tech and agriculture (25%) and tech agencies (9%). This platform is part of the ENRICH project, funded by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 programme, which aims to strengthen the EU–Africa tech and innovation ecosystems by supporting collaboration among innovators and connecting incubators, accelerators, investors, corporates, and policymakers to foster social impact and green business.³⁴⁹ By 2024, CCIs remained among the top sectors but saw a decline to 5%, placing them on par with the tech sector. Meanwhile, agri-tech and agriculture dropped to 16%, and fintech emerged strongly with 15%.

The agenda, emphasising its "holistic ambition," acknowledges the limitations of the current occupational categories used in its statistics—based on ILO classifications—and signals the need to expand the scope to better include professions in the arts, social sciences, and humanities, which may fall outside these conventional categories. The review also recommends that future efforts should aim to capture employment in these sectors more comprehensively and tracking the representation of the cultural and creative industries on the EuroQuity ENRICH in Africa platform over time would provide valuable insights. These developments reflect a positive shift towards recognising the importance of CCIs within the AU-EU innovation policy framework and should be encouraged and monitored.

Civil societies' strengthening and protection of media freedom

UNCTAD (2018) defines creative media as a key component of cultural and creative industries, that refers to the production, creation, and distribution of content across various forms of media (e.g., film, television, digital media, video games, music, etc.). It is important to note that creative media is not exclusively digital, though in recent decades, digital technologies have become a dominant force in its development and distribution. This report has highlighted the media sector's exposure and vulnerability to foreign interference and the manipulation of information. It has also examined how young people consume information. Strengthening creative media training for youth—aligned with the principles of free, accurate, and fact-checked information, and with the aim of supporting the vitality and independence of civil society—is a shared priority for both the AU and EU.

Joint media and journalism training programmes could be designed, or scaled up when already in place, to equip young journalists with digital skills, generate new job opportunities through innovative media production, and combat disinformation using locally developed fact-checking

³⁴⁹ ENRICH in Africa Center, <https://www.enrichinafrica.com/about> (last accessed 27 May 2025)

tools. By supporting African newspapers, these initiatives would contribute to an open, pluralistic, and inclusive media landscape between Europe and Africa. The role of literature and authors in guiding future journalists and young people who engage with or produce creative media could be highly valuable. Their involvement can help inspire youth to develop their own understanding and ethical approach to media and information, fostering a grassroots perspective grounded in critical thinking and creativity.

Team Europe Democracy Initiative

The Team Europe Democracy Initiative was launched in 2022 for a period of five years with a budget of more than 15 million EUR, jointly conducted by 15 member states under the coordination of Enabel and the GIZ (in charge of the Secretariat).³⁵⁰ Its objective is to improve awareness of democratic backsliding and human rights violations around the world, and to contribute to promoting and protecting democracy worldwide, with three priority themes for action being accountability and the rule of law, political and civic participation, and media and the digital domain. It mobilises a network of experts that support EU Delegations to operationalise the initiative and develop joint democracy actions, with the aim of strengthening the "coordination and complementarity of European interventions for democracy support". The initiative is backed by a network composed of EU institutions, EU MS and their implementing agencies, individual civil society organisations or networks, think tanks, universities and research centres based in Europe and engaged in promoting democracy and human rights worldwide.³⁵¹

The Team Europe Initiative has the potential to play a key role in promoting jobs and skills in the cultural and creative industries, contributing to the development of a stronger democratic framework.

Training in digital skills, combined with education in independent journalism and fact-checking, can foster the growth of creative media, generate new job opportunities, and strengthen the protection of free speech and independent media—both essential pillars of democratic life. Building bridges between the Team Europe Democracy Initiative and existing projects that promote digital skills for media and creative industries through cultural initiatives could enhance their impact. In this context, cultural actors should be actively involved in the initiative.

³⁵⁰ European Commission, International Partnerships: Team Europe Democracy Initiative, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/programming/programmes/team-europe-democracy-initiative_en#implementation (last accessed 21 March 2025).

³⁵¹ European Union, Capacity4DEV: Team Europe Democracy Initiative Fact Sheet, 9 March 2023, retrieved from https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/library/ted-initiative-fact-sheet_en.

Conclusion: Partnering with cultural actors amid changing funding dynamics

The question of investment raises a broader issue of choice. African private and financial actors are increasingly recognising the potential of the cultural and creative industries—both in terms of their intrinsic value and their significance for the people of the continent. A strong and forward-thinking policy framework should complement private investment, particularly in supporting core cultural sectors that do not necessarily operate according to conventional profit-driven models. This is a key consideration that both the AU and the EU should bear in mind in their future discussions and planning on cultural cooperation. While attracting private investment is important for fostering the economic independence of the sector, it will not, on its own, ensure the maintenance of positive relations among countries—both within and between continents. Cultural relations and cooperation projects remain vital in this respect.

This part and the examples above show that the EU and member states, together with their African partners, have started to develop innovative financing approaches to support culture, the CCI and creative value chains.

The analysis of programmes and funding has highlighted several key success factors, such as:

- Cascade funding,
- Reliance on local actors to manage grants,
- Promotion of regional integration through local actors contributing to sector structuring,
- Opportunities for intra-African collaboration and mobility,
- Long-term support, particularly for capacity building among cultural administrators and entrepreneurs,
- Diversification of funding (the "blending approach") to enable longer-term project support and adaptation to different project phases,
- Engagement of the private sector.

Reporting regularly on their implementation progress and sharing learnings will be essential to maximise the impact of these programmes. They also demonstrate that links between technology, innovation, and culture have been established for some years through diversified funding approaches and research programmes. These initiatives have supported digital start-ups within the creative and cultural industries. However, such connections are often neither widely recognised nor clearly articulated by institutions.

It is equally important for existing cultural ecosystems to be more aware of these opportunities and to maintain a connection between funding opportunities. New funding mechanisms like CreatiFI could be used to follow up projects and actors supported through previous funding programmes such as ACP-EU Culture one.³⁵² This would ensure continuity of the support,

³⁵² That idea was mentioned as a follow-up phase of the ACP-EU Culture programme, but not made possible technically, administratively or financially with the end of the intra ACP programming. However, other programmes and actors could take over these efforts and ensure that links are made between closing programmes and emerging ones. Interview with manager in the EU ACP Programme.

strengthening of the sector and solidification of good relationships already established between African and European partners. A blending financial approach can ensure that links are maintained with partners and to adapt the support to new needs while creating business opportunities for both continents. This mechanism should however be introduced through actors already in place and in contact with cultural ecosystems and be accompanied by skills' support to ensure that they lead to job creation in line with current realities and diverse contexts without raising further investment or digital gap on the continent.³⁵³

Cooperation programmes supporting the cultural and creative sector remain essential and should not suffer or be questioned by shifting political priorities. EU funding should at least be maintained at the same level to support education and jobs creation in creative sectors and value chains. Stakeholders interviewed for this report have insisted on the importance of culture for trust-building relationships, the benefits drawn from cultural projects and the long-term impact observed from well-designed cultural programmes. AU member states should step up in financing the cultural sector to protect African cultural heritage, train youth to skills and open new job opportunities.

³⁵³ The analysis of the TEI Invest in Young Business in Africa showed that most funded projects happened in urbanised English-speaking countries.

General conclusion

This report provides an overview of the geopolitical, economic, and technological shifts impacting cultural relations and cooperation between Africa and Europe. In light of a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape, adjustments to strategic priorities and existing frameworks are necessary for both the AU and the EU. Rethinking Africa–Europe cultural relations, basing them on a reciprocal, trust-based, and fair approach, will be a prerequisite for making AU-EU partnership fit for the future. It is essential for both partners to be willing to continue working together to jointly defend culture and cultural heritage, and to recognise the central role of CCIs in sustainable development, youth employment, job creation, and economic growth.

In the aftermath of the 7th AU-EU Summit, both institutions stand to benefit from a renewed commitment to shared values and priorities. This redefinition should be both conceptual, clarifying the values and principles underpinning cooperation, and practical, building on the exchanges between civil societies, cultural professionals, artists, and policymakers. It should also consider geographical and political realities that connect North Africa to Sub-Saharan Africa. This would prove necessary in reimagining a more integrated and inclusive cultural relations.

The cultural and creative sector is not absent from Africa-Europe and AU-EU relations. An analysis of funding programmes and projects reveals that while numerous initiatives receive support, their visibility and significance remain insufficient. Greater transparency regarding the EU’s role and actions in this area would improve its perception among cultural actors and partners. Similarly, the AU would benefit from complementing its strong strategies for the preservation and promotion of African cultural heritage with a better-resourced and more adequately staffed cultural unit, along with improved internal coordination.

The current policy frameworks of the AU and the EU still fall short of meeting the expectations and aspirations for intercontinental solidarity and continental integration expressed by cultural and artistic communities. The limited reference to culture in the most recent ministerial meeting joint communiqué—and its omission from the core agenda of the Global Gateway—raised concerns that culture would be sidelined in the 7th AU-EU Summit and in the partnership. This marginalisation would represent a missed opportunity, particularly at a time when there is growing recognition of culture’s vital role in development, diplomacy, and social cohesion. To unlock the full potential of the cultural and creative industries, the AU and EU must adopt a pragmatic approach, shifting the focus from ideological debates to addressing the sector’s most pressing needs—education, skills, employment, and income generation—particularly for young people and women. This must be done while recognising the diverse contexts across both the EU and Africa. In the drive to support the digital transformation of CCIs, rural areas must not be overlooked. While digital innovation presents significant opportunities, it should not become an end in itself. The ultimate goal of AU-EU cultural cooperation should remain the strengthening of the cultural and creative sector—promoting culture, protecting cultural heritage, and supporting communities.

Among recent successes in cultural cooperation, the newly announced African-European Museums Partnership has been particularly well received—both for its objectives, with a focus on peer-to-peer learning and joint projects, and for its methods, including the *Team Europe*

approach, initiatives driven by museums themselves, and the active involvement of citizens and communities (inherent to the efforts museums have been making over the past few years). This initiative should serve as inspiration for future projects and as a best practice model, not only for the cultural sector but also for other priority areas in international partnerships.

Overall, clearer and more assertive leadership from both the EU and the AU in the cultural sector is lacking. However, this leadership should not be seen as a threat or an encroachment on national sovereignty but rather as an additional space for dialogue and a means of creating new opportunities. Moreover, discussions with representatives of European member states and cultural institutes, African cultural institutions, organisations and institutions have shown that this political and financial investment was strongly supported.

Ensuring an institutional memory of the programmes funded and implemented by the AU and the EU is essential to maintaining their credibility, building trust among stakeholders engaged in these initiatives, and shaping the future of the partnership more effectively. The credibility of the EU and the AU will be shaped by culture, and for their efforts in cultural cooperation to be well perceived, they must ensure continuity and visibility. These two factors depend on more established internal processes, a clearly defined role, and strong institutional commitment, driven by a strategic vision.

The EU and the AU must engage in a genuine reflection on the image they wish to project—at a continental level for the AU and an intercontinental level for the EU. The EU, in particular, should consider whether it is sustainable to maintain a highly positive image in certain parts of the world (e.g. through its strong support for Ukraine) while, in others, it is still primarily associated with a security- and migration-focused approach. African and European societies will maintain a high level of interactions no matter the political trends. If institutions want to maintain a certain level of relevance, they should not ignore the topic of culture and rather allow the regulatory frameworks to adapt to challenges and needs shared by actors from the field.

Today, the European Parliament and the EU Council's observations in the document *"Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa"* remain more relevant than ever and should be reaffirmed and embraced by both the AU and the EU.

*"Stronger political, economic, and cultural ties between Europe and Africa are crucial in a multipolar world."*³⁵⁴

³⁵⁴ European Commission (2020). Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa, JOIN/2020/4 final.

5- Recommendations

Significant funding has already been provided by both African and European actors to support CCIs, cultural cooperation and to create the conditions for cultural relations. The aim of this report is not merely to call for more funding but to highlight the crucial role of culture in Africa-Europe relations, the importance of CCIs in the development of African and European economies and the opportunities the sector contains for youth and employment and for the relation of the continents. These recommendations are directed to both AU and EU institutions, with a focus on the strategic development of their mutual relationship and their support for the cultural and creative sector in Africa. They aim to strengthen the connections between African and European cultural ecosystems, while addressing shared trends and challenges relevant to both partners. Drawing on in-depth research, analysis of past programmes, and interviews with key stakeholders, the recommendations urge policymakers to maintain cultural cooperation as a central pillar of the partnership.

The transformations affecting international cooperation and the cultural and creative sectors should not be seen as a reason for institutional disengagement, but rather as an opportunity to rethink and adapt their role. The AU and the EU, as institutions, can lead this renewed dialogue, supported by champion member states that recognise and promote the role of culture in both societies and economies. The 7th AU–EU Summit is a test of the ability of supranational institutions to take the lead, uphold their values, and promote a new multilateralism. At the heart of this rethinking is the recognition that mutual learning and enrichment must be the foundation of the partnership—promoting a truly bi-regional Africa-Europe dimension, rather than a one-sided EU-to-Africa approach. Culture plays a key role in supporting institutions in this shift, thanks to the active engagement of cultural actors and the strong connections between civil societies, including youth and diaspora. In turn, the cultural and creative sectors will benefit from this renewed framework, which fosters greater independence, diversified funding sources, and the promotion of fair and equitable principles for international cooperation, including appropriate legal frameworks for CCIs.

In the second deliverable of this research project, the South African Cultural Observatory puts forward additional recommendations³⁵⁵ directed at cultural cooperation professionals—from institutions, cultural agencies, and across the wider cultural ecosystem. These aim to support a transition toward programmes that are fit for the future, with particular attention to the growing digitalisation of the cultural and creative industries. Both reports, and their respective sets of recommendations, are complementary—addressing different levels of policymaking, strategic planning, and implementation.

To ensure it maintains a dedicated place that fully reflects its political, economic and social value, the part below shares some recommendations addressed to AU and EU policy makers to bridge what is being done with what could be done as part of African-European alliances. AU and EU can revive these alliances that are needed in a tense geopolitical context. AU and EU member states

³⁵⁵ Gaylard, J., Joffe, A., Mtotywa, A., Pearse N., Shelver, A., Vitshima, S., Derrocks, R., Cuny, E. Creative Futures: A Preliminary Exploration of Youth Perceptions on Cultural Cooperation and its Potential in Africa and Europe, UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2025, Digital Library, 2025, https://mondiacult2025.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Technical-paper-M25_CreativeFutures_NMU-SACO.pdf.

are backed in their efforts by strong civil societies on both continents, and cultural ecosystems driven by freedom of creation, mobility and exchanges.

Culture contributes to both continents in terms of growth, revenue, employment, and social cohesion. CCIs are shaped by technologies but are also shaping the digital landscapes of tomorrow. Policymakers play a crucial role in ensuring that regulations protect—rather than hinder—CCIs, allowing their full benefits to be realised. The recommendations rely on the research exposed throughout the report and with in-depth interviews conducted with stakeholders and experts.

The recommendations are organised around three key areas (political, ethical-societal and economic-financial) that could serve as the foundation for a joint AU-EU strategy on ICR.³⁵⁶ Developing such a strategy would require a shared process of reflection and co-creation between both institutions in close link with cultural ecosystems and citizens from both continents that shape and experience these relations. This process should involve emerging stakeholders, address urgent challenges, and provide an opportunity to reassess the relevance of existing geographical, political, and financial frameworks governing Africa-Europe cultural relations.

Rethinking Africa-Europe cultural relations could follow three main directions—concerning the policy framework, ethics, and economy:

- [Visibility, cooperation and leadership for AU and EU's ICR](#)
- [Ethical, fair and sustainable cultural relations](#)
- [Fostering innovation, resisting extractivism](#)

Visibility, cooperation and leadership for AU and EU's ICR.

The AU and the EU will gain from augmenting their internal and external leadership on ICR. The report has exposed the different institutional actors and agencies dealing with culture and CCIs within the EU and the AU. Despite the profusion of actors, a lack of leadership and of clear mandate is observed. This is due to culture largely remaining a national competence on both continents. However, this often overlooks the reality of cultural ecosystems that exchange and co-create at regional, continental, and intercontinental levels—processes made possible notably through AU and EU programmes.

Moreover, exchanges between African and Europe in the field of culture have been lasting and have borne fruits. This report has shown that even if European ICR remains a shared competence of numerous stakeholders (European national cultural institute, Foreign Affairs ministries, Ministries of culture, etc.) EU-level programmes and fundings are undeniably becoming impactful and attractive for national cultural and creative stakeholders. The same goes for the AU: although its lack of visibility and capacity of action was mentioned throughout the research, cultural actors nevertheless recognise the potential it can have in fostering continental approach, standards and

³⁵⁶ Cuny, E., Helly, D., Mbeki, L. Africa-Europe cultural and creative partnerships: a draft joint strategy, culture Solutions, 3 November 2025.

know-how circulation in support of CCIs to provide better revenues and working conditions, youth employment and protection of African cultural heritage.

The EU and AU can ensure a policy and regulatory framework to help CCIs achieve their full capacity in terms of education, skills, employment and innovation. By working closer together on culture and building an innovative vision for CCIs as an example of renewed international partnerships' approach, the AU and the EU could reinvigorate their policy leadership as well as bring concrete positive outcomes to the sector.

1. **Promote a genuine Africa-Europe dimension in cultural cooperation and relations** should be the foundation of any effort to adapt to the evolving trends shaping the global economy and international cooperation. This requires both partners to reflect on and articulate why cultural relations are meaningful for their respective continents, civil societies, and cultural ecosystems. The rationale for renewing these relations must emerge from inclusive dialogue and close engagement with citizens, civil society actors, diasporas, and youth. Such participatory processes—already being pursued on both continents—are essential, especially as youth and civil societies become increasingly aware of the risks facing democracy, independence, and freedom.

2. **Encourage national efforts and supporting champion states to take on regional and continental leadership roles.** AU and EU institutions—particularly in the fields of external relations and culture—reflect the priorities and initiatives of their member states. Leading states should therefore be encouraged to strengthen the supranational dimension of their actions, whether at the European or African level. The AU and EU have a key role to play in mobilising existing national knowledge and transforming it into an institutional strength at the continental level. This is particularly important at a time when both continents are experiencing a rise in nationalism, and when a trend of de-Europeanisation in foreign policy is being observed within the EU.

3. **Produce an AU-EU annual report on cultural programmes.** Such a report would encourage both institutions to identify, measure, memorise and enhance cultural and creative programmes. The annual report could focus on the societal and economic effects of cultural cooperation in partner countries. Data is still lacking on CCIs' weight in Africa but it is also lacking regarding the social benefits of culture and CCIs in Africa and Europe - beyond pure economic impact.

4. **Appoint an AU-EU Special Joint Envoy for culture and CCIs.** The AU and EU could designate a AU-EU Special Joint Envoy for culture and CCIs. The AU-EU relation is looking for a new breath and appointing a joining AU-EU Envoy for culture and CCIs could be it. By representing both views, realities, and continents, the envoy could help institutions and the member states that compose them to overcome past visions and focus on more efficient cooperation. The Envoy would moreover find support among the cultural ecosystems to ground his/her legitimacy and bring the necessary forward thinking vision that institutions crucially need.

5. **Prepare an AU-EU joint international cultural relations strategy.** The EU and the AU should work on a joint ICR strategy that would update the 2016 EU one, and that could then be replicated at bilateral level between the EU and African national governments. African and

European partners - understood as governments, regional organisations, public and private cultural actors as well as civil societies share a lot. Some shared topics remain contentious, but the most sensitive issues—colonisation and restitution—are beginning to be addressed. The AU and the EU cannot afford to forgo a comprehensive strategy that actively involves public stakeholders—governments and cultural institutions such as museums, Universities, art schools—as well as private sector actors and civil society organisations in these matters. The strategy could have components on 1) values and principles in the relation, 2) political leadership, and 3) economic aspects of the cooperation and 4) research and innovation, drawing on the existing AU-EU innovation agenda.

The development of such a strategy would also help strengthen internal teams within both the AU and the EU working on these issues (see Recommendation 1) and politically re-engage institutions on these topics. It would also provide an opportunity to assess recent funded programmes (e.g. *Spaces of Culture*, *ACP-EU Culture Programme*, *AU-EU Youth Cooperation Hub*), a work that could be performed by a dedicated observatory of culture in African-European relations (see recommendation 4). Recent initiatives' evaluation will be essential in designing future programmes to avoid missing opportunities and already well functioning networks and partnerships. A particular place should be given to youth in the policy framework for cultural cooperation, to ensure the programmes match the concerns and needs of young creatives, young artists in the face of global pressing challenges. Youth should be empowered as promoters of culture and guardians of their cultural heritage.

Finally, designing a strategy would enable political and institutional actors from both continents to align their visions with those of communities, artists, and civil society, which are central to this partnership. As is often the case, artists are ahead of their time, and for many, regional integration is a reality. Artists and cultural professionals also bear witness to the deep ties and solidarity between Africa and Europe. By taking ownership of this issue in the right way, the EU and the AU can only strengthen their credibility and legitimacy.

6. **Co-fund an AU-EU Joint Africa-Europe Multi-Annual Programme for Cultural Observation and Analysis.** Too often, cultural funding remains little known or is quickly forgotten. This report provides a 2025 snapshot of the trends, stakeholders, and funding shaping cultural relations between Africa and Europe. Such an ongoing effort is essential for policymakers to effectively fulfil their mission and adapt strategies to the realities on the ground. A continuous analytical approach would support the design of funding programmes by leveraging established actors (diplomatic and cultural institutions, civil society, investors, businesses, entrepreneurs, and academic partners) while also engaging emerging stakeholders in the CCIs. An *Observatory for Africa-Europe Cultural Relations* would build on existing work and guide future decision-making through innovative and inclusive approaches such as surveys, foresight exercises, and participatory workshops for experience-sharing. It would also contribute to the recommendation for an annual AU-EU review of cultural initiatives and the development of a *Joint International Cultural Relations Strategy*. Additionally, the observatory could highlight ongoing research across both continents, as well as the values and approaches underpinning this research. The involvement of artists and cultural professionals would be crucial to ensuring the relevance of the observatory's assessments and discussions.

7. **Build a Community of Practice for Culture among “Team Europe” in Africa.** In addition to ensuring institutional memory, it is crucial to support professionals within EU institutions and

delegations in adopting a cooperative approach to cultural engagement. The creation of EUNIC, while highly promising, has not yet led to the necessary mindset shift for a true European *ownership* of cultural projects. Too often, initiatives depend on individual drive and commitment within EU institutions and in delegations, and the temptation remains high for member states to put forward their cultural institutes relying on important national cultural budgets and well-established networks. However, the *Team Europe* approach has proven effective and is well received by partners. Museum cooperation, for instance, demonstrates how this approach can help address historically sensitive issues within a broader framework of continental and intercontinental collaboration. A continuous knowledge-sharing via exchanges of best practices' online or in person session dedicated to cultural initiatives would allow for a *Community of Practice on Culture*³⁵⁷ for EU Delegations in Africa to emerge, in coordination with member states.

8. **Target CCIs in the EU's international cooperation strategies.** The European Commission should take a more deliberate approach in positioning CCIs as a key sector for economic growth, sustainable development and support to civil societies across its strategies and programmes. This report has demonstrated the relevance of CCIs within the objectives of the Global Gateway, across various Team Europe Initiatives—supporting both business development and the defence of democracy—as well as within the AU-EU Innovation Agenda. Culture, cultural heritage, and CCIs deserve more systematic analysis by the EU, particularly to ensure that internal efforts at the European level are reflected in the EU's international action.

9. **Increase resources and coordination for culture in the AU.** Within the AU, the Culture Division is one of the least staffed units, if not the one. A larger team should be made available for the unit to grasp challenges and opportunities, with budgets to conduct facilitation and engagement activities. Appointing the Pan-African Cultural Congress as a permanent overseeing body could ensure better coordination³⁵⁸, good leverage and ownership among the cultural ecosystems usually represented within the PACC. This would also ensure the AU has good information from the sector and could benefit from strategic advising on decisions to be discussed at the AU level.

10. **Support advocacy strategies to encourage states to meet the 1% target.** The AU has begun establishing important partnerships with cultural organisations, such as the Music in Africa Foundation. These efforts should be continued and expanded, particularly by supporting organisations working at the national level—such as Connect for Culture Africa—that advocate for allocating at least 1% of national budgets to culture. To increase both funding and visibility for culture, the AU should build on the strength of existing networks and organisations already active in the field. This advocacy can also be strengthened through collaboration with financial institutions such as the African Development Bank and Afreximbank.

11. **Enhance Africa Day.**³⁵⁹ Every year since 1963, Africa Day has been happening on May 25th. The event could however benefit from amplification, more budget and visibility. The Africa day could for instance showcase each year the culture of one Member State of the African Union that

³⁵⁷ McNeilly, N., Zayas, C., Valenza, D., Helly, D., op.cit.

³⁵⁸ Recommendation formulated by Daves Ghuzza, Producer/Director, former Chairperson of the Bureau of the 5th Pan-African Cultural Congress, during an interview on 17 January 2025.

³⁵⁹ Recommendation formulated by Daves Ghuzza, Producer/Director, former Chairperson of the Bureau of the 5th Pan-African Cultural Congress, during an interview on 17 January 2025.

would be represented across the continent. This would not only encourage member states to take leadership and ownership of culture, but also bring African peoples closer in understanding the richness of cultural diversity on the continent.

12. **Deepen AU-EU interinstitutional learning and cooperation.** The revision of the AU-EU cultural cooperation framework will also benefit administrators from both regions by enabling them to adapt their work to the evolving realities and opportunities of the sector. The training of cultural policy administrators is essential in an international context undergoing rapid transformation—technologically, economically, and geopolitically—and should be a priority within AU-EU partnerships. Joint training programmes could be a great way to share best practices and strengthen both institutions to better understand CCIs' relevance in the partnership. As previously highlighted, both continents are facing major and, in some aspects, similar crises. These include conflicts leading to population displacement and threats to cultural heritage, as well as challenges related to misinformation, cybersecurity, and positioning themselves within the global AI market. A continuous dialogue between EU and AU administrators on these issues would be both enriching and beneficial for institutions. Cultural policy administrators would be better equipped to assess support programmes for CCIs across the continent, focusing on the production of legitimate, validated data essential for recognising the sector's social and economic value.

Ethical, fair and sustainable cultural relations.

The recommendations below outline how policymakers can update cultural cooperation to better meet the sector's needs, while also addressing global demands for skills, education, and youth employment. These insights are drawn from numerous conversations with cultural sector representatives throughout this research.

13. **Engage with ecosystems in place.** Culture is a particularly sensitive domain, as it brings African and European partners into dialogue with their shared history and cultural heritage. However, the African-European Museums Partnership has demonstrated that when cultural actors are actively involved—opening up to citizens and communities—doors open, and difficult topics can be addressed. The EU and the AU must ensure that this *people-to-people approach* continues to develop beyond national political frameworks, which are often subject to shifts in alliances and political changes (such as the rise of far-right movements in the EU or the growing hostility of Sahelian countries towards France, linked to (post)colonial history and new Russian influence). Institutions could also facilitate more dialogue spaces in other cultural sectors and ensure that the outcomes of these discussions are considered at the political level.

14. **Valorise literature.** Future cooperation programmes could design specific initiatives more explicitly dedicated to the role of literature in the cultural relations between Africa and Europe. Similarly, the evolving role, influence, and reception of cultural relations among diasporic and displaced communities—particularly in the context of digital and social media—could be further examined and highlighted by cultural and research partners from both Africa and Europe.

15. **Capture the impact of cultural programmes.** The systematic design and implementation of robust impact assessments for cultural programmes can effectively highlight their economic,

social, cultural, and educational value.³⁶⁰ Evaluating joint cultural cooperation projects should also include an analysis of their relational benefits, such as strengthened networks and cross-sector collaboration. A thorough assessment of the effects and long-term gains of cultural cooperation is essential for policymakers to recognise its significance. This will help ensure continued support, prevent missed opportunities for value creation, and justify the renewal of impactful programmes.

16. **Think about the jobs of tomorrow.** African-EU cultural cooperation should reinvent itself around the necessity to act along and support value chains in the CCIs. The framework for cultural cooperation between Africa and the EU has long focused on creation and production, showcasing talent, providing them with spaces for representation (such as member states' cultural institutes), and encouraging co-production (through the ACP-EU programme for the audiovisual sector). Today, the European strategic framework of the *Global Gateway* presents an opportunity to broaden this approach by engaging with value chains and turning towards innovative professions within the cultural and creative industries.

This new approach to cultural partnerships could complement the well-established actions of European member states through their cultural institutes. The growing interest of development agencies and banks in the cultural and creative sector in both Europe and Africa further reinforces this opportunity. The AU and the EU can jointly initiate this reflection, with the support of their partners—including the African Development Bank, Afreximbank, and the World Bank—to identify the jobs of the future. These professions should create decent employment opportunities in the cultural and creative sector that are highly skilled, accessible to young people and women, and available in rural areas, all while adapting to the prevailing economic context.

To achieve this, institutions must adopt innovative approaches to policy making, drawing insights from ecosystem observations and applying a reverse engineering method to highlight the professions of the future and determine the necessary training, skills, and partnerships to implement.³⁶¹ Skills development should be strategically aligned with existing job needs, future opportunities, and roles that will help structure the sector. This approach will support the growth of CCIs in Africa, making them more self-sufficient and profitable for African creators.

Among the roles and competencies identified in this research, particular urgency lies in supporting professions related to contract management, the distribution of creative works, and expertise in the legal frameworks governing creation. This includes sales agents responsible for distribution and negotiation, who could greatly benefit from training on legal aspects and contract management. Additionally, there is a need for skilled professionals in commercial roles, as well as in pre-production and post-production—areas that require careful planning and resource allocation beyond just the creative work itself. Moreover, the demand for highly competent sound technicians remains crucial to ensuring high-quality production standards across the industry.

³⁶⁰ Evaluations of large EU-funded programmes (such as ACP-EU culture, Tfenen Tunisie créative) as well as smaller ones (EUNIC spaces of culture, Togo créatif, projects in Senegal, support to EU Film Festivals) or reports from the EU-UNESCO experts facility are useful sources of knowledge and lessons learned. They should be systematically shared and published on dedicated web pages as part of EU regular reporting on the implementation of the 2016 Joint Communication on International Cultural Relations.

³⁶¹ In line with that recommendation, the present research is complemented by a survey and analysis conducted by the South African Cultural Observatory to analyse the current and needed skills of creative youth in the cultural and creative sectors with a specific focus on forecasting what skills will be needed to adapt to the digital and economic transformation of the sector beyond 2030, using the case of South Africa and select insights from other EU and AU countries, organisations and creative practitioners.

This would complement the efforts through Erasmus+ and Horizon to foster academic partnership among European and African universities.

17. **Map mentorship and training opportunities.** To support the relevance of a strategy looking at more education, training and job opportunities, an exercise of mapping of all numerous mentorship and (public and private) cultural management training initiatives would be much needed. This mapping could be performed by the African-European know-how sharing networks in the framework of the upcoming Africa-Europe continental cooperation programme.

Fostering innovation, resisting extractivism.

Commercial partnerships within the CCIIs must be built on the same principles of fairness to avoid long-term harm to cultural sectors. It is crucial to recognise that CCIIs, too, can fall victim to extractive dynamics.³⁶² Today, musical genres such as Amapiano and Afrobeats are among the most prolific, yet the revenues reaching artists remain disproportionately low. The EU and the AU face a critical challenge—one that could strengthen their alliance on issues of mutual interest and strategic importance: artificial intelligence, data management, ownership, and ethics.

18. **Connect CCIIs with the AU-EU Innovation Agenda.** Leverage existing strategic frameworks, such as the *AU-EU Innovation Agenda*, to incorporate more clearly the challenges and opportunities of CCIIs. The agenda could promote greater recognition of the vital role played by the cultural and creative sector in driving innovation³⁶³, inspiring other sectors and by creating opportunities for technology to thrive within creative ecosystems.

19. **Support education actors.** Programmes supporting the cultural and creative sectors should be a priority in future Erasmus+ and Horizon projects, with a focus on job opportunities as a foundation for educational offerings. Art and heritage schools, such as the *École du Patrimoine Africain* and the *École des Beaux-Arts de Kinshasa*, would play a key role in this approach, as they already train many young people for cultural professions. International partners and organisations (such as Aliph and the World Heritage Fund) could also contribute to these efforts.

Additionally, opportunities linked to shared challenges—such as climate change, sustainable tourism, and new museum strategies—should be integrated into broader education and research programmes between European and Sub-Saharan African universities and institutions.

The EU Young African Leadership Programme could be boosted and widened with a dedicated CCI component and expand Erasmus Mundus to include more African higher education institutions.

³⁶² Interview with Alessandro Jedlowski, Associate professor in African Studies, Sciences Po Bordeaux on 22 October 2024 ; Interview with Samuel Samiai Andrews, Professor of Intellectual Property Law, Al Yamamah University College of Law, Al Khobar, on 5 December 2024.

³⁶³ 2016 Study findings suggest that firms in the cultural industries (CIs) outperform those in non-CIs both in terms of product innovation and R&D intensity, but not in terms of process and organisational innovation. Empirical analysis also suggests that the human capital of the founders as well as specific firm characteristics play a significant role in the innovative activity of firms in the CIs.). Protogerou, A., Kontolaimou, A., & Caloghirou, Y. (2016).

Finally, in line with the existing AU-EU Innovation Agenda, exchanges could be fostered between African and European universities to co-design academic programmes that support the structuring and protection of the cultural sector and tackle the specificities of CCIs (Intellectual Property Law, Ethics of cultural data, Artificial intelligence in cultural and creative products). In both public and private education, curricula would benefit to align with emerging challenges and opportunities in CCIs, in line with the AU-EU Innovation Agenda.

20. **Identify CCI extractivism as a threat.** Cultural productions, data and creative work are subject to the threat of new extractivism. EU and AU should affirm the need to protect both tangible and intangible cultural heritage amid the digital transformation of CCIs, and the importance of ensuring decent working conditions for artists on both continents.

While artists and creators readily adopt new technologies, they remain concerned about the business, legal, and long-term cultural challenges these innovations may bring: "there is a growing realisation that unless the African music industry embraces new technology, it risks losing control of its talent and heritage."³⁶⁴ Cultural professionals have emphasised that ensuring proper legal protections for artists should be a priority in education programmes and that stronger partnerships between African and European schools and universities could play a key role in addressing this issue.

Additionally, the digital divide remains a significant concern, with rural areas at risk of being left behind in the enthusiasm surrounding digital CCIs.

21. **Foster exchanges on IP knowledge and reforms.** Intellectual property rights are already essential legal skills and knowledge to be widely disseminated among cultural organisations in the future transformations of CCIs. They will become even more so in the age of culture digitisation and digitalisation. Through joint capacity building programmes benefiting from leaders in the field both in Europe and Africa, legal experts, policy makers and creators could be encouraged to influence and reform the national, regional and international legal frameworks to protect cultural and creative productions in the age of AI.

22. **Develop new African-European academic partnerships for culture and media.** Joint media and journalism training programmes could be designed, or scaled up when already in place, to equip young journalists with digital skills, generate new job opportunities through innovative media production, and combat disinformation using locally developed fact-checking tools. By supporting African newspapers, these initiatives would contribute to an open, pluralistic, and inclusive media landscape between Europe and Africa.

³⁶⁴ Ngobj, Bukonola. 2024, op.cit.

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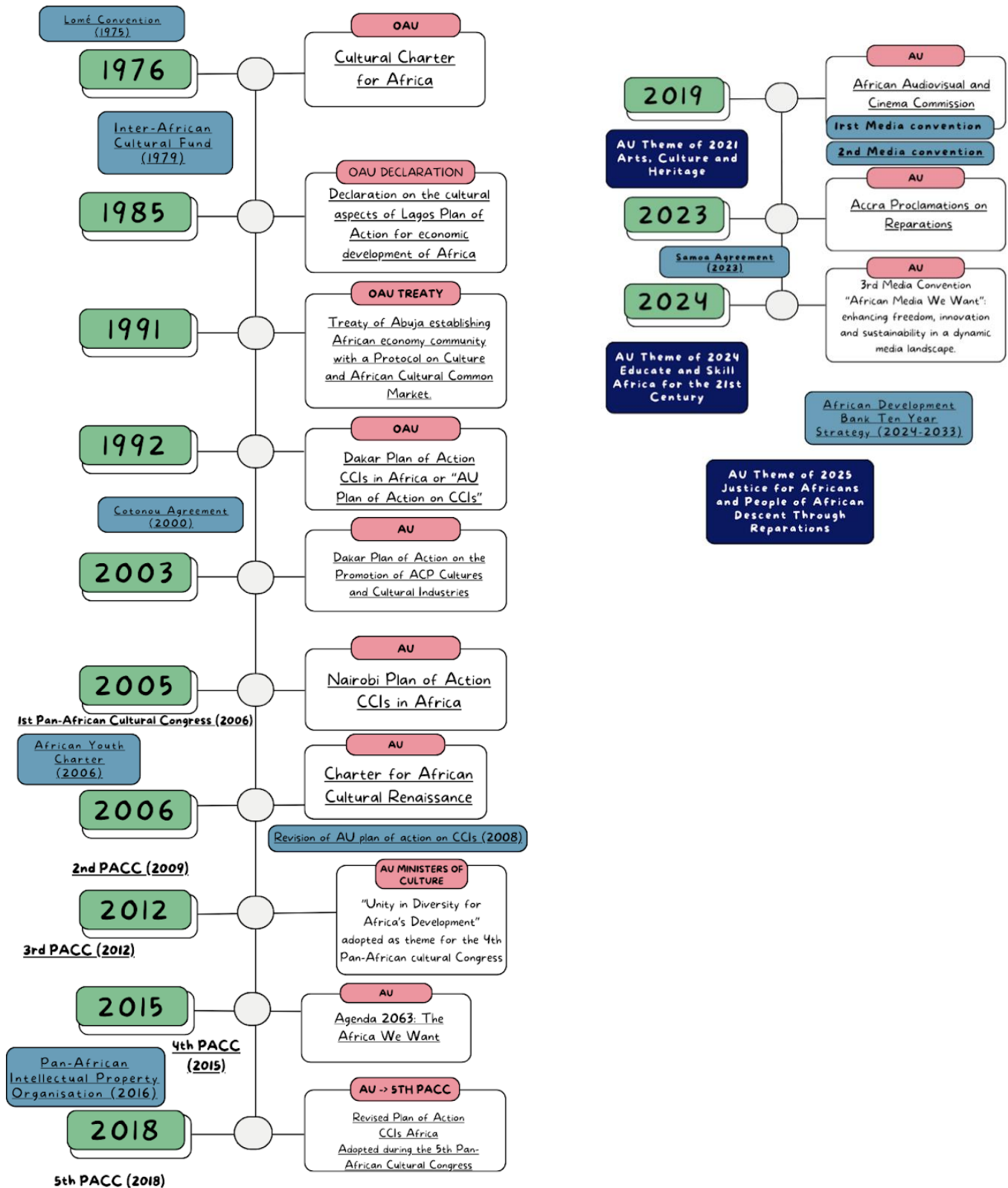
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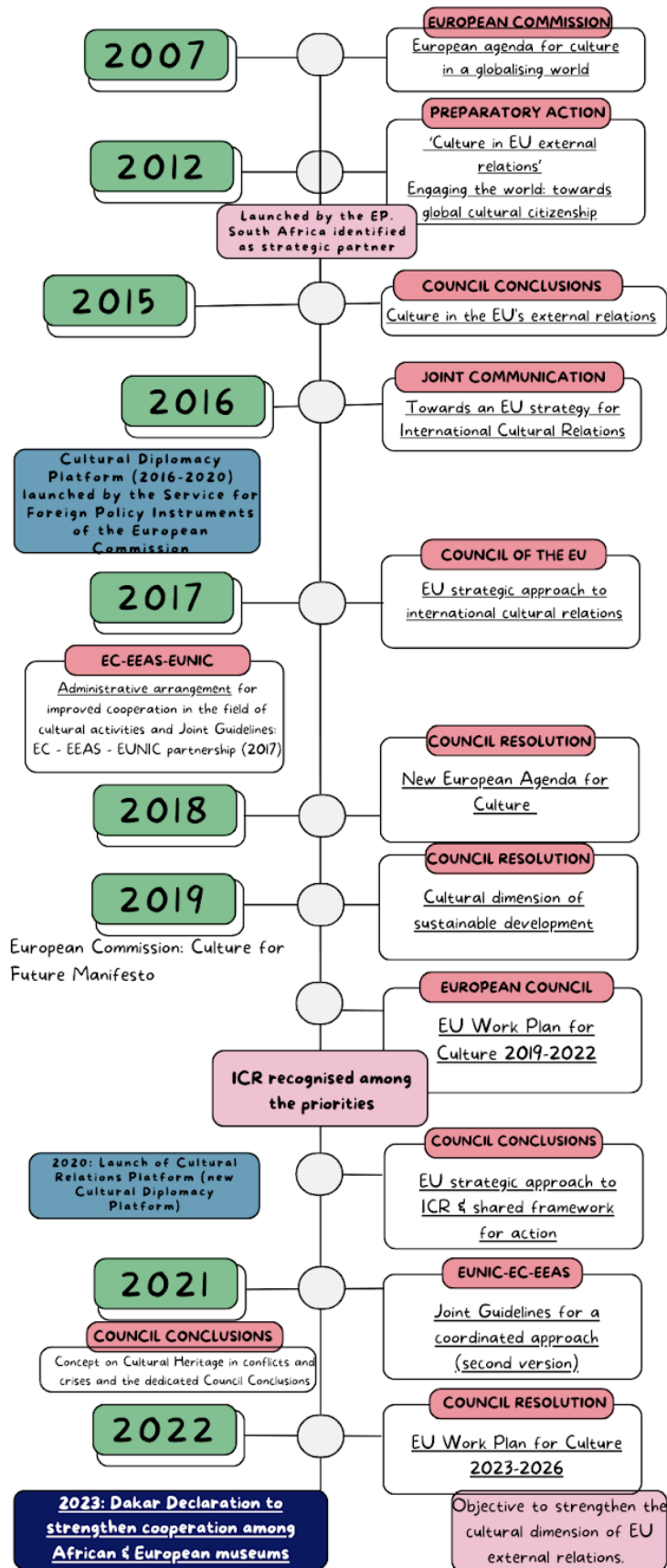
Annexes

1. [Timeline: AU policy framework for culture and media](#)
2. [Timeline: EU policy framework for international cultural relations](#)
3. [Scheme: EU Actors of ICR and dedicated funds & programmes](#)
4. [Scheme: African cultural ecosystems and institutions](#)
5. [Table: EU cultural cooperation programmes from 2019 until today](#)
6. [Conceptual framework](#)

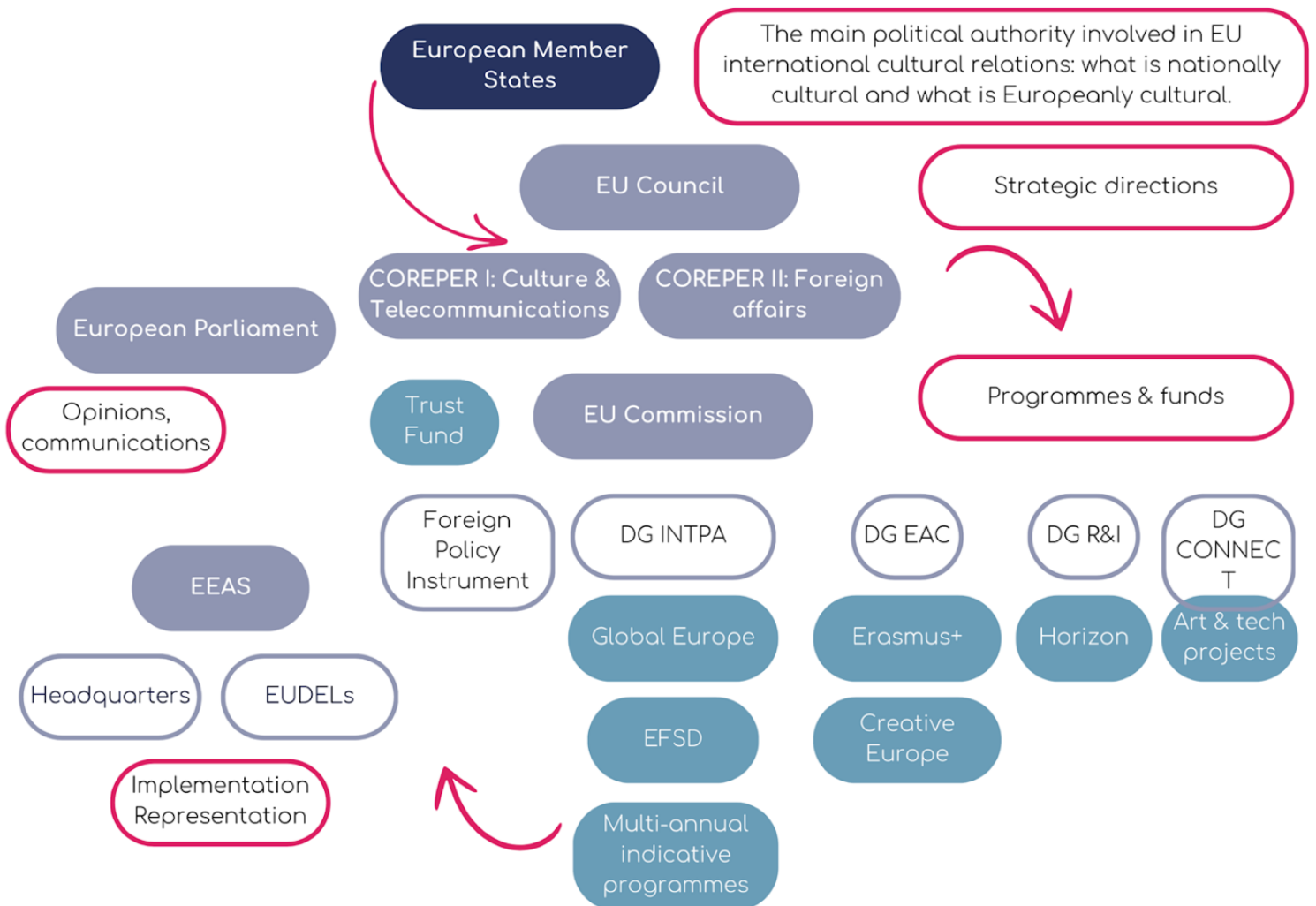
Timeline: AU policy framework for culture and media



Timeline: EU policy framework for international cultural relations



Scheme: EU Actors of ICR and dedicated funds & programmes



Scheme: African cultural ecosystems and institutions

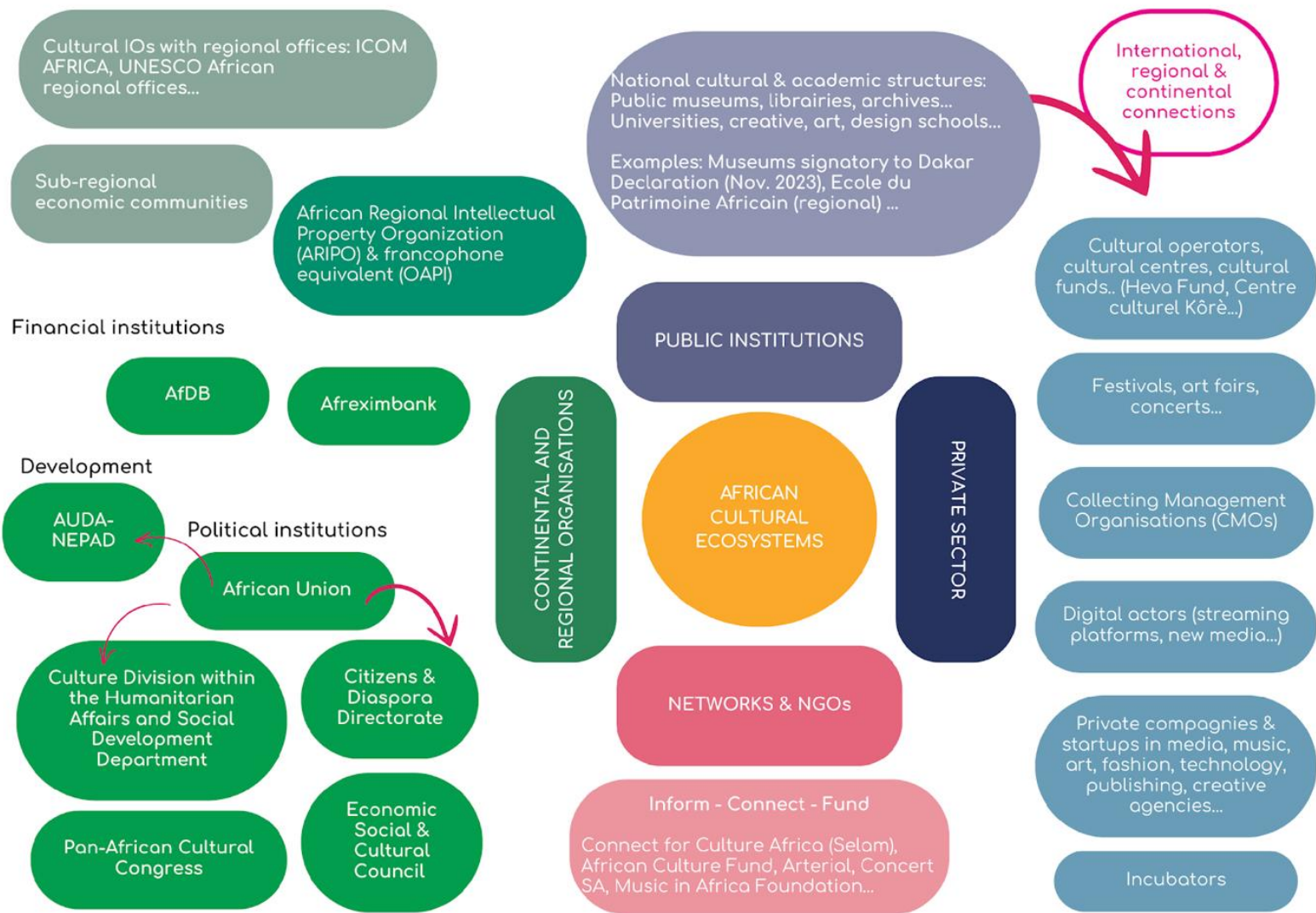


Table: EU cultural cooperation programmes from 2019 until today

Timeframe	2019-2022	2019-2025	2020-2023	2020-2024	2020-2025	2020-2026	2023-2026
Programme	AU-EU Youth Cooperation Hub	ACP-EU Culture Programme	EU Bekou Trust Fund	EUNIC Cluster Funds	EUNIC Spaces of Culture	Cultural Relation Platform	EU-UNESCO EXPERT FACILITY
Projects / objectives	ArtXchange: connecting creative youth in Africa and Europe		Radio Ndeke Luka	18 cluster fund projects in Africa	10 European Spaces of Culture projects	Projects: MusicXwords in South Africa, EU-Kenya Music Xchange. Global Cultural Relations Program - 300 international alumni in total	The technical assistance component related to policy elaboration for the CCLs is being provided to the following selected countries: Belize, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Jordan, Nigeria, and Rwanda. The technical assistance component related to the implementation of the UNESCO Culture 2030 Indicators will take place in the following selected countries: Barbados, Benin, Fiji, Ghana, Jordan, Namibia, Nicaragua, Panama, Tunisia, and Zambia.
Geographical scope	Youth in Kenya, Somalia, Italy, Sweden	Regional Hubs (East, Central, Western, Southern Africa)	Central Africa Republic	EUNIC clusters in Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, DRC, Angola, Namibia South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia	Projects funded in: Morocco and Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi, Angola, Kenya, Cameroon, South Africa, Tanzania, Benin	Support to EUDELs in Benin, Ghana, Togo, Cameroon, South Africa and Sudan.	Global
Budget	€ 1.85 million	€ 40 million	€4.815 million	€ 1 million 835	Up to 60.000 per project funded	€ 2.9 million	€ 5 million
Origin of funds	Funds: European Commission, EUDEL to the AU.	Funds: European Commission (ex-EDF), OACPs, Member States	Funds: European Commission, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands And Switzerland	Funds: Members of EUNIC (Member States)	Funds: EU (Creative Europe)	Funds: EU (FPI)	NDICI-Global Europe

Timeframe	2025-2029	2025-2027	2025-2028				2025-2031
Programme	PROCULTURA II - PALOP-TL	Africa-Europe Partnerships for Culture €30million					Strengthening African-European Museum Partnerships
Geographical scope	Portuguese-speaking African countries (Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe) and Timor-Leste.	Sub-Saharan Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe	Southern Africa: Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe	Southern Africa: Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe	West Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.	Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe
Budget	€10million	€2million	€8million	€4million	€6million	€10million	€19,9million
Origin of funds	NDICI-Global Europe	NDICI-Global Europe	NDICI-Global Europe	NDICI-Global Europe	NDICI-Global Europe	NDICI-Global Europe	EU & member states (BE, FR, DE, NL).

Timeframe	2025-2029	2021-2035	2023-2026	2024-2032
	Africa–Europe Audiovisual Partnerships	CreaTifi - €20million		
Programme		CREATIFI - CREAMUND	CREATIFI World bank – C-JET & F4D	CREATIFI - Fashionomics
Geographical scope	Sub-Saharan Africa	ACP	ACP	ACP
Budget	€ 18.5 million*	€ 7 million	€ 5 million	€ 8 million
Origin of funds	NDICI-Global Europe	11th EDF	11th EDF	11th EDF

*Latest information available on INTPA website, with NDICI-Global Europe contributing to at least € 15 million.

Conceptual framework

Concepts:

[Creative media](#)

[Cultural and creative industries](#)

[Cultural ecosystem](#)

[Cultural entrepreneur](#)

[Cultural operator](#)

[Culture](#)

[Digitalisation](#)

[Digitisation](#)

[Digital art](#)

[Digital culture](#)

[Digital divides](#)

[Digital media](#)

[Digital regulation](#)

[Digital revolution](#)

[International cultural cooperation](#)

[International cultural relations](#)

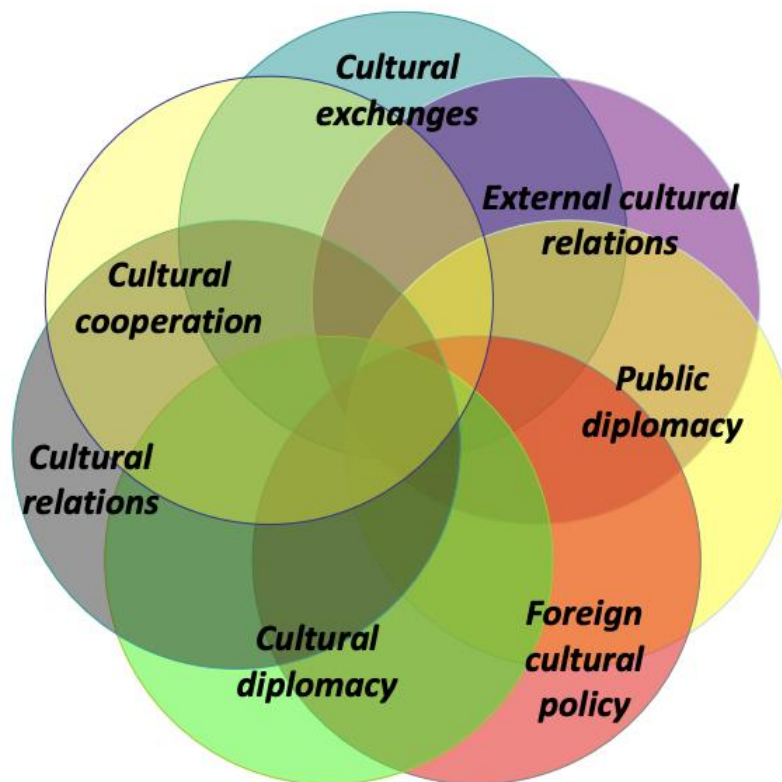
[Restitution](#)

[Soft power](#)

[Youth](#)

Cultural cooperation at the crossroads of arts and culture, economy, development and diplomacy.

Defining cultural cooperation is essential for grasping the richness of what it entails for the African-European partnership. It, however, poses a challenge: definitions vary according to who relies on it and who implements it. Qualifying culture in the EU's external relations is a major task in itself. This report does not aim to do that, but the literature review draws on key scholarship that has shaped this understanding of culture in the EU's external relations. There are numerous concepts used to express the various ways culture interacts with European foreign affairs.³⁶⁵ The perception factor also plays a role in qualifying the results of cultural relations. Projects labelled as cultural diplomacy on the European side can be felt as economic support closer to cultural cooperation on the receiving end. In the case of cultural cooperation, it is also likely that the cultural diplomacy target is always present, even if it is not displayed as the first goal of the action. Two schemes previously produced by Damien Helly as part of the article *More Cultural Europe in the World*³⁶⁶ help to grasp the diversity and richness of concepts:



Helly, D. (2012). "More Cultural Europe in the World", *More Europe External Cultural Relations*, December 2012, p.5.

³⁶⁵ Damien Helly, 'More Cultural Europe in the World', *More Europe External Cultural Relations*, December 2012, p.4.

³⁶⁶ Ibid, pp.5-6.

Table 1 - Unpacking definitions

concept → Key variables ↓	Public diplomacy	Cultural relations	Cultural diplomacy / foreign cultural policy	Cultural cooperation	Cultural regulation / rule- making
Funding source	Foreign affairs / foreign policy department / other state services	Cultural agency, public and/or private	State / foreign affairs institutions / cultural agencies / partnerships possible	Public and/or private	Public / foreign affairs / trade / culture ministries
Political interference	Strong	Often indirect, weak or none	Significant, but reliant on respect for the autonomy of cultural space	Significant, but reliant on respect for the autonomy of cultural space	Strong
Agenda setters	Political authorities	Intermediaries; individual, civil society or culture professionals	Mix of political authorities, cultural agencies / institutes / parastatal body	Mix of cultural agencies, public bodies and civil society or culture professionals	Governments agencies and/or lobby from cultural sector or industries or research/think tanks
Implementers	Governments or public institutions	Culture professionals	Mix of cultural agencies, public bodies and civil society or culture professionals	Mix of cultural agencies, public bodies and civil society or culture professionals	Governments or public institutions
Main partners	Other governments or public institutions	Open to all sorts	Open to all sorts but reliant on political green light/sanction	Open to all sorts but reliant on political green light/sanction	Other governments or public institutions + lobbying groups
Target audience	Opinion-formers Depends on political objectives	Depends on the objectives of the initiative	Depends on a mix of political and cultural objectives	Depends on the objectives of the initiatives	Depends on a mix of political, trade, and cultural objectives
Degree of decentralisation	Depends on the level of the political authority	Usually high	Depends on the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the implementers	Depends on the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the implementers	Depends on the level of the political authority
Export orientation	Export-oriented	Mutuality, and two- way exchange process	Mostly export-oriented but depends on the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the agenda setters	Mostly export-oriented but depends on the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the agenda- setters	Often export-oriented but depends on a mix of political, trade, and cultural objectives
Kind of output	Awareness-raising material / action	Depends on the objectives of the initiative	Support transnational cultural production and cooperation with a varying degree of governmental participation	Mobile cultural production with a varying degree of co-production	Normative output document with a varying degree of legal obligation (convention, law, treaties and international agreements)
Targeted outcome	Visibility and awareness-raising	Mutual understanding and visibility	Mix of visibility, mutual understanding and political rapprochement	Mix of visibility, mutual understanding and political rapprochement	Promotion of innovation and creativity + protection of cultural diversity

Helly, D. (2012), “More Cultural Europe in the World”, *More Europe External Cultural Relations*, December 2012, p.6.

Creative media

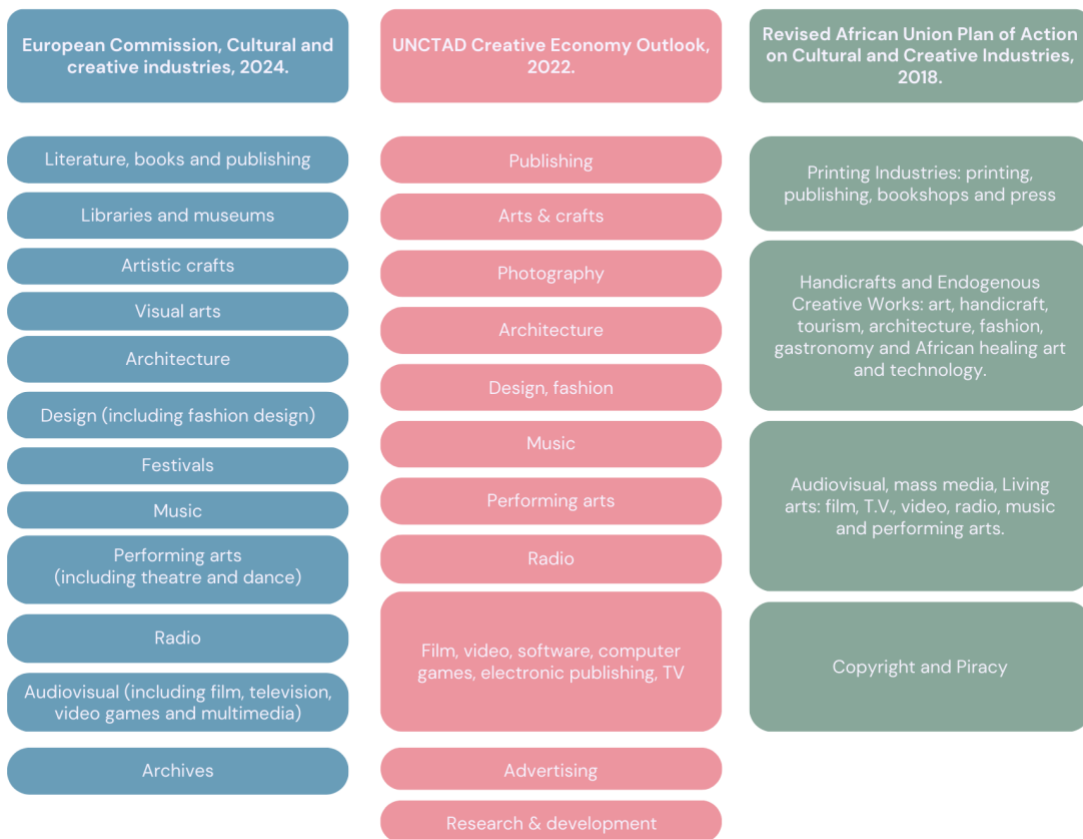
UNCTAD (2018) defines creative media as a key component of cultural and creative industries, that includes everything from film to music, broadcasting, and digital content. The report emphasises the role of digital platforms, multimedia storytelling, and interactive media in shaping the global economy and cultural industries. The UNESCO Convention (2005) recognises the importance of creative industries, including media, in fostering cultural diversity.

Creative media refers to the production, creation, and distribution of content across various forms of media (e.g., film, television, digital media, video games, music, etc.). It is important to note that creative media is not exclusively digital, though in recent decades, digital technologies have become a dominant force in its development and distribution. The term ‘creative media’ broadly refers to any medium used to express creativity or artistic ideas, and it encompasses both traditional (analogue) and digital forms. While digital media have become central to many creative fields today, traditional methods still play a significant role. For this report, we focus on creative media’s impact for journalism. Digital arts, that play a role in shaping creative media, are understood as a separate sector.

Cultural and creative industries

This report refers to the whole range of cultural and creative industries, including creative media, press, digital and traditional publishing, and journalism. 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)³⁶⁷ 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 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.

Compared definitions of CCI (EU, UNCTAD, AU)



culture Solutions (2025)

³⁶⁷ UNESCO (2009), op.cit.

The UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics (dated 2009, and currently under the process of revision) gives a comprehensive conceptual and methodological framework designed to facilitate socioeconomic analysis of cultural domains that include CCIs. The table below helps to grasp the scope of CCIs. It identifies three main units with the Cultural and Creative Ecosystem, that are (i) Cultural and Natural Heritage Sectors; (ii) Cultural and Creative Industries; and (iii) Transversal Sectors:

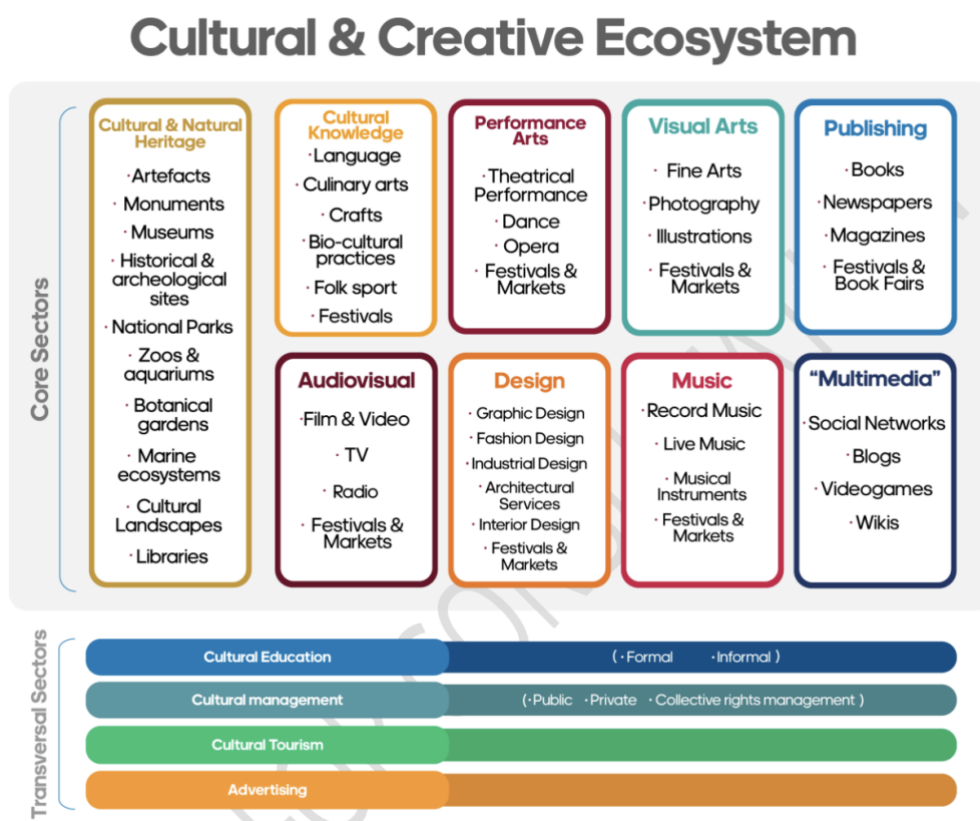


Figure 1: UNESCO Draft revision of the Framework for Cultural Statistics – graphic representation of cultural domains (2025).

The media and press component of CCIs reflects the shared effort by the EU and AU to support innovative media content (part of the AU 2063 Agenda) and an open, pluralistic, and inclusive media system between Europe and Africa. The report places particular importance on the inclusion of new media in the analysis for cultural cooperation and identifies projects which aim at supporting the achievement of an open, plural, and inclusive media ecosystem between Africa and Europe. In CCIs' definitions, UNESCO refers specifically to "interactive media", the EU to "press" and UNCTAD to "multimedia".³⁶⁸ As noted by the UNCTAD, the creative economy is a notion that evolves and our project will make sure to capture this transformation and its potential, especially given the pace of digital transformation underway across governments and sectors.

This report acknowledges the rich scholarly reflections on the specificity, uniqueness, and fragility of the cultural component within the CCIs. CCIs offer products and services that have, in the definition of Hesmondhalgh "influence on our understanding of the world".³⁶⁹ For Cunningham

³⁶⁸ UNCTAD using IDB, Measuring CCS Consortium, UNESCO-UIS and WIPO resources (UNESCO-UIS, 2009; Restrepo and Márquez, 2013; WIPO, 2015; Benavente and Grazi, 2017; Measuring CCS Consortium, 2022).

³⁶⁹ D. Hesmondhalgh, *The Cultural Industries*. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2013 cited in B. Ericsson, A. Hauge, P.K. Alnes, *Cultural and creative industries: Innovation, performance and spillovers*. Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography, 78(4), 2024, 222–233.

and Flew, CCIs constitute a "complex ecosystem where publicly funded culture, commercial culture, and non-market cultural forms intersect".³⁷⁰ The value created by CCIs goes beyond the economic value ("value-added or contribution to gross value added, employment, exports, and multiplier effects") by providing social value, defined as "enabling participation in culture and realising creative abilities across all societal sectors" and cultural value, defined as "enriching the lives of citizens and communities, by enabling equitable access to cultural forms at the highest levels of artistic quality".³⁷¹

The report considers the sensitivity in defining, distinguishing cultural from creative work and articulating the two. Scholars have looked at this specific articulation: "A neat categorisation is that the creative industries produce work that can be protected by copyright, and the cultural industries produce symbolic meaning... The creative industries use some of what the 'core' produces to develop marketable products and services... Their outputs are not necessarily symbolically meaningful, but they do generate intellectual property. Arguments for their support are thus around job creation and economic growth potential".³⁷²

Previous academic work has insisted on the differentiation between creative economy and the economic impact of culture or cultural industries.³⁷³ The creative economy is more than this impact. UNESCO has also underlined the dual value approach to creative economy: culture is a driver and an enabler of development. The cultural sector delivers economic benefits and enables wider socio-economic benefits.³⁷⁴

Cultural ecosystem

The Cultural and Creative Industries is among the 14 industrial ecosystems identified in the EU's updated industrial strategy.³⁷⁵ The strategy refers to the term ecosystem as "encompassing all players operating in a value chain: from the smallest startups to the largest companies, from academia to research, service providers to suppliers".³⁷⁶ The notion of ecosystem helps to capture the complex set of interlinkages and interdependencies among sectors and firms within a sector.

The revised UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics (FCS), of which a draft version was made available in early 2025,³⁷⁷ refers to the Cultural and Creative Ecosystem (CCE). The framework provides the concepts and definitions for defining the culture ecosystem and aims at facilitating the assessment of socioeconomic impacts within that ecosystem, using existing data collection

³⁷⁰ Cunningham, S. & Flew, T., Introduction to a research agenda for creative industries, Cunningham, S. & Flew, T. (eds.) *A Research Agenda for Creative Industries*, 2019, 1–20. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, cited in Ericsson, B., Hauge, A., & Alnes, P. K. *Cultural and creative industries: Innovation, performance and spillovers*. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 78(4), 2024, 222–233.

³⁷¹ Ericsson, B., Hauge, A., & Alnes, P. K. (2024), op.cit.

³⁷² Brooks, M., Moyo, P., Tapscott, C., Shelver, A. (2020), op.cit.

³⁷³ Justin O'Connor, 'The creative imaginary: cultural and creative industries and the future of modernity' in Kong, L., de Dios, A. (ed.s), *Handbook on geographies of creativity*, Edward Elgar Handbook Series, pp. 15-36 ; South African Cultural Observatory (SACO) (2024). *Conference Report SACO 2024: Creative Economy Reset*, p.16.

³⁷⁴ (SACO) (2024). op.cit., p.18.

³⁷⁵ European Commission, 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 New Industrial Strategy for Europe*. COM(2020) 102 final. Brussels, 2020.

³⁷⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷⁷ UNESCO 2025, op.cit.

instruments. As a comparison, the previous version of the Framework,³⁷⁸ released in 2009, did not mention "ecosystem". The framework recognises the Cultural and Creative Ecosystem "as the universe of analysis for socioeconomic studies" and the conceptual foundation to represent "a complex environment wherein artists, social groups, cultural communities, audiences, and a broad spectrum of public and private intermediaries engage in various relationships to generate diverse forms of cultural and economic value."³⁷⁹

The Practitioners Network for European Development Cooperation also advances the notion of ecosystem in a guide on "Measuring Culture's Impact in Development Cooperation",³⁸⁰ referring here to several ecosystems that interact through projects and programmes - such as the "cultural and creative ecosystem, the general business ecosystem, the educational ecosystem, or the urban planning ecosystem". They refer to the European Commission's Culture and Creativity policy framework for "Ecosystem supporting artists" that advances that at the heart of the ecosystemic approach lies "the idea that that cultural and creative sectors work in an inter-twined way with different sectors adjacent to their own, or with completely different sectors, and also in a cross-sectoral way".³⁸¹ The 2018 Report of the OMC (Open Method of Coordination) working group of member states' experts³⁸² clarified why the presence of ecosystems is beneficial to supporting innovation and entrepreneurship in the CCS, and emphasised the essential role of "support structures" in ensuring that the entry of innovation and business respects the uniqueness of cultural content. The same care should apply today with digital innovations. Support structures are defined as "clusters, incubators, accelerators, creative hubs, networks, digital platforms, professional organisations, co-working spaces, creative labs, makerspaces and fabrication labs".³⁸³

Cultural entrepreneur

The CCIs are characterised by a high proportion of micro-companies, self-employed and freelance workers. The use of the term "cultural entrepreneur" hence becomes particularly relevant to match the new economic realities. This is observed by European cultural institutes active in Sub-Saharan Africa.³⁸⁴ This report will not capture the theoretical framework to see to the origins of the term,³⁸⁵ but rather acknowledge it as a new emerging trend observed by cultural professionals and the actors of cultural cooperation.

Cultural operator

Cultural operators are central actors of cultural cooperation. The network *On the Move* defines them as "Professionals engaged in facilitating arts and cultural programmes and activities such as festival directors, venue or company managers, network secretary generals etc."³⁸⁶

³⁷⁸ UNESCO, The 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2009.

³⁷⁹ UNESCO (2025) op.cit., p.6.

³⁸⁰ Avril Joffe, Lina Kirjazovaite, Dr. Matina Magkou, Measuring Culture's Impact in Development Cooperation (developed under the co-leadership of: AECID; AICS, and the British Council), Practitioners Network for European Development Cooperation, September 2024.

³⁸¹ European Commission, "Ecosystem supporting artists", last updated 4 November 2021, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/policies/selected-themes/ecosystem-supporting-artists>.

³⁸² European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, The role of public policies in developing entrepreneurial and innovation potential of the cultural and creative sectors – Report of THE OMC (Open Method of Coordination) working group of member states' experts, Publications Office of the European Union, 2018, p.46.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Interview with representatives of French external cultural agencies.

³⁸⁵ Gehman, J., & Soublière, J. F., Cultural entrepreneurship: from making culture to cultural making. *Innovation*, 19(1), 2017, 61–73.

³⁸⁶ On The Move, website, <https://on-the-move.org/about/cultural-mobility> (last accessed March 10, 2025).

Culture

Culture is a supplementary competence of the EU. Article 167.2 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) mentions that:

"The EU should encourage cooperation and support and supplement action for:

- Improvement of knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of European peoples,
- Conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance,
- Non-commercial cultural exchanges,
- Artistic and literary creation including the audio-visual sector".³⁸⁷

Regarding the EU's internal conceptualisation of culture, treaties also emphasise the rich cultural and linguistic diversity and that the EU should encourage the "flowering of the cultures of the member states while respecting their national and regional diversity and bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore".³⁸⁸

In 2007, the European Commission's Communication "An agenda for culture in a globalising world"³⁸⁹ gave the following interpretation of culture: "Culture lies at the heart of human development and civilisation. Culture is what makes people hope and dream, by stimulating our senses and offering new ways of looking at reality. It is what brings together people, by stirring dialogue and arousing passions, in a way that unites rather than divides. Culture should be regarded as a set of distinctive spiritual and material traits that characterise a society and social group. It embraces literature and arts as well as ways of life, value systems, traditions, and beliefs."

For the African Union, cultural values refers to "rules and principles based on traditions, languages, ways of life and thoughts" and is strongly associated with cultural heritage and history³⁹⁰. Culture is also depicted in the light of Africa's experience of colonisation, referring to the "depersonalisation", "falsification of history", and the "replacement" of values and languages during colonial times. The AU has shown it is intentional in safeguarding, de-colonising, and re-establishing cultural heritage as well as promoting cultural values.³⁹¹

Digitalisation

It refers to the way in which many spheres of social life are restructured around digital communications and media infrastructures. The term can also be applied to the use of digital technologies in changing a business model, including that of a cultural actor.³⁹²

³⁸⁷ Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), art. 167(2), 2012 OJ C 326/47.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 10 May 2007 on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world [COM(2007) 242 final – Not published in the Official Journal].

³⁹⁰ African Union, Charter for African Cultural Renaissance, January 24, 2006.

³⁹¹ African Union of Abuja Establishing the African Economic Community with a Protocol on Culture and African Cultural Common Market: Article 70, Chapter XII – Education, Training and Culture, 1991.

³⁹² Bloomberg J., "Digitalization and Digital Transformation: Confuse Them At Your Peril", Forbes, April 29, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonbloomberg/2018/04/29/digitization-digitalization-and-digital-transformation-confuse-them-at-your-peril/#4027f5f42f2c>, cited in Helly, D. (ed.) (2020), Composing Trust, Research Report, 2019/2020, culture Solutions, p.47.

Digitisation

culture Solution "Composing Trust Research Report" (2020)³⁹³ highlighted how, with digitisation, "even those artworks that are initially produced through non-digital means can become accessible through digital media", citing the examples of performing arts shows, literature, sculpture, comic strips, as well as visual arts collections available in museums and galleries, and archives and fragile artefacts or handcraft specimen. The digitisation of museums' collections is particularly relevant in the context of the Africa-Europe museum cooperation to encourage the understanding and access of collections of African artefacts stored or displayed in European museums, boosting joint initiatives on collections for which reliance on digitised material is essential. Digitisation techniques also benefit cultural professionals involved in memory reconstruction or reconstitution,³⁹⁴ which can take place before, after, or alongside the restitution of artifacts. That is the case of Elena Schilling and Saitabao Kaiyare, two filmmakers who produced a 3D scan of a Kenyan artifact in a German museum and embarked on a journey back to its roots.³⁹⁵ The only information about the object was that it entered the museum in 1903. Such a process echoes an effort of "reconstitution"³⁹⁶ behind the Africa-Europe cooperation on artefacts, going beyond and around the restitution question.

Digital art

Digital art is more of an evolutive concept within CCIs. It has been defined by scholars as "a fluid set of artistic techniques, technologies and concepts"³⁹⁷ – often associated with the story of the computer." As such, it feeds into different pre-existing sectors of CCIs, like media, music, illustration etc. One definition offered by Beryl Graham manages to capture it in a simple frame through its transmission and dissemination format, as "art made with, and for, digital media including the internet, digital making or computer-controlled installations."³⁹⁸ The intensification of digital transformations leads to an increase in digital arts, and other scholars have noticed how "the emergence of generative AI tools like ChatGPT and Stable Diffusion in late 2022 immediately disrupted the established practices of the art world".³⁹⁹ There is however a shared understanding that artists have adapted and learned to use digital means in their work. This report does not cover the debate of AI-art (art expression created by an AI software) but focuses on digital art as a technique and a means of diffusion under the artists' impulse.

Digital culture

Use of social media and digital technology for social interaction. It includes mobile communications technologies, gaming and technological bodies, and the like.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹³ Helly, D. (ed.) (2020) op.cit.

³⁹⁴ Belgian Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (2023). AfricaMuseum: core player in decolonisation, December, 19 2023, <https://diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/politique/themes-politiques/sous-la-loupe/africamuseum-un-acteur-cle-de-la-decolonisation> (last accessed March, 10 2025).

³⁹⁵ Elena Schilling, Kai Yare (dirs.), If Objects Could Speak, https://www.instagram.com/ifobjectscouldspeak/?fbclid=IwY2xjawlpWLtleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHUSJwEHvayaVi5W3DH79JXDRLyLR_3fB5m2nhrgvd_Ulni_pMC_P8QJkcg_aem_NOefetUAe2V2VT5sRuRrbA, (last accessed March 10, 2025).

³⁹⁶ Belgian Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (2023), op.cit.

³⁹⁷ Hope, C., and John R. (2014). Digital Arts: An Introduction to New Media. New York: Bloomsbury, cited in Bisschoff, L. (2017). The future is digital: an introduction to African digital arts. *Critical African Studies*, 9(3), 261–267.

³⁹⁸ Graham, 2007, p.93 cited in Hope, C., and John R. (2014), op.cit.

³⁹⁹ Hutson J., and Harper-Nichols M. (2023), "Generative AI and Algorithmic Art: Disrupting the Framing of Meaning and Rethinking the Subject-Object Dilemma," *Global Journal of Computer Science and Technology: D, Neural & Artificial Intelligence* 23, no. 1 (2023).

⁴⁰⁰ V. Miller, *Understanding digital culture*. London: Sage, 2011, cited in Helly, D. (ed.) (2020), op.cit, p.47.

Digital divides

Digital divides represent situations of inequality in access and mastering of digital tools. These divides exist along a range of dimensions, including geography, education, age, gender, income, and firm size, among others.⁴⁰¹ In the context of this report, divides along continental trends as well as rural and urban areas are particularly relevant. As pointed out by the UNCTAD report in 2019, "Inequality will worsen unless the so-called "digital divide" – the gap between under-connected and highly digitalized countries – is not addressed."⁴⁰² The report also notes how widening digital divides threaten to leave developing countries, and especially least developed countries, even further behind.⁴⁰³

Digital media

Digitised content that can be transmitted over the internet or computer networks. This can include text, audio, video, and graphics. News from a TV network, newspaper, magazine, etc. via websites also fall within this category. Most digital media are based on translating analogue data into digital data.⁴⁰⁴

Digital regulation

Set of legal measures to control digital markets. Digital regulation is seen by the European Commission as an "essential step to strengthen individuals' fundamental rights in the digital age and facilitate business by clarifying rules for companies and public bodies in the digital single market".⁴⁰⁵ The EU adopted the Regulation on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data in 2016 and the Digital Services Act⁴⁰⁶ and the world's first comprehensive AI law (AI Act) in 2024.⁴⁰⁷

Digital revolution

A historical era (1980s - present) of digital electronic equipment inaugurates the Information Age. It is the manifestation and result of information and communication technologies, characterised by mass production of digital communication technology, digital logic circuits and its derived technology. It is described as a revolution due to its important technological, social, economic and political consequences. Its transformative power has been recognised by the European Institutions.⁴⁰⁸

International cultural cooperation

⁴⁰¹ OECD, Digital divides, <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/digital-divides.html> (last accessed March 10, 2025).

⁴⁰² UNCTAD, Digital Economy Report 2019 - Value Creation and Capture: Implications for Developing Countries (UNCTAD/DER/2019), 4 Sep 2019.

⁴⁰³ Ibid, p.16: the report gives the example of data centres : "Africa and Latin America together account for less than 5 % of the world's colocation data centres. If left unaddressed, these divides will exacerbate existing income inequalities."

⁴⁰⁴ IGI Global, Dictionary, cited in Helly, D. (ed.) (2020), op.cit, p.47.

⁴⁰⁵ European Commission, Information, Data Protection, European Commission Website, https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection/data-protection-eu_en, cited in Helly, D. (ed.) (2020), op.cit, p.47.

⁴⁰⁶ European Union, Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 on a Single Market for Digital Services (Digital Services Act), Official Journal of the European Union L 277, October 27, 2022, 1–102.

⁴⁰⁷ European Union, Proposal for a Regulation Laying Down Harmonised Rules on Artificial Intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act), COM(2021) 206 final, April 21, 2021.

⁴⁰⁸ European Parliament, European Parliamentary Research Service, Negreiro Mar, Madiega Tambiana, "Digital Transformation", Brief, PE 633.171, June 2019, cited in Helly, D. (ed.) (2020), op.cit, p.47.

Cultural cooperation's understanding has been shaped by UNESCO in 1966, when the General Conference adopted the "Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Co-operation".⁴⁰⁹ The aims of international cultural cooperation are stated in the Declaration, in its various forms, bilateral or multilateral, regional or international, as:

1. "To spread knowledge, to stimulate talent and to enrich cultures;
2. To develop peaceful relations and friendship among the peoples and bring about a better understanding of each other's way of life;
3. To contribute to the application of the principles set out in the United Nations Declarations that are recalled in the Preamble to this Declaration;
4. To enable, everyone to have access to knowledge, to enjoy the arts and literature of all peoples, to share in advances made in science in all parts of the world and in the resulting benefits, and to contribute to the enrichment of cultural life;
5. To raise the level of the spiritual and material life of man in all parts of the world."

This report focuses on cultural cooperation between Africa and the EU. But within this framework, intra-African cultural cooperation is also encouraged. This echoes the AU's ambition to build a continental vision for culture. In 1976, the OAU Cultural Charter for Africa aimed at encouraging both "cultural cooperation with a view to the strengthening of African unity" and "international cultural cooperation for a better understanding among peoples within which Africa makes its original and appropriate contribution to human culture", through "cooperation of universities, research institutes, meetings of young people, joint cultural events, common funds, regional specialised institutions to training cultural cadres..."⁴¹⁰

The importance of culture for an AU continental approach was reaffirmed 30 years later with the adoption of the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (2006), stating that:

- "African cultural diversity and unity are a factor of equilibrium, strength in African economic development, conflict resolution and reducing inequality and injustice to promote national integration;
- Cultural identity denotes a concern common to all peoples of Africa;
- Culture constitutes for our peoples the surest means to chart Africa's own course towards technological development, and the most efficient response to the challenges of globalisation".⁴¹¹

International cultural relations

International cultural relations (ICR) have not been defined as a clear concept. According to scholars and professionals active in the field of cultural cooperation, they are based on interactions between different cultures, with a focus on intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding and benefit. It is a two-way conversation. Actions in the realm of ICR can be undertaken by civil society or governmental actors.⁴¹²

According to the British Council, the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities, "cultural relations are reciprocal transnational

⁴⁰⁹ Sulwyn Lewis, *The principles of cultural cooperation*, Études et documents d'information (61), 1971, 29 p.

⁴¹⁰ Organization of African Unity (OAU), Cultural Charter for Africa, July 5, 1976, Port Louis, Mauritius (entry into force: September 19, 1990).

⁴¹¹ African Union (2006). op.cit.

⁴¹² culture Solutions, Van de Gejuchte, I., Gil, A. (authors), Podcast: "composing trust #3: Cultural relations perspectives beyond the European Union", April 14, 2024, <https://www.culturesolutions.eu/podcast/cultural-relations-perspectives-beyond-the-european-union/>

interactions between cultures, which lead to outcomes such as greater connectivity, better mutual understanding, more and deeper relationships, mutually beneficial transactions and enhanced sustainable dialogue between people and cultures".⁴¹³

In the joint guidelines designed by EUNIC and the European External Action Service (EEAS) in 2021, "Cultural relations can be understood as an "umbrella expression referring to the fostering of understanding between countries and especially their peoples in the field of culture. Cultural relations seek to engage in dialogue with a much broader public than is the case with cultural diplomacy or public diplomacy".⁴¹⁴

The document "Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations" (2016) frames EU's action in that regard:

"The EU aims at advancing cultural cooperation with partner countries across three main strands:

1. supporting culture as an engine for sustainable social and economic development;
2. promoting culture and intercultural dialogue for peaceful inter-community relations;
3. reinforcing cooperation on cultural heritage."⁴¹⁵

In 2017, the Council of the EU stated that "culture forms part of a strategic and cross-cutting approach to the Union's international relations", and emphasised the role of culture in development cooperation".⁴¹⁶

Authentic international cultural relations (ICR) foster trust and mutual understanding among partners. However, achieving this outcome requires that the pursuit of equity and fairness be at the core of ICR's construction. The Marcel Hicter Association has sought to define this equity as "a synonym or shorthand for the adoption of authentic cultural relations that transcend power dichotomies and unlock culture's potential for development." This pursuit of equity is deeply rooted in the decolonial approach, which serves as a "methodology for achieving restorative justice through cultural, psychological, and economic freedom".⁴¹⁷ In 2023, the European Union Network of National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) released "Not a toolkit! Fair collaboration in cultural relations: a reflAction", to raise awareness about fair practices in cultural relations, and guide cultural practitioners and organisations in their activities to support fair ICR.⁴¹⁸

Restitution

This report mentions the restitution of African artefacts that were looted and illegally acquired and that are for a great part stored in European museums. The report does not however cover the past and ongoing discussions and negotiations for the artefacts' restitution and repatriation. This process happens at national and bilateral level. This report deals with multi-level governance that does not apply to the specific and challenging question of restitution. It is however mentioned as

⁴¹³ F. Karanàsou, E. Lemoine, Cultural Relations in Action: A research study on the British Council's International Collaboration Grants programme, British Council, 2024.

⁴¹⁴ European Commission, Joint Guidelines: EUNIC - EEAS - EC Partnership, Brussels, January 2021 (second edition).

⁴¹⁵ European Commission, Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations, JOIN(2016) 29 final, Brussels, June 8, 2016.

⁴¹⁶ General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, Cultural Affairs Committee, "Draft Council Conclusions on an EU Strategic Approach to International Cultural Relations", 7935/17, April 5, 2017, 5 pages.

⁴¹⁷ Avril Joffe, *Comment vérifier l'équité dans la gestion des relations culturelles internationales ?*, Association Marcel Hicter pour la Démocratie Culturelle - FMH, August 10, 2023.

⁴¹⁸ Cristina Farinha, Avril Joffe, Matina Magkou, Anna Steinkamp, Katelijn Verstraete, and Sudebi Thakurata. Fair Collaboration in Cultural Relations: A ReflAction. Commissioned by EUNIC. Designed by D.epicentre, 2023.

part of the African-European Museums Partnership that acts on the broader framework of cooperation between museums, and can have an impact before and after the process of restitution and repatriation.

Soft power

Joseph Nye is the father of the concept of soft power, that he defines as "The ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments",⁴¹⁹ that "arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies".⁴²⁰ A report published by the British Council with the University of The West of Scotland contributes to grasping why "institutions of state are not always best placed, willing or able to cooperate in ways necessary to build and exploit soft power potential".⁴²¹ "Soft power is consistently identified in both the academic or grey literature as either an initiative (or input) into a cultural or other process or an output/ outcome of a set of cultural activities. While the process of seeking to achieve soft power might usefully be broken down into more easily identifiable activities, discovering or knowing whether an increase in soft power has been achieved (and whether or not any of that change emerged as a direct result of the activity undertaken) and evaluating the quality of that impact, is a far more complex and indistinct process. These lacunas and relative weaknesses do much to obstruct the effective deployment of the levers of soft power, placing significant obstacles in the path of advocates of soft power proliferation and providing ample opportunity for its opponents to challenge its efficacy (or genuine existence)."⁴²²

Youth

The UN definition of 'youth' is someone aged between 15 and 24 years old. There is however no universal definition of youth. "Many agencies adapt their definition to the national/regional context depending on their operations."⁴²³ European policy, within the scope of the EU Youth Strategy, Erasmus+ and Youth in Action Programmes, as well as Eurostat reports and Eurobarometer surveys, determine young people as those aged 15-29 years.⁴²⁴ Projects funded by the EU as part of the AU-EU youth cooperation however targets young people aged from 18 to 35⁴²⁵ (in the age of working and being rewarded for a project they implement). The African Youth Charter defines youth as aged from 15 to 35 years old.⁴²⁶ Part 1 of this report addresses youth in terms of its political, economic, and social significance for CCIs and cultural cooperation.

⁴¹⁹ Nye, J. S., (2004) "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics".

⁴²⁰ *ibid*

⁴²¹ McPherson, G., McGillivray, D. (2017), Arts, Cultural Relations and Soft Power: Developing an Evidence Base Interim Report, British Council, 10 February 2017.

⁴²² Wilson III., E. (2008) Hard power, soft power, smart power, *Annals American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616, pp. 110-124

⁴²³ UNESCO (2019), *Meaningfully engaging with youth*, Guidance and training for UN staff, United Nations, p.3.

⁴²⁴ Perovic, Bojana. *Defining Youth in Contemporary National Legal and Policy Frameworks Across Europe*. Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the Field of Youth, 2016.

⁴²⁵ AU-EU Youth Action Lab, *Call for Proposals: "The Innovation Grants provide grants opportunities between 30.000 and 50.000 EURO for which individual youth organisations and consortiums of youth organisations can apply to."* <https://aueuyouth.com/innovation-grants/> (last accessed March 10, 2025).

⁴²⁶ African Union. 2006. *African Youth Charter*, p.3.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

3D – Three-Dimensional

4IR – Fourth Industrial Revolution

AEF – Africa-Europe Foundation

ADBG – African Development Bank Group

AfDB – African Development Bank

AFD – Agence Française de Développement

AI – Artificial Intelligence

AIA – EU AI Act

ARIPO – African Regional Intellectual Property Organization

AU – African Union

AUDA – African Union Development Agency

CCIFSA – Cultural and Creative Industries Federation of South Africa

CCIs – Cultural and Creative Industries

CCS – Cultural and Creative Sector

CCTV – China Central Television

COMESA – Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa

DG CNECT – EU Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology

DG EAC – EU Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

DG INTPA – EU Directorate-General for International Partnerships

DG MENA – EU Directorate-General Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf

DG NEAR – EU Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations

DG R&I – Directorate-General for Research and Innovation

DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo

EAC – East African Community

EACEA – European Education and Culture Executive Agency

ECCAS – Economic Community of Central African States

ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States

EDF – European Development Fund

EEAS – European External Action Service

EFSD – European Fund for Sustainable Development

EP – European Parliament

EU – European Union

EUNIC – European Union National Institutes for Culture

FIMI - Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference

FPI – Service for Foreign Policy Instruments

ICR – International Cultural Relations

IP – Intellectual Property

IR – International Relations

JRC – Joint Research Centre

KfW – Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau ("Credit Institute for Reconstruction")

LLMs – Large Language Models

MASA – Marché des Arts et du Spectacle Africains

ML – Machine Learning

MSMEs – Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

OACPS – Organisation of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States

OAPI – Organisation africaine de la propriété intellectuelle

ODA – Official Development Assistance

OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OIF – Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie

R&D – Research & Development

RFI – Radio France Internationale

SACEM – Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Éditeurs de Musique

SACO – South African Cultural Observatory

SADC – Southern African Development Community

SDC – Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SIDA – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

SSA – Sub-Saharan Africa

STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

TEU – Treaty on European Union

TFEU – Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

ToT – Training of Trainers

UK – United Kingdom

UNCTAD – United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

USA – United States of America

VFX – Visual Effects

VR – Virtual Reality

WIPO – World Intellectual Property Organisation

