

EU's next long-term budget (MFF) – EU funding for cross-border education, training and solidarity, young people, media, culture, and creative sectors, values, and civil society

Response to call for feedback

Brussels, 20 November 2025

P8652

Identification number
EC register 4817795559-48

Introduction

Pearle*- Live Performance Europe is the European federation regrouping through its members over 13,000 organisations and companies in the music, performing arts and live event sectors.

Pearle* welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the call for feedback on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034 proposal on EU funding for cross-border education, training and solidarity, young people, media, culture, and creative sectors, values, and civil society.

General Comments on AgoraEU

Pearle* acknowledges the establishment of **AgoraEU** and the recognition of **culture as a key area for investment** within the future framework. The cultural and creative sectors are essential drivers of social cohesion, innovation, and European identity. Pearle* takes note of the three main parts of AgoraEU and the related proposed budgets:

- **Creative Europe - Culture**, with a budget of €1.8 billion (currently the culture strand in Creative Europe is about €805 million).
- **MEDIA+**, with a budget of €3.2 billion (currently the media strand in Creative Europe is about 1.4 billion).
- **CERV+ (Citizens, Equality, Rights & Values)**, with a budget of 3.6 billion.

However, while the proposed overall budget increase is a positive step, it remains insufficient to meet the growing demands for cultural cooperation and mobility across Europe.

In 2024, a total of 160 European Cooperation Projects were supported - a relatively high number given that the focus was solely on small- and medium-scale projects. However, the more striking figure is the low success rate, with only 16% of applications being selected. Previous years show a clear upward trend in the number of applications, particularly for the European Cooperation Projects: from 468 proposals in 2021 to 831 in 2023, representing a 78% increase. Unfortunately, this rise in interest has not translated into higher success rates, which have dropped from 26% in 2021 to 17% in 2023.

Pearle* notes with concern the clear lack of funding available in the current programme, which will continue to be the case under the newly proposed programme, despite the increased budget proposal.

The impact of rejected projects should not be underestimated - from the missed opportunities for cultural cooperation and the negative experiences of cultural operators with European programmes, to the discouraging effect this has on peers, the resulting demotivation to apply again, and the added complexity it poses for project partners unfamiliar with the application process.

Moreover, there is a disbalance between the three parts, in particular as the culture strand covers all other culture and creative sectors, but media. In Pearle*'s view, there should be more alignment of the Cultural Strand with the two other parts.

Last March, Eurostat¹ published key figures on the cultural sector and subsectors covering the number of enterprises, added value, net turnover, employment, and the birth/death rate of enterprises. In 2022, over 2 million cultural enterprises in the EU generated approximately €199 billion in value added. According to 2023 data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), there were 7.8 million people in cultural employment across the EU, representing 3.8% of total employment. The creative, arts and entertainment activities sector (NACE R90) alone employed 1.08 million people in 2023, with about 545.000 enterprises.

According to a recent European Commission study, the EU media sector² as a whole encompasses nearly 245,000 enterprises and employs approximately 1.32 million individuals as of 2023. Overall, in 2024, the EU media market generated approximately € 158 billion in revenues.

Whereas the media sector generates significant added value, the cultural sector encompasses nearly ten times more enterprises and caters for nearly six times more employment. It is therefore noteworthy that this reality is not reflected in the proposed allocation of funds between the Creative Europe - Culture strand and the MEDIA+ strand in the new proposal.

Specific comments on the three strands of AgoraEU

- **Creative Europe – Cultural Strand**

Pearle* particularly welcomes the **prominent place of the intrinsic and core value of culture in the Creative Europe – Culture strand**, as well as its **objectives on cross-border creation and cooperation, access and participation, circulation of diverse works, skills development, capacity-building, and international cultural relations**.

The recent Eurobarometer, published in May 2025, clearly indicates (87% of respondents citizens) agree that culture and cultural exchange should have a very important place in the European Union, as they help citizens feel more European.

To match this level of ambition, the Programme must ensure **adequate and predictable financial resources** for 2028–2034, including the provision of **multi-annual grants** and continuity between the current and future programmes.

¹ [Culture statistics - cultural enterprises - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

² The European media outlook – September 2025, publication of the European Commission

Pearle* fully supports the continued focus on **cross-border cultural cooperation** and underlines its importance as the core of the Creative Europe programme. Such projects generate the highest European added value by enabling long-term partnerships, artistic exchange, and capacity-building across borders. Cross-border cultural cooperation demonstrates the EU's commitment to the **UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions**, as well as to the EU's shared foundation established in Article 167 TFEU. **The future Culture strand should therefore maintain this focus and provide flexible support for emerging art forms, while incentivising cooperation between established cultural organisations and smaller operators within existing cooperation and platform structures.**

In addition, the Culture strand explicitly supports **cultural networks** of cultural and creative organisations that contribute to skills development, capacity-building, and peer learning. Pearle* welcomes this continued recognition of networks as they are key intermediaries for cooperation and knowledge exchange within the cultural ecosystem. **However, Pearle* advocates for a return to the essence of what European cultural networks are meant to achieve:** connecting professionals, fostering knowledge exchange, and strengthening the sector's voice at the EU level. **Future frameworks should ensure that networks can fulfil these roles effectively, without being overstretched by an increasing number of thematic or horizontal priorities. Pearle* also calls to increase the number and range of networks to be supported, which could be achieved by introducing an option for those who wish to apply for smaller grants, similar to the different sizes of cultural cooperation grants. This would contribute to the goal of the EU to uphold the objective cultural diversity.**

- **MEDIA+ Strand**

While we welcome the general objectives of the **MEDIA+ Strand**, we call on the Commission to ensure that MEDIA+ initiatives **acknowledge the interdependence between media and the live performing arts**, for example, through actions that promote the circulation of content and **fair access to digital platforms, the digital archiving of cultural content, the support to discoverability of specific art forms and content, and the mutualisation of resources of live with media.** The Programme should actively facilitate collaboration with cultural operators through the proposed cross-cutting actions of AgoraEU.

The cultural and creative sectors are deeply interconnected, and cross-sector cooperation, particularly between culture and media, offers valuable opportunities for audience development, artistic innovation, and the promotion of freedom of expression.

Pearle* therefore encourages the Commission to close this gap and promote stronger synergies between cultural and media initiatives in the implementation of the next generation of programmes.

- **CERV+ Strand**

The **CERV+** objectives outline the promotion of **fundamental rights and equality**, support for **democratic participation and the rule of law**. On this line, we call for the inclusion of **sector-specific priorities for cultural participation and access to culture** within CERV+ work programmes, for example, culture-based civic engagement, social inclusion through the arts, and intergenerational fairness achieved via cultural activities. These priorities would be fully consistent with the strand's objectives.

The cultural sector plays a crucial role in promoting citizens' access to culture and participation in democratic life. We believe that the inclusion of sector-specific priorities under this strand would recognise the contribution of culture to civic engagement and inclusion. This is supported by findings presented in the May 2025 Eurobarometer³ clearly revealed as a priority indicated by citizens' views to making arts and culture more accessible to everyone (45%) in their respective country and the EU. The Eurobarometer findings also revealed that 87% of respondents agree that culture and cultural exchange should have a very important place in the European Union, as they help citizens feel more European, and a similar percentage of citizens believe that culture and cultural exchange can play an important role in developing greater understanding and tolerance in the world.

Conclusion

Pearle* welcomes the initiative to shape a forward-looking Multiannual Financial Framework that recognises the essential contribution of culture, creativity, education, values, and civic participation to the European project. The proposal for AgoraEU represents an important step towards strengthening the role of culture and the cultural ecosystem in Europe. However, the current imbalance between the three strands and the persistent underfunding of cross-border cultural cooperation risk undermining the ambitions set out in the programme.

Ensuring adequate, predictable, and proportionate funding for the Creative Europe – Culture strand is essential to support artistic creation, mobility, skills development, and long-term cooperation structures. Meaningful synergies between culture and media should be reinforced under MEDIA+, while CERV+ would benefit from clear sector-specific priorities that fully acknowledge the role of culture in promoting democratic participation, social inclusion, and shared European values.

With growing public support for cultural exchange and cultural participation across the Union, as evidenced by the latest Eurobarometer, the next MFF must match this ambition. By strengthening cooperation, improving access, and ensuring a more equitable allocation of resources across the cultural and creative sectors, the EU can deliver a programme that genuinely reflects the social, democratic, and economic value of culture for all Europeans.

Pearle* stands ready to continue contributing to this process and to support the development of a robust and impactful framework for 2028–2034.

³ Special Eurobarometer 562 Citizen's attitude towards culture