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Executive Summary

This report on the state of the art of cultural policies of cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in non-urban areas (Deliverable 5.2) has been developed within the activities of IN SITU Work Package 5 (WP5), which focuses on innovation, cultural policy and gender related to CCIs in non-urban areas. Based on a mixed-methods design of desktop research, document analysis and empirical methods, D5.2 presents and discusses various information and findings from the diverse field of EU policy conceptions, backgrounds, organisations and (decision-making) structures. In addition, the report focuses on strategies and planning, implementation and programmes in multi-level policy frameworks.

Beyond the review of EU cultural policy, the national and territorial levels were analysed, using the examples of the six IN SITU Lab regions (Azores, Portugal; Western coastal region, Ireland; Western region, Iceland; Rauma and Eurajoki municipalities, Finland; Valmiera County, Latvia; Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia). For each of these locations, the review involves the national level of cultural policy related to CCIs and the cultural and creative ecosystems of non-urban areas as well as territorial aspects, specified to regional and local levels, wherever it occurred relevant. In fact, cultural policy is not only seen as a task of governmental entities. Moreover, it includes network activities on a local basis and activities of cultural and creative stakeholders that are active in social innovation to shape social cohesion and regional transformation.

Organised in two parts, this publication first provides and reflects a comprehensive overview of existing cultural policy structures on European level. Looking from this perspective, it is noticeable that cultural policy is applied at a wide variety of levels, albeit sometimes covertly. It is therefore the intention of this initial analysis to present the complexity of the levels and programmes and to clarify the various reference systems. This section also highlights how decisions are implemented in the various programmes. Cultural policy on the EU level is, until today, generally based on a more urban-centred and economic view on CCIs, culture and creativity. There are only very few hints that the stakeholders, structures, potentials, challenges and needs of CCIs embedded in cultural and creative ecosystems in non-urban areas are on the political agenda – and if they are, the focus is mainly on cultural heritage and the potential of non-urban or rural development through cultural tourism.

Secondly, the report presents the findings of the analyses of the six IN SITU Lab regions. Several similarities could be identified beyond a striking variety of both cultural policy concepts, structures, strategies, programmes and different administrative, political, socio-economic and place-based backgrounds:

- The role and significance of non-urban CCIs related to innovation is mainly unseen;
- Culture and creativity in non-urban areas are widely reduced to the function of “serving” for education, heritage and identity-building;

- A strongly urban-oriented view of those who decide and develop priorities, strategies and programmes;
- A lack of specific strategies and programmes taking into account the various and different needs and potentials of CCIs in diverse non-urban, rural and remote areas;
- A need for data, research and discourse on this fluid and overlapping policy field with unclear edges;
- Much relevant information, data and knowledge of local and regional actors and place-based issues remain invisible to research, in international discourses and at the EU level. This is due, in particular, to oral communication patterns, languages not spoken internationally, remoteness from urban discourses, place-based issues that are sometimes linked to place-based narratives and dynamics; and
- Desktop research and quantitative methods are limited because of the lack of data and access. Qualitative and ethnographic or community-engaged research methods are still rarely used in this context.

“Cultural Policy? Oh, no we don’t have any cultural policy here!” – this was the typical answer to our question on local and regional cultural policy in the IN SITU Lab areas, which pointed out quite obviously to a wide-spread phenomena in Europe’s non-urban territories. Even if a more detailed look on place-based cultural policy revealed some contradictions to this polemic expression, it can be generally stated that, as a result of this investigation into non-urban territories of several EU member states, national cultural policy lacks a focus on non-urban issues.

On the other hand, however, it became clear from the Labs in the Azores (Portugal), Western coastal region (Ireland) and West region (Iceland), for example, that as soon as the topic was discussed, regional cultural policy networks and modes of action crystallised and were often only ‘recognised’ in joint discussions and workshops. Overall, a very diverse picture of different actors and responsibilities that characterise the respective regional cultural policies emerged.

Another general finding resulted from a close examination of local policies. Place-based needs and the local potentials of CCI stakeholders stay relatively often unseen. They lack adequate enabling structures that foster their innovation capacity and involvement in the shaping of local and regional transformation processes to enhance social cohesion and contribute to the sustainability, vitality, and resilience of local and regional communities. Political and administrative entities and granting systems, if existing, rarely consider CCI stakeholders as partners in alliances for common goals but more often see them as funding recipients or providers of cultural services in the areas of tourism, heritage protection, education, and image building.

Nevertheless, it is remarkable that bottom-up activities for social innovation are often tested and organised by CCI actors and their informal networks. This type of active and civil policymaking for local societies reveals good practices of how to manage ongoing transformation processes. Those activities

are also valuable contributions to regional development. Whenever they are supported by flexible measures that meet the individual needs of local and regional CCIs, these movements and actions of citizenship seem to promote vitality and resilience.

The information, questions and results gathered, and the structures and frameworks presented in this report, both at the European and IN SITU Lab levels, will inform further cultural policy analysis and discussion to develop cultural policy recommendations for non-urban areas in Europe. These will be discussed with multi-level stakeholders in the course of the IN SITU project and published in the outcome report *D5.6 – Handbook on policy, strategies and planning for CCIs in non-urban areas* – in June 2026.

1. Introduction

This report (Deliverable 5.2) presents the state of the art of cultural policy in the European multi-level political system concerning CCIs embedded in cultural and creative ecosystems of non-urban areas. Divided into two main parts, it reports on grounds, structures, strategies and implementations of cultural policies at the European level as well as on regional and territorial cultural policies, and their strategies, structures and implementation in non-urban areas, including those implemented at the territorial level by regional and local authorities. The work is intended as a review of the current situation and first examines and describes cultural policy on different levels before formulating an evaluation and assessment. This research informs continuing work within the IN SITU project, including recommendations for policy action, to be published in June 2026 (*D5.6 – Handbook on policy, strategies, and planning for CCIs in non-urban areas*).

Culture and creative industries in non-urban territories are strongly connected with and embedded in a broader cultural ecosystem of the respective territories and cannot be regarded as clearly separable fields. The cultural ecosystems are essential parts of non-urban, especially rural and remote communities. Historically, cultural community building activities in self-sustaining small systems like villages were necessary to train the togetherness as a base for common agricultural processes. Every hand and talent were needed. Culture as community culture shaped the corporate identity, trained skills in learning-by-doing and intergenerational education, and gave a rhythm to everyday working as well as throughout the year. Networking and giving impulses for innovation to cope with the challenges and transformations were essential. Cultural engagement was a matter of course and, needless to say, voluntary.

Until today, the deeply rooted and self-understanding nature of cultural engagement for the shaping of togetherness are essential factors of the cultural ecosystems of small societal systems in non-urban territories. They are also strongly connected to and part of the culture and creative industries, with flowing transitions and unclear field edges (Heinicke and Lohbeck, 2020; Kegler, 2020; Mak, 1999; Schneider, 2014). Even if reliable data concerning non-employed and freelance CCI stakeholders, volunteer engagement and activities without trademarks or profit oriented background are broadly missing, the cultural scene in non-urban areas is largely determined by these actors. A profound cultural policy review related to non-urban areas must take this fact into account.

In particular, the research on grounds, structures, strategies and implementation of cultural policies at the territorial level had to face a severe lack of data. The place-based research revealed phenomena that are missing in the academic literature. This gap clearly indicates the need for more in-depth data collection on cultural policy frameworks of differing non-urban, rural and remote areas. Additionally, it demonstrated the need for improved discourses on cultural policy as overarching policy field in place-based strategies towards vital and resilient non-urban territories in times of transformation.

2. Connection to other work in the IN SITU project

The report's results are based on the research of Work Package 5, in particular its *sub-task 5.5.1: Review and assessment of level and details of (EU) policies in terms of culture and CCIs in non-urban areas* and *sub-task 5.5.2: National and territorial cultural policy review*. It is also supported by the findings and activities carried out in other research streams of the IN SITU project.¹ In addition, the research was informed by discussions and mutual exchange between the Consortium Partners of the IN SITU project, especially the Lab Partners, and members of the International Advisory Board (IAB).

This report – focusing on cultural policy – complements recent IN SITU research focusing on the state of policies and smart specialisation strategies (S3s) regarding innovation and CCIs in non-urban areas (IN SITU, 2024d).

Finally, as an additional aspect of the activities carried out that underlie the drafting of this document, the gender dimension had been constantly taken into account by interconnecting the research on gender in the IN SITU Labs with the one on cultural policy. Interviews on the gender dimension included an insight on cultural policy and related it to place-based challenges, potentials and needs in the light of equality, diversity and participation. The choice of the interviewed partners and the composition of focus groups was based on practical experience and respective academic expertise in the field, but also tried to include a variety of perspectives related to gender issues like heteronormative, feminist and queer perspectives. It is clear that gender issues remain unseen due to huge data gaps and entrenched patriarchal structures (IN SITU, 2023a). Therefore, considering the issue in different fields becomes both urgent and challenging. Nevertheless, just like gender roles and stereotypes affect every aspect of our lives, they also affect policies and the CCIs. Therefore, our research needs to reflect the different roles and relations regarding gender, including our own perspective, although the huge lack of data on gendered inequalities hinders this reflection in this report and beyond.

3. Definitions

The report and research are based on the definitions of main terms collected in the IN SITU Concept Guide² (IN SITU, 2024a). The concepts reflect the current international research tendencies and

¹ Within the IN SITU project's activities, the research was supported by the finding and activities carried out in Work Packages 1, 2 (Task 2.1), 3 (Tasks 3.1 and 3.2), 4, 5 (Task 5.1, Sub-task 5.5.3 and Task 5.6) and 7 (Task 7.2) of the ongoing project.

² IN SITU Deliverable D7.2 *Concept Guide* is a sensitive deliverable, conceived as an internal document to provide a common conceptual umbrella for the project. In this report, Version 2.0 is the one referenced.

express the evolving and commonly developed understanding of the IN SITU project partners. Table 1 presents a selection of definitions from the guide that are important for understanding this report as well as other concepts that are relevant in the context of our research but are not integrated in the IN SITU Concept Guide.

Table 1 - Definitions used in this report

Term	Definition and source
Cohesion (policy)	Cohesion refers to spatial dimensions or place-based effects in relation to policy. The Cohesion Policy of the EU, or Regional Policy, aims to reduce regional and national disparities and improve economic well-being and economic, social, and territorial cohesion in the European Union as mentioned in the Lisbon Treaty, with particular attention paid to rural areas and those affected by the industrial transition and natural or demographic handicap (European Commission, n.d.-a).
Community culture (broad culture)	Community culture can be understood as cultural or artistic expression which, according to a broad concept of culture, refers to activities of the general population that derive from the artistic-cultural leisure spheres – in this dimension, it could be described as grassroots culture. Community (or grassroots) culture is thus based on civil society engagement, is mainly local, and is planned, organised, and practised by local or regional communities, for example, choirs, amateur theatre groups, folk dance groups, marching bands and others. (Schneider, 2014; Kegler et al., 2017)
Cultural and creative ecosystem (CC ecosystem)	<p>Cultural and creative ecosystems are complex, adaptive systems composed of cultural and creative actors, as well as other actors and institutions operating across multiple economic, cultural, and social domains, contributing to a vibrant environment that supports creative activities, intangible community value, and place identity. A key feature is the synergies achievable through those links that members of the system maintain with each other. The composition, boundaries and interconnections of the ecosystem are set up in relation to the specificities of each locality.</p> <p>The key potential of the word ecosystem is to allow for the inclusion of actors and institutions operating across multiple economic, cultural, and social domains, thus holding together – in a generative tension – the questions of value that the long-standing debates between “creative industries” and “cultural industries” raise. It is a model that recognises a more inclusive and participatory approach to value generation (beyond the pure economic value of CCIs) and that allows to broaden policy understanding beyond linear approaches to the sector and its development (Barker, 2019).</p> <p>[...]. Differences in local context produce different ecosystems, both in terms of who/what is part of it and is responsible for its prosperity, and in terms of the type, timing, and intensity of its structural connections. Within IN SITU, the connections</p>

Term	Definition and source
<p>Cultural and creative industries (CCIs)</p>	<p>between actors composing cultural and creative ecosystems stimulate new insights and opportunities related to cultural and creative experiences for local communities, stakeholders, and residents. (IN SITU, 2024a, p. 36)</p> <hr/> <p>Cultural and creative industries (CCIs) comprise enterprises and activities that produce and disseminate artistic and creative products and services that are consumed in mass quantities and generate wealth and profit through the effective use of cultural assets. The term cultural industry is more related to traditional forms of art and creation, while creative industry is a newer term, emphasising innovation, knowledge, and the use of digital technologies in the production and distribution process. (IN SITU, 2024a, p. 38)</p> <p>In the project IN SITU the concept of Cultural and Creative Industry (CCI) follows the definition of the term developed by the European Commission. It describes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Industries as those industries producing and distributing goods or services which are considered to have a specific attribute, use, or purpose which embodies or conveys cultural expressions, irrespective of the commercial value they may have. Besides the traditional arts sectors (performing arts, visual arts, cultural heritage – including the public sector), they include film, DVD and video, television and radio, video games, new media, music, books, and press (European Commission, 2010, p. 5). • Creative Industries as those industries which use culture as an input and have a cultural dimension, although their outputs are mainly functional. They include architecture and design, which integrate creative elements into wider processes, as well as sub sectors such as graphic design, fashion design or advertising (European Commission, 2010, p. 6) <p><i>Eurostat list of different <u>domains</u> in the CCIs:</i> Heritage, Archives, Libraries, Books and press, Visual arts, Performing Arts, Audio-visual and multimedia, Architecture, Advertising, Art crafts</p> <p><i>Eurostat list of <u>functions</u> of the CCIs:</i> Creation, Production/publishing, Dissemination/trade, Preservation, Education, Management/regulation (Eurostat, 2018)</p>
<p>Cultural policy</p>	<p>Cultural policy describes primarily national and communal action in the field of arts and culture. It includes the promotion of the actors, steering mechanisms, the definition of cultural assets worth protecting or supporting, the design and assurance of the framework conditions (Kegler et al., 2017, p. 25). In a broader sense, cultural policy is understood as political-cultural action by state actors, civil society initiatives, non-profit and private-sector participants who jointly shape the cultural landscape (University of Hildesheim, 2023).</p>

Term	Definition and source
Innovation	Innovation is defined in many ways, but the standard economic definition stresses two main types of innovation: product and process innovation. The Oslo Manual defines innovation as: “a new or improved product or process (or combination thereof) that differs significantly from the unit’s previous products or processes and that has been made available to potential users (product) or brought into use by the unit (process).” (OECD-Eurostat, 2018, p. 20)
Non-urban	Non-urban areas incorporate rural, remote territories, and peripheral locations as well as towns, villages, and small cities that may serve as regional hubs for broader territories. As ‘extra-metropolitan’ areas, these places are defined in opposition to the ‘urban’ of major metropolitan areas and large cities. In research, two approaches to characterising the non-rural are evident: statistical/administrative and conceptual/fluid. (IN SITU, 2024a, p. 99)
Place-based development	Place-based development is a key element in the IN SITU project. It advocates for respecting the nuances of a place in devising policies and actions to support its development. Best understood as an antonym, place-based development advocates for agency at the local level and a movement away from a ‘one-size fits all’ approach to development policies. The shift towards a spatially aware approach involves an acknowledgement that the geographical context matters and that it is understood in the multidimensional sense to include social, cultural, political and institutional specificities (Pugalis and Bentley, 2014). Knowledge and power matter in the design and pursuit of territorial policies while governance is multiscalar.
Rurality	Approaches to conceptualising and investigating rurality are varied and diverse. Subjective perceptions and socio-cultural definitions of rurality tend to sit alongside more quantitative approaches. Within this diversity, Keith Halfacree’s (2006) three-fold, entwined structure for analysing rurality provides a useful framework, involving: (1) rural localities as material spaces, (2) symbolic representations of the rural, and (3) the rural as lived experience. (IN SITU, 2024a, p. 136)

Source: Compiled mainly from IN SITU Deliverable D7.2 - Concept Guide, v. 2.0 and other sources, indicated beside each term.

4. Methodology

The research in this report is based on a mixed-method design that combines: literature review, including findings already published in other IN SITU reports; a multi-perspective document analysis; and original qualitative research that relies on ethnographic and empirical methods, including a topic-related exchange with CCI stakeholders concerning cultural and creative ecosystems, regional planning, and cultural policies in the IN SITU Lab areas. Information was gathered through expert

interviews, focus group discussions, field research with participatory observation, and participative workshops during the IN SITU meetings in the Lab areas of the Azores (Portugal), Rauma and Eurajoki municipalities (Finland) and Western coastal region (Ireland). The different methodological approaches and their interweaving structure are described in this section.

In combining and analysing the outcomes of these methods, policies and regulations could be mapped and a deeper understanding of the consequences for local CCIs could be identified. In this report, the structure and mode of action of cultural policy in the context of CCIs in non-urban areas and the respective regions of the IN SITU Labs are analysed while a subsequent report (*D5.6 – Handbook on policy, strategies, and planning for CCIs in non-urban areas*, to be published in June 2026) will look more closely at their modes of action, on which recommendations will be developed.

4.1. Literature review and document analysis

The literature research and document analysis included various forms of reference such as scientific literature, academic as well as relevant newspaper articles, statistics, vision statements, policy guidelines, strategic planning papers and policy action plans, manifestos, organigrams, bid-books of application process of cities striving to become European Capital of Culture, programme and project descriptions (e.g., funding programmes). Thanks to the support of our project partners, particularly the European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC), we were able to include past studies and analyses as well as examples of implementation of cultural policy strategies in our research corpus. Our interviewed partners also supplemented our references with very valuable local sources that would have been impossible to find through desk research solely. Within the IN SITU project's activities, the research was also informed by the findings and activities carried out in other research streams of the project (see Footnote 1).

While we were able to find some literature and related documents on cultural policy for non-urban territories on a European level, the search for corresponding references on territorial cultural policy was much more challenging. Not all relevant documents are translated into English and not all languages can be translated easily or equally well with translation tools. Information on websites was changed frequently during the research process, and in some cases relevant documents were removed or replaced without maintaining accessibility to the previous document. Moreover, elections led to changes in structures and periods of missing documentation on reorganisations. In some cases, relevant documents such as strategy papers were stored in formats that did not offer the option of translating or copying text into a translation tool. In addition, the digital presence was sometimes only marginally developed, especially in very rural areas. In some cases, in fact, it was not possible to find any digitally written information on structures and orientations. For these reasons, we were dependent on the help of our regional partners, both in tracking down regional documents and in translating them. Finally, the sources available in the various Lab regions are very different in terms of

format. Some regions may have more or fewer recommendations for action or strategy papers; some publish online, others less. This diversity makes the sources of the different Labs difficult to compare. Even the policy structure of the regions is described with varying degrees of accuracy and precision.

4.2. Qualitative, empirical and ethnographic methods

In addition to the document and literature research and analysis, various interviews and discussions took place as part of the research. Expert interviews, focus group discussions, workshops, field research and observation helped to deepen and enlarge the findings and gave insights in phenomena behind the written word. Additionally, on-site research was carried out in the Azores, Finland and Ireland while for Iceland, Croatia and Latvia this will take place later on in the course of the project, with the findings from these locations incorporated into the development of the next reports on cultural policy recommendations. Expert interviews and focus group discussions took place with stakeholders of CCIs, cultural and creative ecosystems, local municipalities, regional and national administration or agencies, representatives of regional LEADER groups and researchers. Some of them could be held onsite, others were carried out online. Despite a broad agreement to record the interviews during the online sessions, we decided to maintain the anonymity of the interviewees to avoid conflicts of interests whenever this seemed likely. In addition to the partners related to the Lab areas, we interviewed IN SITU partners, including representatives of the ENCC as a European network, and national and international experts on cultural policy for non-urban territories, like Sylvia Amann (IN SITU IAB member) and Njörður Sigurjónsson (University of Bifröst, Iceland). Annex C presents the interviewed experts listed by their field of expertise and Annex D provides information on those interviewees whose statements we have anonymised.

Through discussions with our colleagues from the various Lab regions and in initial conversations with local practitioners, it became clear that cultural professionals' knowledge of cultural policy is often relatively limited to their needs and is therefore not always suitable to obtain a general overview on the topic of local cultural policy structures. Nevertheless, such interviews are definitely valuable sources of information to guide researchers in their analysis. Focused on the topic of cultural policy, they were conducted in four of the six IN SITU Lab regions, according to their current workload. In fact, potential interviewees from Lab regions' partners were often already involved as contact persons in the research of other IN SITU project activities, so that a further enquiry might have risked to undermine the balance between work and benefit for the practitioners involved, an aspect deeply taken into consideration by the IN SITU Consortium in each phase of its activities.

Behind this backdrop, further information was gathered and deepened through field research, participatory observations and workshops conducted as part of the Consortium meetings in Rauma (Finland) and Galway (Ireland) as well as from discussions and mutual exchange between the members of the IN SITU Consortium and of the IAB. The interviews conducted on the topic of gender as part of

Deliverable D5.5 - *Gender dimension of CCIs in non-urban areas* were also able to pick up on and discuss individual aspects of local cultural policy.

Due to the large number of regions, their different cultural policy frameworks and the diverse implementation strategies, comparisons can only be made to a certain extent. Rather, trends become visible at European level and concrete results in the respective regions are more suitable to be compared. These quite divergent starting positions again justify the mixed method approach we have chosen. In fact, besides European tendencies that become visible in the literature research and document analysis and in expert interviews at EU level, regional particularities and local contexts can be identified and, in particular, analysed through participant observation, workshops and interviews with the Lab partners and cultural actors on site. The various methods used therefore create a comprehensive source base, which provides an initial overview of strategies, goals and implementations of cultural policy.

5. Cultural policy at the EU level: A review of grounds, structures and programmes for non-urban territories

Cultural policy at the EU level is a widespread policy field with overarching characteristics. As a matter of fact, the term *culture* can be understood as formats, structures, activities, concepts and methods that are practised, transformed and developed by professional artists as well as amateurs, by rural communities as well as urban institutions taking part in shaping society and togetherness through creative means. Arts and culture can both give impulses and offer frames for experimentation and innovation, while also fostering the will, abilities and power to cope with the needs of the different transforming societies all over the world. The complexity of the term becomes visible in the “Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies” from the 1982 UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies:

[...] that in its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs; that it is culture that gives man the ability to reflect upon himself. It is culture that makes us specifically human, rational beings, endowed with a critical judgement and a sense of moral commitment. It is through culture that we discern values and make choices. It is through culture that man expresses himself, becomes aware of himself, recognizes his incompleteness, questions his own achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings and creates works through which he transcends his limitations. (UNESCO, 1982, p. 1)

Behind this backdrop, cultural policies for non-urban, rural and remote territories play an important role in enabling the cultural and creative industries in the respective cultural ecosystems to activate their innovation potential and creative power for the (re-)shaping of vital and resilient societies.

Notably, the Council of Europe defines *culture* as “an essential component and a key factor for the effective delivery of the core mission of the Council of Europe to promote human rights, the practice of democracy and the rule of law” (Council of Europe, n.d.-c).

A look at recent cultural policy literature ascribes a decisive role to non-urban regions, which leads to two conclusions:

Firstly: As culture is the responsibility of the individual countries, cultural policy at the EU level initially has the rather symbolic task of representing a European identity and making it tangible. The challenge lies in the fact that this identity was initially developed top-down. Recently, however, EU cultural policy has attempted to develop the strategy through a bottom-up approach. Lähdesmäki et al. (2021) analysed European cultural policy documents from the perspective of how and in which ways they support an EU identity agenda. They emphasise the importance of cultural and artistic levels in creating a European identity and a sense of belonging: “The cultural programmes mention values, history, cultural heritage, way of life, symbols, cultural events, and cultural cooperation as important and distinctively ‘European’ elements of identity” (p. 52). They then come to the interesting conclusion that “participation” has only recently become increasingly important in documents and programmes. For our research, this finding means that participatory models are gaining relevance from an EU perspective, as they create a sense of belonging through art and culture as well as promoting dialogue and exchange. Both processes, the representation and affiliation of the various population groups as well as the exchange between them at local, national and European level, are also relevant for the development of non-urban areas.

Secondly: Academic research to the topic is rare. As the IN SITU deliverable on innovation and CCIs in non-urban areas noted, there are hardly any data and descriptions of local and territorial cultural policy in non-urban areas, especially in relation to EU cultural policy (IN SITU, 2024d). In her most recent publications, Sylvia Amann points out that non-urban areas are often marginalised in EU cultural policy or, if focused on, are downright stereotyped (Amann, 2022). The diversity of rural areas is also often not recognised or addressed. Amann’s relevant research results were therefore brought into the structured dialogue of the EU’s Voices of Culture (VoC) Brainstorming Meeting on the “Role of Culture in Non-Urban Areas of the European Union” (Voices of Culture, 2020), a dialogue format between the European Commission and the cultural sector.

The increasing importance of cultural policy for European affiliation and identity as well as the marginalisation and stereotyping of rural areas require, on one hand, a precise description of the current structures and processes of EU cultural policy to understand at which levels, in which structures and with which mechanisms EU cultural policy is applied in non-urban regions. On the other hand, to understand if and how EU cultural policy influences, supports or supplements the national and regional cultural policies, a precise look at the national and territorial structures in the regions of the IN SITU Labs is also needed.

5.1 Grounds of cultural policy on the EU level

In order to understand and situate the capabilities and implementations of cultural policy at EU level, the framework conditions and foundations of cultural policy must be addressed. The European Union (EU) states in its Treaties³ that overarching values are the common ground above which the EU had been built and through which the Member States are interconnected (European Commission DG EAC, n.d.-e). Such values, described in article 2 of the Founding Treaty, can be seen by the EU national members as a first sign that *culture* in its broad meaning and relatedness to those common base values plays a decisive role in the EU's self-image and political orientation:

[The European Union was] founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Despite this point, neither the term *culture* nor *cultural policy* had been described or can be identified in the Founding Treaties of the EU. However, although a specific description of culture is missing, its value can be clearly identified as a central and cross-cutting task in the European Union. Through a comparison of EU documents from its very first steps in 1979 towards the European cultural policy of today, there has been a permanent process that has led to the acknowledgement of the overarching value of culture being far beyond a purely economic impact (see Schwencke, 2004). The Member States' agreement to "promote peace, its values, and the well-being of its peoples" (Art. 3, 1 TEU), to foster the sustainable development of Europe and to promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States as well as "to respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity" and to contribute to "the safeguarding and enhancing of Europe's cultural heritage" (Art. 3, 3 TEU) are clear hints of the role of culture and of the need for cultural policy strategies at the EU level (European Commission, n.d.-e).

With the agreement of the members of the European Union to pursue "the principle of sincere cooperation by assisting each other in carrying out tasks which flow from the Treaties" (Art. 4, 3 TEU) and to "carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States" (Art. 6 TFEU), a first fundamental prerequisite for enabling and supporting Member States' cultural policy concepts had been stated. Nevertheless, it was not until the Maastricht Treaty of 1993, later adapted to the Treaty of Lisbon 2007 (coming into force in 2009) that *culture* had been explicitly mentioned as a policy field.

³ The *Founding Treaty of the European Union* (TEU) (European Union, 2020) as well as the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (TFEU) build the primary legal basis of the political system of the European Union. The TEU was concluded in 1992 in Maastricht and was adapted three times (Treaty of Amsterdam 1967, Treaty of Nizza 2001 and Treaty of Lisbon 2007).

Due to the principle of subsidiarity⁴, *cultural policy* as such is, until today, under the responsibility of each state, although the Treaty clearly states the commonly agreed will and commitment of the EU to support and enable its members to fulfil these cultural political tasks. Described as the “cultural article,” Art. 167 TFEU defines the EU’s cultural commitment as subsidiary and complementary to the activities of the Member States, specifies the topics of cultural promotion, including a “non-commercial cultural exchange,” and assigns the EU competence in foreign cultural policy (see Figure 1). Paragraph 4, also known as the *cultural compatibility clause*, stipulates that the EU “shall take cultural aspects into account” in its other activities (European Commission, 2008).

Article 167

1. The Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore.
2. Action by the Union shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action in the following areas:
 - Improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples,
 - Conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance,
 - Non-commercial cultural exchanges,
 - Artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector.
3. The Union and the Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the sphere of culture, in particular the Council of Europe.
4. The Union shall take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of the Treaties, in particular in order to respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures.
5. In order to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article:
 - the European Parliament and the Council acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and after consulting the Committee of the Regions, shall adopt incentive measures, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States,
 - the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, shall adopt recommendations.

Figure 1 - Article 167 of the treaty on the functioning of the European Union (consolidated version)

Source: Developed by authors according to European Commission (2008).

⁴ “In areas in which the European Union does not have exclusive competence, the principle of subsidiarity, laid down in the Treaty on European Union, defines the circumstances in which it is preferable for action to be taken by the Union, rather than the Member States” (European Parliament, n.d.-b).

5.2. Structures of cultural policy: Organisation, cooperation and dialogue

Decision-making on cultural policy at the EU-level follows the organisational structures of the EU and is influenced by dialogues, knowledge-transfer and discourses developed both internally and in cooperation and structured exchange with experts and EU citizens. This section provides an overview on the organs of the European Union first, before examining the cooperation with other organisations in which cultural policy dialogues take place.

5.2.1. Organisational structure of the European Union

The objective of this analysis is to contribute to the understanding of the extent to which cultural policy is considered with regard to innovation processes for non-urban territories. A close look on decision-making structures, communication processes and organisational frames help in comprehending the dynamics, the advocacy potentials and the logics of policymaking for non-urban territories at the EU level. Depicting the EU structures and its organs in general provides a first overview on the interconnected layers and actors on cultural decision-making and its preparation and outlining (Figure 2).

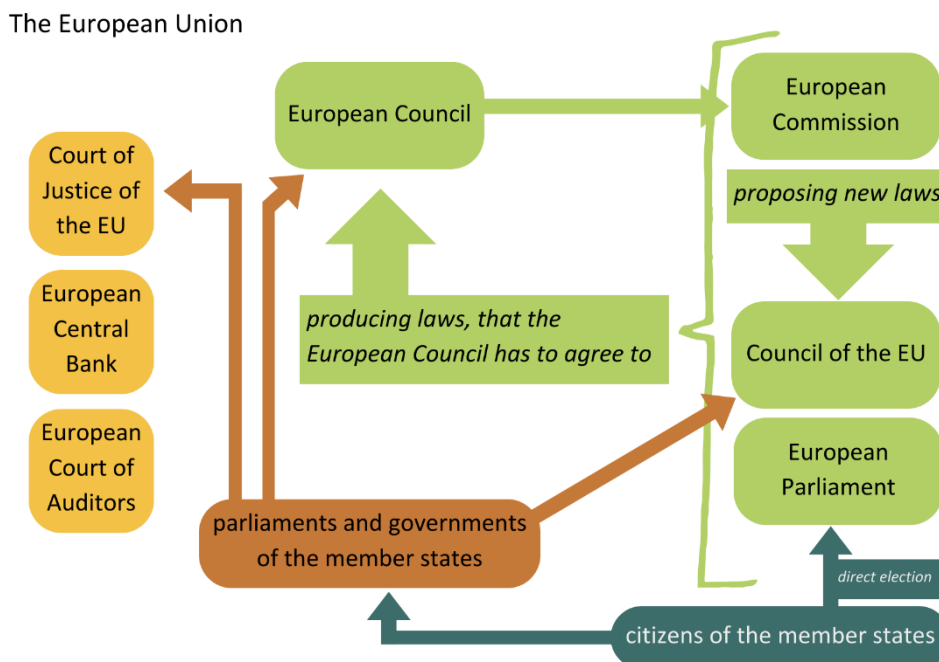


Figure 2 - Organs of the European Union

Source: Authors' visualisation according to Z. van Dijk, Organs of the European Union, 2018. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/3/36/Organs_of_the_European_Union.svg/1024px-Organs_of_the_European_Union.svg.png

5.2.1.1. The European Council

The European Council sets the EU’s Policy agenda and general political guidelines. It is composed by the EU Member States – represented by the leading person of each Member State government – the president of the European Council and the president of the European Commission. Every five years the leaders of the EU Member States discuss and agree on political priorities and develop the strategic agenda for the EU’s policy – reacting on current crises such as climate change, the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war against Ukraine, the rising economic and geopolitical challenges as well as the need to defend democratic values. The strategic agenda 2024–2029 will be adopted in June 2024 (European Council, 2024).

5.2.1.2. The Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union is an entity of the EU and is understood as the voice of EU member governments (European Council & Council of the European Union, n.d.; European Union, n.d.-e) (Figure 3). Together with the European Parliament, the Council can be described as the EU’s main political decision-making body. In terms of its duties and competences, the Council of the EU:

- negotiates and adopts EU laws together with the European Parliament, based on proposals from the European Commission, and coordinates EU policies;
- coordinates EU countries policies;
- develops the EU’s foreign and security policy, based on the European Council guidelines;
- concludes agreements between the EU and other countries or international organisations; and
- adopts the annual EU budget, together with the European Parliament.

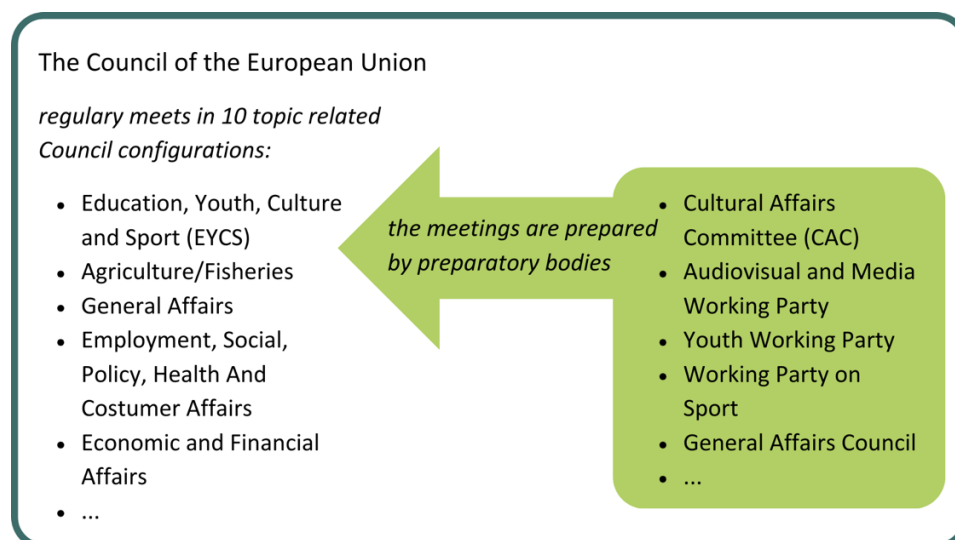


Figure 3 - Council of the EU and Council configurations

Source: Authors’ visualisation

The members of the Council of the European Union (or Council of the EU) are representatives of each EU Member State's national ministers that, in general, have the authority to commit their national governments to the actions agreed on in the meetings and cast the votes of their country. European Commissioners responsible for the areas concerned are also invited to join the respective discussions. The Council of the EU meets in ten different topic-specific configurations. Cultural affairs in general are discussed in the section *Education, Youth, Culture and Sport (EYCS)*. Questions on non-urban development and innovation may be discussed in different sections like *Agriculture and Fisheries, Economic and Financial Affairs, Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs* or others.

Over 150 preparatory bodies set the grounds for the regular or *ad hoc* meetings. For Cultural Affairs, the *Cultural Affairs Committee (CAC)* prepares the work of the EU ministers for culture (or state secretaries) and discusses legislative proposals. The CAC supports the EYCS in preparing debates related to cultural policy in general. Cultural policy subjects with an emphasis on media, film and other audio-visual issues are supported by the *Audiovisual and Media Working Party*. Other cross-cutting issues related to the EYCS section could lead to appropriate division of tasks to other preparatory bodies.

A number of cross-cutting policy areas are under the responsibility of the *General Affairs Council*, which also coordinates the work of the Council and prepares for European Council meetings. The aforementioned Committees may bring in their own proposals and recommendations to such meetings, but without binding character.

Furthermore, the Council of the EU regularly holds public debates on issues affecting the interests of civil society.

5.2.1.3. European Parliament

The more than 700 members of the European Parliament are directly elected in the respective Member States and represents the voices of the EU's 448 million citizens in the 27 countries that are part of the EU. Informed by the European Commission (EC); and together with the Council of the EU, the European Parliament:

- debates and decides about the policymaking at EU level;
- adopts and amends legislative proposals;
- decides on the EU budget;
- supervises the work of the EC and other EU bodies; and
- cooperates with national parliaments in collecting decision-leading inputs from the EU Member States.

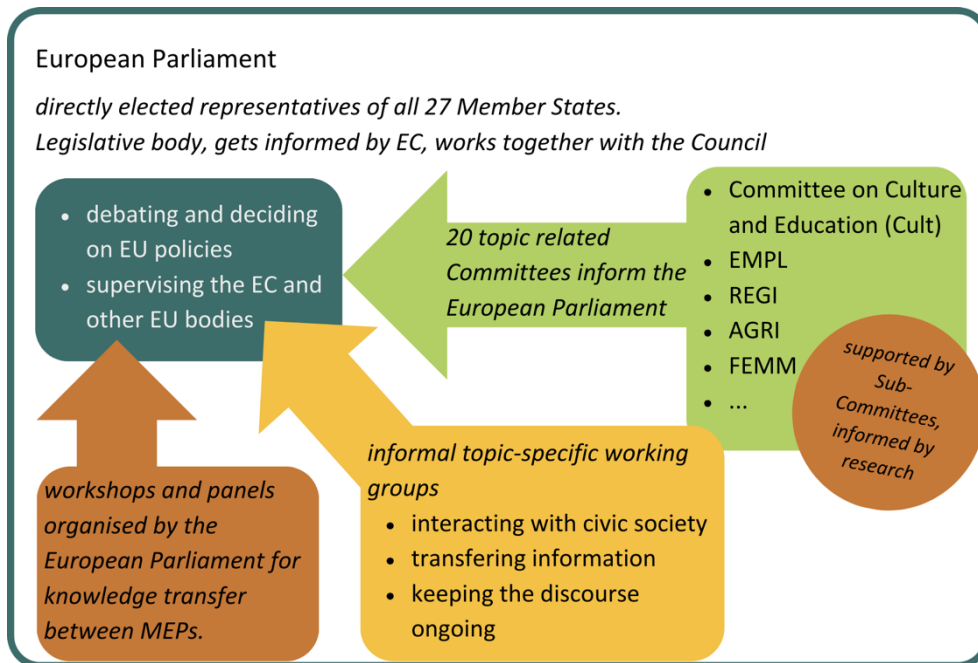


Figure 4 - European Parliament

Source: Authors' visualisation

The work of the *Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)* is prepared, influenced and followed-up by 20 Standing Committees and three Subcommittees (see Figure 4). With the start of every new legislature, the MEPs express their interest and preferences about their commitment in the proposed committees.

It is a key decision, as it will determine in which field they will focus most of their efforts. Parliament's committees play a crucial role in policymaking as they are responsible for preparing Parliament's positions, in particular on new legislative proposals. (European Parliament, 2021, p. 3)

The *Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)*, as one of the 20 committees in place, combines the interests and expertise of seven stately members and three substituting members out of the seven different political groups. Compared to other Committees, CULT is a small-sized group, considering that others range up to even more than 80 members. The composition of the larger sized groups reflects the weight each political group has in Parliament as a whole.

Regarding the research topic of cultural policy for non-urban development and innovation, other Committees might be relevant for political decision-making on EU level, especially when the idea of cultural policy as an overarching policy subject is considered as a serious task. The *Committees on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)*, *Regional Development (REGI)*, *Agriculture and Rural*

Development (AGRI) and Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) are some of those which work on related issues.

The work of the Committees is supported by *Sub-Committees* and informed through the work of different research services and policy departments by studies, briefings, in-depth analyses, and other forms of knowledge transfer (Council of Europe, 2024). Furthermore, the European Parliament organises workshops and panels to enable the MEPs to transfer knowledge and exchange ideas and views with experts in the respective policy fields and current subjects of interest (European Parliament, 2021, p. 11).

Furthermore, there are informal topic-specific working groups (*Intergroups/Friendship Groups*) of MEPs which are important and active communities to keep topics in an ongoing discourse, interact with civil society and transfer information to other political groups. Those groups can be supranational, bringing together MEPs of different political groups and expertise.

As one of the more informal groups, the *Cultural and Creators Friendship Group (CCFG)* is considered to be a politically relevant and active group of key people. 28 MEPs from 14 Member States and 6 political groups, active in diverse committees, are members of the CCFG. They agreed to the general aims of improving the European cultural ecosystem with a focus on the situation and conditions of creators of cultural works (European Parliament, n.d.-a). In 2020, the CCFG launched the CCFG Manifesto and a Working Plan (European Parliament, n.d.-a). Operating as a forum of discussion and cooperation among its members, they describe their objectives with the following topics:

- labour rights, social and working conditions;
- funding and supporting creativity;
- cultural education, life-long learning, and career development;
- opportunities and challenges of the digital era;
- promoting the European dimension of cultural diversity; and
- fostering international cultural relations at EU level.

5.2.1.4. The European Commission

The European Commission (EC), as the executive organ of the EU, proposes legislation and budget to the Council of the EU and the European Parliament which then negotiate and decide based on those legislative initiatives (European Commission JRC, n.d.) (see Figure 5). The administration of the established budget is also a task of the EC (European Commission, n.d.-f). In addition, it helps the Member States to “mitigate the adverse effects of crises and any challenges where coordinated EU response might prove beneficial” (European Commission, n.d.-e). In order to gain a broader view of developments and ongoing discourses and to guarantee European values in the form of democratic principles as a basis for its work, the Commission bases parts of its activities on exchange processes with stakeholders and experts in the field and is open to structured dialogue with civil society. In this

way, the Commission develops strategic documents on cultural cooperation as well as its own priorities, objectives, and guidelines for the given Commission term. Key themes are worked out, ensuring, for example, the embeddedness of the social and economic roles of culture in wider EU policymaking and actions.

While the individual EU Member States are responsible for their own (cultural) policies due to the principle of subsidiarity, the European Commission sees its role in supporting to address more common challenges, defined in priorities. For the Commission term 2019–2024, six priorities had been set considered as highly relevant for the EU policy including, in particular, cultural policy as an overarching task (European Commission, DG COMM, n.d.-b). The objective to support the Member States in their cultural policy processes according to the EU-policy priorities needs a profound knowledge on potentials, challenges, and needs of the sector and its fields of action.

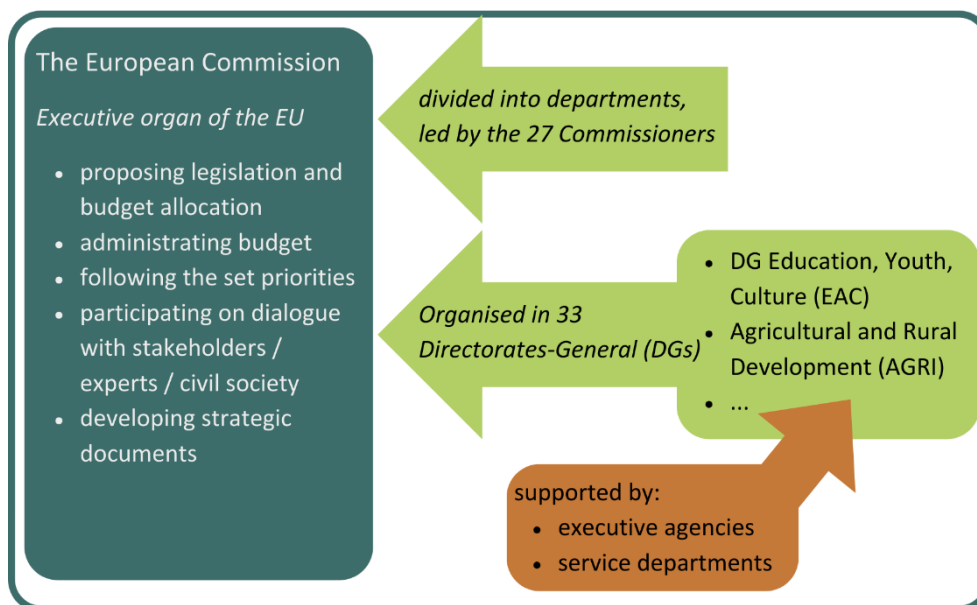


Figure 5 - The European Commission

Source: Authors' visualisation

The work of the EC is divided into specific *Departments* headed by Commissioners, under the leadership of a President (European Commission, DG COMM, n.d.-e). The *27 Commissioners*, one from each Member State, are steering the EC as the so-called *College*, appointed every five years. Assigned by the President of the EC, they are responsible for different specific policy areas and some of them also for more than one area of responsibility. The EC Commissioner Mariya Gabriel oversaw the policy fields innovation, research, culture, education and youth from 2019–2023, followed by Iliana Ivanova (Commissioner 2023–2024). These Commissioners report to Margaritis Schinas (Vice-President 2019–2024) as responsible for *promoting our European way of life, maximising the potential of culture and*

sport, dialogue with churches and religious associations, equality, diversity, inclusion, European Education area concerning cultural and educational affairs. As culture is seen as an overarching topic it could theoretically be regarded as a common field of policy for all Commissioners. Regarding the IN SITU project, it may be especially interesting to topic-related research as well as to practitioners and network organisation of CCIs in non-urban areas to have a closer look on the relevance of cultural topics in the policy fields of non-urban or rural areas, social cohesion and demographic changes, equality, and related fields of innovation for non-urban territories (European Commission, n.d.-e).

Comparable to ministries on national level, the EC is organised in *Directorates-General (DGs)*, each of them responsible for the development, implementation and administration of policy fields supported by expert-led **executive agencies** and **service departments**. The resorts of the 33 DGs are not necessarily congruent with those of the Commissioners since some DGs work even for more than one Commissioner. The *DG EAC* (Education, Youth, and Culture) contributes directly to the cultural policymaking in the field of culture and is responsible for funding programmes like ERASMUS+, Creative Europe and others (Publications Office of the European Union, n.d.). The DG EAC is supported in its tasks by the *Executive Agency EACEA* which manages the funding programmes for education, culture, audio-visual, sport, citizenship, and volunteering (European Commission, DG COMM, n.d.-d). Concerning the research subject of IN SITU, it might be as well useful to have in further research a closer look at the *DG AGRI* (Agricultural and Rural Development), *DG EMPL* (Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion), the *DG GROW* (Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs), the *DG REGIO* (Regional and Urban Policy), the *DG RTD* (Research and Innovation) and others like the *European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)* which was established in 2008 to support innovation in EU countries (European Commission, DG COMM, n.d.-c; European Union, DC COMM, n.d.-a).

5.2.1.5. Cultural policy: Cooperation and dialogue

The cooperation with and the support of the national Member States by the EC requires a profound dialogue with civil society organisations, cultural stakeholders, cities and regions, and international organisations, including the Council of Europe, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

To coordinate the interaction of different working groups, committees, and stakeholders the Commission implemented the so-called *Open Method of Coordination (OMC)*. As topic-focused working groups, the OMC groups take over the task of organising the respective knowledge transfer in the single and overarching policy fields. The OMC group members are experts of diverse topic-related fields with different backgrounds, ranging from expertise in administration to relevant research in the field. OMC members are invited by the Member States, although an OMC group does not need to have members from each Member State. The OMC experts who have been appointed by Member States meet five to six times over 18 months to produce policy recommendations, manuals

and toolkits shared throughout Europe. The Commission is responsible for organising the OMC, hosts most of its meetings, and supports the work of the OMC groups with policy updates and inputs, such as studies. The results and proposals of the OMCs are not binding but can influence the political decisions and strategies.

OMC groups related to cultural policy had worked since 2008 on a wide range of topics but none of them referring explicitly to the special potentials, challenges and needs of cultural policy for innovation in and for non-urban areas, even if the topics are partly strongly related to place-based issues in non-urban areas.

One of the basic findings on culture and creativity by OMC groups can be seen in the OMC report of 2018 (European Commission, DG EAC, 2018). The report refers to the role of public policies in developing entrepreneurial and innovation potential of the cultural and creative sectors and states that CCIs generate a wide range of strongly needed factors, such as well-being and cohesion, while also shaping public spaces, modernising industries and business sectors with new creative input and methods, providing meaning and a feeling of belonging, upgrading urban and rural areas, designing products and services, producing and digitising content, enriching visual experiences, and bringing content for debates (European Commission, 2018, p. 7). Even if this study is based on predominantly economic perspectives and does not primarily relate to cultural policy for non-urban territories, it described the need to understand the cultural and creative sector as part of the regional cultural ecosystems and to recognise the innovation potential of the wide field of its actors.

More recent OMC reports refer to:

- status and working conditions of artists (European Commission, DG EAC, 2023)⁵;
- culture as a driver for sustainable development (European Commission, DG EAC, 2022a)⁶;

⁵ The report *Status and Working Conditions of Artists* fostered and influenced the ongoing discussions on cultural policy in the EU, but the role of arts and culture or the working conditions and the cultural policy framework missed to be related explicitly to the special challenges of working in and for non-urban territories. Nevertheless, a general perspective on “local” issues is a topic, not excluding non-urban issues (European Commission, 2023).

⁶ The report *Stormy times: Nature and Humans – Cultural Courage for Change* fostered and influenced the ongoing discussions on cultural policy in the EU as well, but like the 2023 OMC-report, it didn’t focus much on details and special conditions of potentials of non-urban territories (European Commission, 2022a). In any case, it provided at least a few mentions of sustainable methods of intangible heritage still used in rural areas (pp. 47-49) that could be examples for a “reappraisal of low-emission European knowledge and techniques [... which] can create new synergies to bring about change” (p. 47). Additionally, as one of the challenges of rural areas, the still low rate of computer access of only “66% of the rural population” in Europe has been mentioned (p. 62).

- strengthening cultural heritage resilience for climate change (European Union, 2022b)⁷;
- multilingualism and translation (European Commission, DG EAC, 2022b);
- audio-visual co-productions (European Union, 2022a); and
- high-quality architecture and living environment (European Commission, DG EAC, 2021).

“[But] until now there is no direct focus on culture in rural areas, but more transversal approaches. But actually, if there is a good number of members, of representatives of member states that want to set up this working group it could be set up, but it needs to be an initiative of member states that cooperate together and then it [has a chance to be approved as a] new working group. And yes, the work on the OMC groups that is really important [...]. We (the ENCC) are now involved in the OMC group on working condition of cultural and creative operators and the report will feed into the main policy for the EC for the next years. So, they are expecting this report to drafting the new policy. It is pretty relevant work.”
(Interview with representatives of ENCC, 2023)

Beyond the focus on knowledge-transfer for policy recommendations, the EC is interested in strengthening a dialogue with stakeholders of the cultural and creative sector as experts and affected parties in this policy field, following the strategies of the New European Agenda for Culture (European Commission, n.d.-g). This governance policy dialogues and cooperation strategies are elements of an ongoing democratic process, offering a platform for advocating relevant issues since:

The Commission brings together stakeholders and decision-makers to discuss key issues according to policy priorities and topics, considering sectoral developments and needs. It aims to strengthen the advocacy capacity of the cultural sector in policy debates on culture at the European level, while encouraging these organisations to work in a more collaborative way. (European Commission, DG EAC, n.d.-b)

5.2.1.6. Voices of Culture – civil society in structured dialogue with OMC groups

One of the main dialogue formats may be seen in the contribution of the *Voices of Culture (VoC)*, a specific structured dialogue between civil society and the OMC group of experts in the field (VoC, n.d.). The aim of this dialogue format can be seen in the will to strengthen the advocacy capacity of the cultural sector in policy debates and in knowledge exchanges between different fields of expertise of

⁷ Even if the topic of tangible and intangible heritage and its endangerment by climate change is highly connected to the cultural policy, cultural ecosystems and regional development of non-urban areas, the report does not focus on the place-based background and challenges. The examples cited in the report are situated in non-urban areas and it is pointed out that cultural landscapes, heritage in coastal areas and intangible heritage are in danger. Nevertheless, despite those references, the measurements proposed do not address the concrete conditions and frameworks of rural and remote areas. However, it is remarked that missing knowledge and skills can be especially a problem when migration, leading to brain-drain, affects those regions where cultural heritage should be protected (European Union, 2022b, p. 17).

practitioners, researchers, administrators, and political deciders. For each topic, about 50 representatives from the cultural sector can participate in the VoC dialogue formats. The general topics are determined by the *European Agenda for Culture* or the *Work Plan for Culture* and often align with the respective OMC topics. Similar to the thematic OMC groups, the conferences of VoC produce reports with cultural policy recommendations. In recent years, the influence on and interaction with the ongoing discourses of the OMC raised and are deepened in meetings with the OMC groups as well as by discussions on reports.

Among a wide range of relevant topics in the cultural sector, the studies *Gender Balance in the Cultural and Creative Sectors* (VoC, 2019) and *The Role of Culture in Non-urban Areas of the European Union* (VoC, 2020) as well as the brainstorming reports *Developing the Entrepreneurial and Innovation Potential of the Cultural and Creative Sectors* (VoC, 2016) and *Participatory Governance of Cultural Heritage* (VoC, 2015), have tackled issues of concern of the IN SITU project. Voices of Culture is currently run by the Goethe-Institute on behalf of the European Commission.

5.2.1.7. Voices of Culture 2020: The role of culture in non-urban areas of the European Union

The format was convened with 35 organisations from across Europe to address the question of what the EU can do to promote culture in the peri-urban spaces (outside of urban centres), the suburbs, and the periphery. The European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC)⁸ was part of the conference that took part in the Fagus-Werk Alfeld, Germany. The ENCC and other networks brought in the results and questions of an ongoing discourse among their members⁹ while other members enriched the

⁸ The European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC) is a Consortium member of the IN SITU project.

⁹ The ENCC as a European Network of Cultural Centres in Europe had launched a working group of members on culture in non-urban areas with two conferences on the topic in Oleśnica 2016 and Hildesheim 2017, which resulted, among others in a Crowd-Sourced Manifesto: *Culture for Shared, Smart, Innovative Territories* (ENCC, 2020) and the anthology *Vital Village* (Schneider et al., 2017), coordinated by the University of Hildesheim. The results were brought in the Brainstorming Meeting of Voices of Culture by Board Members of the ENCC and others involved in the discussions and processes.

discussions and workshops with individual knowledge, experiences, and impulses^{10,11}. The participants of the Voices of Culture Brainstorming Meeting 2020 developed a brainstorming report with a wide range of recommendations which influenced the discussion of OMCs and DGs, and made an impact on the development of the EU financial framework (VoC, 2020):

“The recommendations were at two levels, so for each visibly the report is structured on chapters, each focusing on different topics and each chapter has recommendation for EU policymaking, and local and national policymakers, so with different levels. And for each level you have operational tools, so different aspects and action plans, action points, something like that. I don’t know what happened on local and national levels. On the EU level, there were some discussions, internally in the different DGs, that are working in the EU financial framework, for example, Horizon Europe. The whole structure of Horizon Europe was changed both, thanks to these recommendations, but also due to a lot of other recommendations coming from other working groups that recommended the same things.” (Interview with representatives of ENCC, 2023)

5.2.1.8. European Network for Rural Development – dialogues and communication beyond the urban

Cultural policy as an overarching task is tackled as well in other fields of policy and its dialogue formats. One of the most relevant working groups in communication with the EC is the **European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)**, a network of national rural networks, supporting units and stakeholder organisations which contributed to the development of the long-term vision for the *EU Rural Vision action plan* and *Rural Pact* including strategies until 2040 (these are described further later in this report). In an intensive process, they provided opportunities for sharing views and information with rural stakeholders and developed scenarios for the future of rural areas of the EU, supported by an open public consultation with the EC.

¹⁰ Four European networks of the cultural and creative sector – the European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC); Culture Action Europe (CAE), one of the IN SITU Outreach Partners; IETM (International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts); and Trans Europe Halles (TEH) – joined forces in 2020 and created an online campaign and the joint policy paper *Beyond the Urban* (Culture Action Europe et al., 2020), launched in 2020. The results of their ongoing discussions and exchanges enriched the discussion during the Brainstorming Conference in Alfeld since their members participated in this joint working group. Parallel to these approaches, sector-based discussions among the members of the single networks enhanced the discourse. The IETM published a further policy paper on arts in rural areas in the same year (IETM, 2020) and brought its findings into the VoC brainstorming through stakeholders participating at the workshop in Alfeld.

¹¹ The brainstorming report of the topic-related VoC Brainstorming Meeting in the Fagus-Werk in Alfeld (Germany), February 2020, describes several examples of good practice in non-urban areas which were brought in by various stakeholders to the meeting (VoC, 2020).

5.2.1.9. Citizens' initiative Protect the EU's Rural Heritage, Food Security, and Supply

Beneath the internal structures of the European Commission, independent and non-governmental citizens' initiatives can have relevant influences on the shaping of cultural policy lines. This can be seen in the example of the citizens' initiative "Protect the EU's Rural Heritage, Food Security, and Supply" with its focus on depopulation, food, local culture and heritage:

"This is a citizens' initiative, not launched by the Commission, but it is very relevant, and the Commission highlighted it several times. It has a focus on depopulation, food, local cultures, and heritage, it is not about the role of culture in innovation or rural development process, it is rather on a perspective of protection of local culture and heritage. But it is still very relevant because it is a bottom-up initiative."
(Interview with representatives of ENCC, 2023)

The analysis of related structures of EU's decision-making reveals the opportunities but also the challenges of bringing in the topics of CCIs in non-urban territories as drivers of innovation. Beyond the traditional principle of an architect's model of cultural policy, the EU includes bottom-up processes involving the contribution of stakeholders and further external experts in the decision-making process. Voices of Culture, the OMC groups, the informal topic-related friendship groups or other kind of working groups of different organs are based on an interdisciplinary exchange to gain insights and knowledge as ground for future decision-making. Advocacy is possible and practiced by networks of cultural stakeholders and representatives of different interest groups. Nevertheless, despite all the openness towards new findings and the inclusion of stakeholders' demands and knowledge, it is clearly revealed that the existing structures are based, on one hand, quite generally on culture as an overarching principle and, on the other hand, culture is mainly related to heritage and identity-building, as factor of social cohesion and culture as instrument for mobility purposes. The role of culture and creativity in non-urban territories and the situation of its stakeholders is therefore neither excluded, nor clearly addressed in the existing structures, with exception of the VoC workshops in 2020.

5.3. Cultural policy on the EU level: Priorities, strategies and implementation

Culture as well as place-based issues for non-urban territories are both overarching categories related to a huge variety of interconnected policy fields. As the previous section revealed, there is not one single topic-related entity or working-group dealing with this subject at the EU level. Priorities, strategies and their implementation through programmes, funds and initiatives are also lacking a concrete focus on fostering the activities of CCIs and enhancing the cultural and creative ecosystems in and for non-urban territories.

The following analysis of EU programmes for cultural policy shows where the topic of CCIs for innovation in non-urban territories could be at least partially seen, not to be completely excluded from

the policy discourse, even if there are no explicit priorities, strategies and implementation measurements related to fostering culture and creativity in non-urban, rural and remote areas.

5.3.1. Priorities of cultural policy

The *Overall Strategy of the European Union* defined six priorities for the period of 2019–2024 which determine the guiding principles of EU policy (von der Leyen, n.d.):

1. A European Green Deal: striving to be the first climate-neutral continent,
2. A Europe fit for the digital age: empowering people with a new generation of technologies,
3. An economy that works for people: working for social fairness and prosperity,
4. A stronger Europe in the world: Europe to strive for more by strengthening our unique brand of responsible global leadership,
5. Promoting our European way of life: building a Union of equality in which we all have the same access to opportunities,
6. A new push for European democracy: nurturing, protecting, and strengthening our democracy.

None of the six strategies is focusing especially on cultural policy for non-urban areas, but they are at least not excluding cultural activities, funding and policy decisions for these locations when they can be identified as related to the six overarching priorities. It has to be discussed if a non-exclusion of non-urban issues is sufficient for the needs of cultural policy in non-urban areas, or if the overall objectives related to non-urban territories could and should be addressed in a more targeted way. The forthcoming report (D5.6) on policy recommendation will deepen these research question. In the actual period of preparation for the new Commission era after 2024, it may be important to have a closer look at those priorities.

5.3.1.1. *The European Green Deal and the New European Bauhaus*

“The European Green Deal, that is something which will even stay in the new Commission [...] until 2030. So, it is a good area of intervention, focusing on rural areas – not directly on culture, but again: it is up to the cultural operators, practitioners, to make a thing with that.” (Interview with ENCC)

Related to the priority of the European Green Deal is the *New European Bauhaus Strategy (NEB)*, which was mainly put forward by the EC president, Ursula von der Leyen, and started in 2020 (European Union, n.d.-i). It enforces the European Green Deal priority through “creative and interdisciplinary initiatives” that connect this priority to “our living spaces and experiences” as a result of projects which aim to “imagine and to build together a sustainable and inclusive future that is beautiful for our eyes, minds, and souls.” According to the NEB, “beautiful are the places, practices, and experiences that are”:

- enriching, in the meaning of *inspired by art and culture*;
- responding to the needs beyond functionality;
- sustainable and in harmony with nature, environment and “*our planet*”; as well as

- inclusive and diversity-based.

Although the new strategy focused on creativity from the very beginning and described the power of arts and creativity as leading principles, in its first stages and in its official description appeared to be more urban-centred.

“Now they changed a bit the approach, but at the beginning, when it was launched you could only read that this was an initiative for cities and urban areas. Now after several concerns and complaints they are opening up more to rural areas although not formally, but when we had – because we are partner of the New European Bauhaus – when we had some community meetings organised by the Commission, you see that they are considering a bit more issues, specific issues of rural areas, but the focus is still much urban-centred. [...] It’s up to all the members and the partners of the new European Bauhaus to bring attention to the rural areas, rural topics, culture in rural areas, because the Bauhaus per se is not really focusing on rural areas, but it’s up to us basically.” (Interview with representatives of ENCC, 2023)

5.3.2. Strategies of cultural policy at the EU level

5.3.2.1. Strategic areas and priorities

Besides its overarching priorities, the European Commission focuses more directly on Cultural Policy in four strategic areas, described as “key themes of European cultural cooperation, with specific objectives corresponding to social, economic, and external dimensions” (European Commission, DG EAC, n.d.-g).

Key themes of European Cultural Cooperation are:

- supporting cultural heritage;
- the socio-economic value of culture;
- boosting gender equality and diversity, and
- measuring the positive impact of culture.

Dimensions of strategic areas on cultural policy are:

- social: foster cultural capabilities, encourage mobility of professionals, protect, and promote Europe’s cultural heritage;
- economic: supporting culture-based creativity in education and innovation, for jobs and growth; and
- external: strengthen the EU’s international cultural relations through support of culture as an incubator for sustainable social and economic development, promotion of culture and international dialogue, reinforcement of cooperation on cultural heritage.

The framework for cooperation on culture at the EU level is elaborated in the **New European Agenda for Culture** and its accompanying **Staff Working Document** which include working methods with

Member States, civil society organisations and international partners. All Member States contributed to the cultural policy strategies and the planning for its implementation by developing a **Work Plan for Culture** adopted by the Council of the European Union (see Figure 6). This Work Plan is considered the “main policy roadmap to align cultural policies” as well as the “main platform to build the essence of a European cultural policy” (Culture Action Europe, 2022).

The current EU’s *Work Plan for Culture* covers the period 2023–2026 and focuses on four priorities in cultural policymaking:

1. artists and cultural professionals: empowering the cultural and creative sectors (CCS);
2. culture for the people: enhancing cultural participation and the role of culture in society;
3. culture for the planet: unleashing the power of culture; and
4. culture for co-creative partnerships: strengthening the cultural dimension of EU external relation.

Each of these priorities is elaborated more in detail through the identification of 21 actions with related working methods (i.e., workshops, conferences, OMC groups, meetings, Commission-led expert groups or think tanks, discussions, peer-learning of stakeholders, and stocktaking) and target outputs clearly defined. All actions can be seen as a framework for cultural policy, in line with the EU’s general priorities and the four priorities of the EU’s Work Plan for Culture. None of the 21 action plans is specifically related to territorial categories like urban or non-urban areas, even if some actions could be especially relevant to non-urban areas or could lead to different results if discussed focusing the reality of rural and remote territories (The Council of the European Union, 2022).

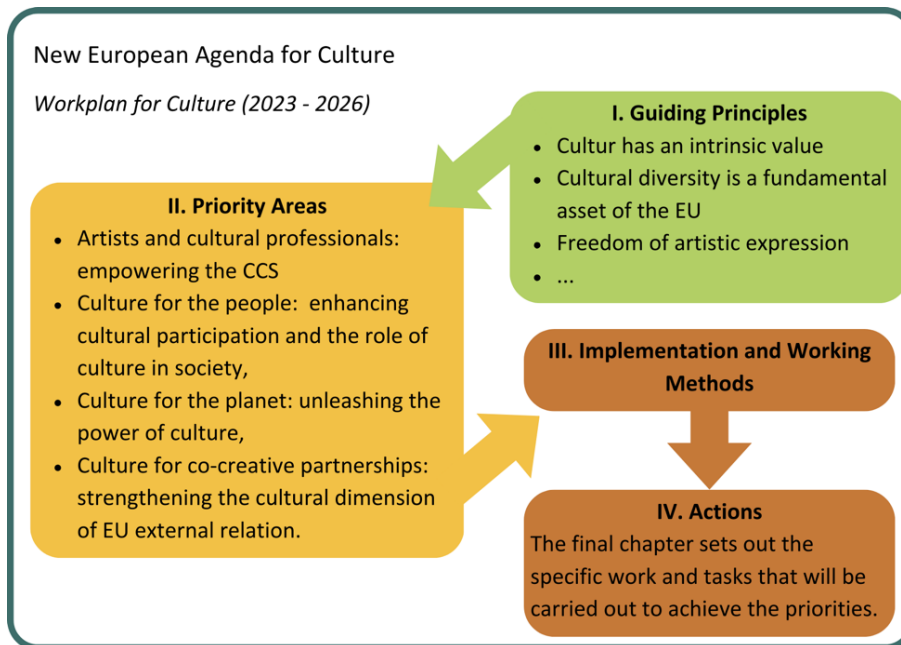


Figure 6 - New European Agenda for Culture – Work Plan for Culture (2023–2026)

Source: Authors' visualisation

The actions associated to each priority of the current EU's Work Plan for Culture are:

Priority 1 - Artist and cultural professionals

- status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals;
- artistic freedom;
- stimulate the digital transformation of the CCS;
- stimulate the green transition of the CCS, with a specific focus on the energy crisis; and
- enhancing the cultural and creative dimension in the European video game sector.

Priority 2 - Culture for the people

- culture and promoting democracy: towards a cultural citizenship in Europe;
- culture and health;
- building bridges: strengthen the multiple roles of libraries as gateways and transmitters of cultural works, skills and European values;
- protection of children and young people from harmful content on digital platforms; and
- discoverability of diverse European content in the digital environment.

Priority 3 - Culture for the planet

- cultural statistics – to build resilience in and through culture;
- cultural governance;
- climate action through culture, including arts and cultural heritage;
- high-quality living environment for everyone;
- safeguarding heritage against natural and human-made disasters; and
- exchanging information between cultural heritage professionals and competent authorities for cultural goods on the fight against trafficking cultural goods.

Priority 4 - Culture for co-creative partnerships

- governance of the EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and framework;
- preserving cultural heritage and empowering local cultural and creative sectors in Ukraine; and
- the role of culture and cultural professionals in the promotion and defence of democracy and human rights in fragile contexts.

The guiding principles of the new Work Plan for Culture are remarkable, describing a broad understanding of the value of culture and creativity and its overarching impact into several policy domains. The EU Work Plan for Culture is based on the following general guiding principles:

- Culture, including cultural heritage, has an intrinsic value and contributes to strengthening European identity.
- Cultural and linguistic diversity are fundamental assets of the EU and are to be respected, promoted, and enhanced, including through mobility and the circulation of works.
- Freedom of artistic expression and creativity are fundamental to the human ability to address challenges, to think critically, to innovate and to invent, and they must be encouraged and supported in all relevant ways.
- Cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are essential for the promotion and protection of human rights; they foster mutual understanding, help prevent and resolve conflicts and promote reconciliation, peace and international stability, and any misuse of culture with the aim of spreading war propaganda and disinformation and of instigating hatred is incompatible with the fundamental values and principles of the EU.
- Culture makes a significant contribution to sustainable development, the economy and social inclusion, enhancing territorial cohesion.
- Culture has the potential to promote equality and mutual respect, and to fight against all forms of violence, discrimination, intolerance and prejudice.
- Implementation should be supported by optimised use of quality data and statistics. (The Council of the European Union, 2022, p. 3)

Despite this broad and holistic approach, not a single action focuses directly on the value of culture and creativity for shaping the processes of transformation through innovation in non-urban territories. Cultural policy in non-urban areas is not literally excluded but, unlike the previous work plan for culture¹², there is no hint that proves the acknowledgement of special potentials, challenges and needs beyond the urban.

In addition to the described strategies and work plans, a main topic for the EC is – since the beginning of the cultural policy discourse at the EU level – the focus on cultural heritage as a driver of identification, transferred in the wording of economics as an incubator of “corporate identity”¹³, element of tourism economy, consciousness and responsibility for common roots and values developed throughout history. In 2018 the *European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage* as a Commission Staff Working Document had been developed to gain a lasting impact of future-based strategic action in the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage (European Union, 2019).

Furthermore, a *Joint Communication Strategy* of the European Parliament and the Council towards an *EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations* is at the centre of the EU’s diplomatic relations in an international context. Although the majority of EU Member States are significantly characterised by rural areas and their cultural characteristics, it is surprising that the Joint Communication Strategy and International Cultural Relations make no mention of the rural perspective and do not focus on an ongoing exchange with stakeholders and other experts of non-urban, and especially rural territories in the field.

¹² In the previous *New Agenda for Culture (2019–2022)*, the potential of cultural heritage and its role for economic growth, tourism and the proximity between culture and the inhabitants’ needs and potentials had been recognised at least as values of cultural ecosystems and its stakeholders in non-urban areas. “Cities and regions are natural partners: at the forefront of culture-led development thanks to greater local autonomy, the attraction they exert on high-talent individuals, and their proximity to their inhabitants’ needs and potential. Culture and tourism are powerful drivers of economic activity. [...] In rural areas, restoration and upgrading of cultural and natural heritage contributes to growth potential and sustainability. Integrated management of cultural and natural assets encourages people to discover and engage with both” (European Commission, 2018, n.p.).

¹³ The term *corporate identity* is normally used in economic sciences and marketing literature to describe the community building strategies of enterprises to achieve a common sense of belonging and intrinsic motivation to engage for the company. The successful introduction of such strategies stands and falls with the personality and enthusiasm of the people who provide the impetus. They are, as they were, incubators for an intrinsic commitment to achieving the corporate goals defined in this way as a “common cause.” These strategies can also be understood as dynamics of small systems in the history of work organisation and the community culture of village communities (see also the Introduction of this report).

5.3.2.2. Cultural policy strategies beyond the urban

Across regions and cities in the European Union, culture is highly valued by residents and visitors alike. Cultural and creative industries (CCIs) are also a vital asset for regional economic competitiveness and attractiveness, while cultural heritage is a key element of the image and identity of cities and regions and often times the focus of city tourism (European Commission, DG EAC, n.d.-g).

Despite the EC's acknowledgement of the overarching and future-based value of culture for Europe and its citizens, CCIs and cultural heritage in a local and regional context are mainly described by the potentials of economic growth and tourism, and not by their potential as key factors of shaping a future-based identity of cities and regions, enhancing vitality, social cohesion and active citizenship in times of ongoing transformation (European Commission, DG EAC, n.d.-g).

The European Commission regards its task in supporting culture on a local level mainly in:

- providing financial support to local and regional authorities;
- raising awareness about the potential of the cultural and creative sector for regional and local development; and
- helping local and regional authorities formulate integrated strategies.

5.3.2.3. The European Rural Pact

As part of the EU's long-term vision for the EU's rural areas up to 2040, the European Rural Pact was launched in 2021. In a multilevel, cross-sector and wide-ranging alliance between public authorities, civil society, economy, research and citizens at the European, national, regional, and local level, the potentials, challenges and needs of the rural areas in Europe were in focus and discussed. In 2021, the *Rural Voices* report provided a first analysis of findings from stakeholder workshops where more than 3000 rural citizens from 19 Member States reflected "on the social, economic, and environmental conditions of their own rural area and how it might change over the next 20 years, what developments they would like to see, and the conditions and policies needed to reach their future vision" (ENRD, 2021b, n.p.).

As a first result, ten shared goals under four complementary areas of action for the EU's rural areas could be identified, building the heart of the EU Rural Action Plan and the launched Rural Pact. Out of these main lines, 30 actions were implemented, worked out through the cooperation of 14 EC departments:

- *Stronger* rural areas by empowered and vibrant local communities with "access to services to facilitate social innovation, spatial planning, and youth involvement" (European Union, n.d.-d);

- **Connected** rural areas by actions to “boost sustainable transport links and digitalisation through investments in infrastructure, technology development and skills enhancement activities” (European Union, n.d.-a);
- **Prosperous** rural areas by supporting “social economy, addressing the needs of young people, promoting bioeconomy, and supporting producer organisations and producer groups” (European Union, n.d.-b); and
- **Resilient** rural areas by actions to increase “environmental, climatic, and social resilience by storing carbon in peatland and wetlands, enhancing soil health and improving prospects for women and vulnerable groups” (European Union, n.d.-c).

A **Rural Pact Support Office (RPSO)** coordinates and implements the network activities and builds synergies and complementarities with relevant EU policy networks and initiatives for rural development (European Union, n.d.-h).

Despite the participatory efforts and the profound view on rural development, culture or the impact of cultural policy for transforming societies in rural territories are not mentioned in the EU Rural Vision as

“[...] the only and consequent action plan and rural pact which summarises the number of commitments of member states to this topic, which is the only edition developed on rural areas. it’s a transversional, transsectorial edition, so most of industrial sectors are mentioned, but it’s not a specific sector for culture mentioned. So, this is something to be taken into account!” (Interview with representatives of ENCC, 2023)

Regarding the cultural and creative sector and its cultural and creative industries, and in the light of regional economic development principles and related investment strategies, the **Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3)** can be regarded as another suitable EU program due to their potential for creativity and experimentation on new ways and expressions. The EU even describes traditional cultural assets and cultural heritage as possible factors being considered *for stimulating the development of creative businesses, support investment in infrastructure and in human capital as well as bring spill-over effects into the wider local economy* (European Commission, n.d.-c; see also IN SITU, 2024b).

5.3.3. Implementation of cultural policy on the EU level: Programmes, funds and initiatives

Following the overarching priorities and strategies of the EU’s cultural policy, its agendas, work plans and actions, the **European Cultural Funding Programmes** address the cultural and creative sector and offer direct funding at EU level, respectively distributed and managed by national, regional or local authorities. Comparable to the results of the analysis of overarching priorities and strategies of cultural policy, none of those funding programmes is especially focused on CCIs in non-urban areas and none addresses directly the special potentials, challenges, and needs of cultural ecosystems and

its cultural stakeholders in rural and remote territories. That doesn't mean necessarily that Cultural Policy at the EU level doesn't take place. In interviews with EU policy experts and stakeholders of European cultural networks as well as through the analysis of literature and self-description of the EU's activities, planning and implementation reports, it became clear that culture as an overarching policy field can be part of a wide range of funding programmes depending on the meaning and effects of cultural impact to be achieved with the planned projects. Regarding the *culture compatibility clause* and the broad intersectional aspects of cultural policy, a closer look on other culture related policy fields could be useful for a broader view. Especially due to their link with the topics of the IN SITU research project with its focus on non-urban areas, the territorial cohesion policy and rural development, as well as policies of citizens' rights, diversity and gender issues, economics, innovation and research, education and cross-cutting issues may be considered. Figure 7 presents programmes and funds, connected to cohesion policy, regional and rural development, education, innovation, the Green Deal and equality, that can be regarded as especially related to the topic.

CREATIVE EUROPE (CE) Mobility programs related to CCI/CCS	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) e.g.: LEADER / CLLD	ERASMUS + Lifelong learning and (cultural) education	Citizens' Equality Rights and Values Programm (CERV)
Cohesion Fund (CF) Support for networks for Member States with lower gross national income	European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Fostering cohesion	HORIZON EUROPE Research on innovation	DIGITAL EUROPE Chances and challenges of digital transition
European Social Fund (ESF+) Fostering employment, education & skills	JUST TRANSITION Projects related to regional socio-economic transformation	S+T+ARTS Residency Alliances between artists, scientists, engineers and researchers	LIFE Funding instrument for environment and climate action
INTERREG Cohesion linked to European cooperation by cross-border activities			and others...

Figure 7 - Programmes and funds, connected to cohesion policy, rural development and innovation

Source: Authors' visualisation

5.3.3.1. Programmes, funding schemes and initiatives mainly related to cultural policy

Creative Europe (CREA) (2021–2027) is seen as the “EC's flagship programme to support the culture and audiovisual sectors” with a budget of €2.44 billion and a wide range of sector-based sub-programmes (European Commission, DG EAC, n.d.-f) that aim at:

- promoting and enhancing artistic and cultural cooperation at a European level (Strand 1),
- fostering actions to support especially the audio-visual sector (Strand 2), and
- helping to initiatives to promote innovative cross-sectoral actions and collaboration (Strand 3) (European Commission, DG EAC, n.d.-a).

Sub-programmes like *European Cooperation Projects* (European Commission, DG EAC, n.d.-d), or the different funding possibilities concerning individual mobility and residency programmes for artists and cultural professionals under the umbrella of the sub-programme *Culture Moves Europe* (European Commission, DG EAC, n.d.-c), can be considered partly relevant for professionals of the CCS in non-urban areas too. Nevertheless, the suitability or need-based measurements for stakeholders in rural and remote areas aren't described broadly or aren't considered as necessary throughout all sub-programmes as they are in the mobility funding scheme **Perform Europe**. Perform Europe *facilitates international networking and supports inclusive, diverse, and green touring projects across the 40 Creative Europe countries*. Developed out of a pilot project on sustainable touring of performing artists, Perform Europe became a practise-related funding programme with a particular focus *on projects by and including underrepresented groups, areas, and communities*. With this prioritisation, it has been developed to one of the few funding possibilities focusing directly on the special needs and place-based challenges of performing artists and touring concepts related to rural and remote areas (Perform Europe, n.d.).

European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) as an initiative which started in the 1980s puts a yearlong celebration of arts and culture in selected cities into the heart of its objectives. The programme addresses at the same time the development of cities and regions and contributes to the cultural cooperation and exchange programmes. Cities that apply to become ECOCs undergo a challenging selection process which leads from the beginning to a multi-perspective and participatory planning. Civil society, politics and administration, urban and regional planning, city marketing and tourism, artists and cultural professionals are already involved in the planning process and thus form an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental alliance that can provide valuable impetus and realisation for the city and the surrounding region during and after the application process. "In addition to direct contributions to economic development through the production of goods and services, there are many indirect effects, such as on innovation, welfare, social cohesion, lifelong learning, and local identity" (Gerland, 2023, n.p.). Despite the obvious references to the representation of urbanity, to which the title of the initiative alone refers, cities beyond the European metropolises that consciously incorporate the surrounding rural regions into their concepts have been participating again and again for around ten years. Aarhus in Denmark (2017), Leeuwarden in the Netherlands (2018) and Galway in Ireland (2020) are three of the examples in which the ECOC initiative has made a significant contribution to the cultural development of rural areas and, at the same time, made visible the potential of the creative and cultural sector beyond the urban. Gaughan (2017), Jacobsen (2019), Larsen (2017), Leloup and Panait (2019), Pfeifere (2017), Schneider and Jacobsen (2019), and

Westerhof (2019) deepened in articles on ECOC strategies for non-urban areas academic and experience-based knowledge (European Commission, DG EAC, n.d.-h).

5.3.3.2. Programmes, funding schemes and initiatives mainly related to policies for cohesion and regional and rural development

A much wider range of EU programmes, funds and initiatives focus on cohesion policy and regional development. An EU's joint action plan for cohesion policy refers to the priorities of improving competitiveness in a *smarter Europe, greener economy*, with enhanced mobility for better connectivity but also in a more social and inclusive Europe which is closer to citizens by fostering sustainable and integrated territorial development. The EU Horizon 2020 research project dialoguing@rts (d@rts) is an example of a project in which the UNESCO Chair at the University of Hildesheim conducts research and that investigates the connection between culture and social cohesion, in part, in rural areas. The project is based on the assumption that applied arts practices can strengthen social cohesion, particularly in school contexts. Because of its topics and the issues tackled, it is worth accompanying this project in upcoming research (European Commission, 2023).

Culture as an overarching issue to foster social cohesion is not named in the priorities but could be an important incubator and driver to different of the related topics.

“[Policy for Regional and Rural Development] is a EU’s policy field which gives more room for action, for intervention. Though from an operational strategic point of view [...] the latter therefore seems to be the most versatile and open policy area for action when it comes to culture in rural areas. Because on the cultural policy side there is not much that you have as concept for initiatives and events, formal statements etc.” (Interview with representatives of ENCC, 2023)

The funds on social cohesion are directly managed at the national and regional level and offer in this way realistic possibilities of place-based actions and interventions involving local and regional stakeholders of cultural ecosystems like CCIs, cultural policy decision-makers and cultural administration as part of non-urban cohesion policies and as well as of rural development strategies.

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as an overarching fund aims to strengthen economic, social, and territorial cohesion by correcting imbalances between regions – including, among others, the objective to enhance the role of culture and sustainable tourism, supporting locally-led development as well as supporting innovation and small businesses (European Commission, DG REGIO, n.d.-b).

The European Social Fund+ (ESF+) supports actions fostering employment, education, and skills as well as of social inclusion, addressed to individuals, regions, and Member States as “main instrument for investing in people and supporting the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights” (European Union, n.d.-g).

The Cohesion Fund (CF) as a programme provides support in the field of environment and trans-European networks for Member States with lower gross national income (below 90% EU-27 average) to strengthen the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the EU (European Commission, DG REGIO, n.d.-a).

The Just Transition Fund (JTF) functions as a tool that helps regions and their citizens to cope with the socio-economic impact of transition towards a climate-neutral economy, such as in coal mining regions, by supporting economic diversification and reconversion of the concerned territories and others (European Commission, DG COMM, n.d.-e).

INTERREG is a programme aiming on cohesion linked to European territorial cooperation by supporting cross-border activities of the Member States (Interreg, n.d.). Projects under the umbrella of INTERREG are quite often based on arts and culture and a cooperation of stakeholders of regional and local CCS/CCIs. The program is co-financed by the ERDF and builds one of the main programmes for cultural exchange as part of regional development and cohesion with cross-border neighbours.

Besides the previously described cohesion-related programmes, the *Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)* can be seen as another strongly related policy field with programmes that – beyond agricultural income supports and market measures – focus on regional development by strengthening social, environmental and economic sustainability of rural areas and thus can be related in a broader sense to the role of CCIs and cultural ecosystems beyond the urban (European Commission, DG AGRI, n.d.-a). The design and implementation of CAP strategic plans, knowledge transfer and exchange, evaluation and monitoring are supported by the forum initiative *EU CAP Network*¹⁴. Under this umbrella National CAP Networks, organisations, administrations, researchers, entrepreneurs, and practitioners can share knowledge and information about agriculture and the diverse range of topics related to rural policy.

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) as the core programme under the umbrella of CAP is implemented and co-financed through diverse national *Rural Development Programmes (RDPs)* (European Commission, DG COMM, n.d.-b). Those RDPs are mostly prepared, selected and handled on national or regional basis. Beyond agricultural, economic and ecological objectives, the programmes focus on:

¹⁴ The European CAP Network (ENRD, n.d.-a) brings together stakeholders from the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD, n.d.-b), EIP-AGRI (European Union, n.d.-f), other stakeholders like farmers, foresters, rural enterprises, Local Action Groups (LAGs), European organisations, rural advisory and innovation support services, CAP managing authorities and the National CAP Networks.

- “Knowledge transfer and innovation in rural areas” (European Commission, DG AGRI, n.d.-b), as well as on
- “The promotion of social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas” (ENRD, 2017).

Even if culture and creativity or the CCIs of non-urban areas are not explicitly mentioned, it has been profoundly researched and proven that methods, actions, knowledge, and experiences of CCI actors can play a crucial role in achieving these goals (Brennan et al., 2008; Kegler, 2020; Pasikowska-Schnass and Widuto, 2022; Schneider, 2014). Other studies show that, although the results of ongoing research are now predominantly known to the cultural and creative sectors in non-urban areas themselves and are in some cases supported and disseminated by networks of these actors, there is still a great deal of room for improvement in the transfer of knowledge to politics and regional planning (Lysgård, 2016; BMEL, 2024).

One of the most established longstanding framing of RDPs are actions based on the *LEADER Programme*¹⁵ approach as community-led local development with cooperating Local Action Groups (LAGs) developing and implementing local strategies. At least 5% of RDP funding has to be allocated to actions based on the LEADER method, but co-financing from other EU-funds is possible. LEADER as a local development method engages local actors in the design and delivery of strategies, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of non-urban areas and brings together civil society, public and private stakeholders. Culture and cultural development planning for rural development can be funded as strategic actions or determined as overarching strategies (ENRD, 2021a). In the last programming period (2014–2020), the LEADER method has been extended to three additional EU funds under the broader term *Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)*: the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF); the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). Furthermore, LEADER/CLLD focuses on the two strands *cooperation* and *innovation* (ENRD, 2022):

- *LEADER Cooperation* supports local action groups to improve the potentials of their area by undertaking joint actions with other local groups and building active networks for rural development.
- *LEADER Innovation* is related to the cross-cutting priority of the European Rural Development policy and has to be involved in the strategical planning process of the Local Development Strategies.

¹⁵ LEADER is an acronym for “Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale” (Connection between Actions for Economical Rural Development).

These funds, initiatives and programmes address diverse or combined policy fields and supplement the possibilities of fostering the cultural and creative sector in non-urban areas, like is revealed in the IN SITU report *D5.1 - State of policies and S3s on innovation and CCI in non-urban areas*, which illustrates the diversity of territorial projects that are brought to life by the EU's LEADER program (IN SITU, 2024c). Here, too, the regional and national differences and the resulting diversity become clear. Of particular interest for our context is the finding of study D5.1. that the regions use very different definitions of CCIs so that there is no uniform conceptualisation. This supports our thesis that, although an EU-wide strategy is implemented in the regions, the way in which this is done differs completely from region to region, as does the definition of the key concepts.

5.3.3.3. Programmes, funding schemes and initiatives mainly related to Education Policy

ERASMUS+ and its sub-programmes and funds can be considered as the central programme for lifelong learning and education, including cultural education in non-urban areas. Cultural education or learning and knowledge exchange in the field of creativity, arts and culture are essential parts of the policy field. Therefore, a wide range of culture-related projects could have been realised until today under the programme *ERASMUS+*. Simply entering the combined search terms 'culture & rural' on the website for *ERASMUS+* projects, 3511 projects were listed, allocated in several strands of the funding programme (European Commission, n.d.-b).

5.3.3.4. Programmes, funding schemes and initiatives mainly related to Policy for Innovation and Research

Horizon Europe supports research and innovation in different relevant approaches tackling mainly the topics of climate change and Sustainable Development Goals. In the new funding period 2021–2027, *Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Societies* are now directly named as Cluster 2 of Pillar 2 as one of "six boosting key technologies and solutions underpinning EU policies & Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)" (European Union, 2021). A budget of €2,280 billion has been allocated to this Cluster for the funding period (European Commission, DG RTD, n.d.).

Launched under the *Horizon 2020* programme, collaboration and dialogue for knowledge transfer play a crucial role and led to sub-programmes like the *S+T+Arts Residency Programme* that fosters alliances between artists, scientist, engineers and researchers (STARTS, 2024).

5.3.3.5. Programmes, funding schemes and initiatives mainly related to the New European Green Deal

Connected to the *Horizon Europe* programme and other EU's funding facilities, *Digital Europe*, under the priority of the European Green Deal, focuses on opportunities and challenges of the digital transition. As the topic is one of the crucial aspects in regional and rural development and its societal transformation processes, it might be one of the programmes with at least some potential to be used for respective cultural projects related to the topic (European Commission, DG Connect, n.d.).

In a similar way connected to the European Green Deal are the programmes *LIFE*, a funding instrument for environment and climate action (European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency, n.d.), and *Just Transition*, a fund that focuses on how the deep changes related to the transition of whole regions to the EU climate-neutral economy principles affect its socio-economic conditions, such as in the case of coal mining regions (European Commission, DG COMM, n.d.-c). Culture, with its innovation potential concerning the shaping of cohesion in times of transition, especially in regions beyond the urban, can be regarded as a possible field of action related to the aims of both programmes.

5.3.3.6. Programmes, funding schemes and initiatives mainly related to Policy for Justice, Rights and Values

Based on equality and rights, citizens' engagement, and participation, with the aim to fight violence and to protect and promote the so-called European values, the *CERV* programme supports projects through different focal points. The programme was launched in 2021 and will run until 2027, created under the Justice, Rights and Values Fund. Here, too, good starting points can be found for the promotion of cultural projects with an appropriate focus, which can play a decisive role in shaping change especially in times of comprehensive transformation processes in rural and remote areas (European Commission, DG COMM, n.d.-a).

6. Summing up, lessons learned and questions for further research

The research on cultural policy at the EU level reveals that the EU bases its foundations on values that acknowledge a general understanding of a culture-based European cohesion. Art. 167 TEC underlines the conviction that culture is an overarching and cross-cutting policy field of the EU – independently of whether such policies address more urban or non-urban issues (see Figure 8). Beside those obvious and fundamental statements, the research on cultural policy reveals a wide range of different reference points, mentions and related policy fields, strategies and programs, but importantly no clearly defined strategy toward cultural policy for and in non-urban territories (Pasikowska-Schnass and Widuto, 2022).

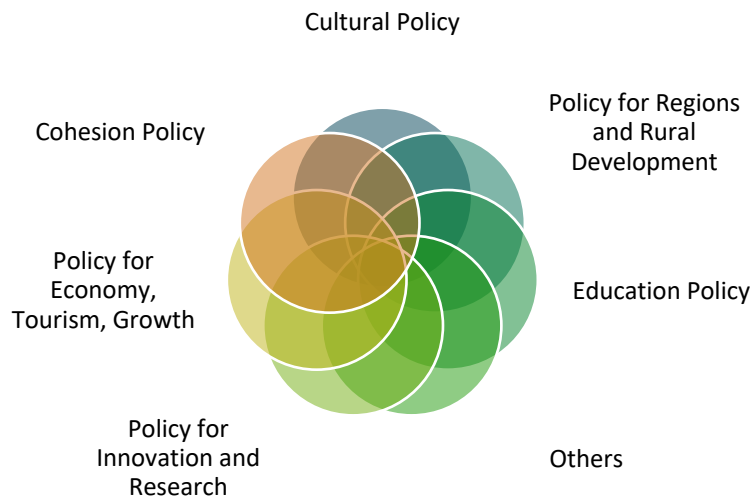


Figure 8 - Cultural policy as a cross-cutting task

Source: Authors' visualisation

Cultural policy at the EU-level is, until today, generally based on a more urban-centred and economic view of CCIs, culture and creativity. There are only very few hints that the stakeholders, structures, potentials, challenges and needs of CCIs embedded in cultural and creative ecosystems of non-urban areas are on the political agenda – and if they are evident, the focus is mainly related to cultural heritage and the potential of a non-urban or rural development through cultural tourism.

One reason for the partly neglected view on CCIs in non-urban areas may be the lack of data, of research and expertise as well as the need for a more intense knowledge-transfer with experts in the field concerning the situation in different non-urban territories focused on the diverse stakeholders, structures and formats of CCS/CCIs, and the (place-based) potentials, challenges and needs in these locations (Kegler, 2020; Kegler and Schneider, 2017). Another reason may be seen in the decision-making process and socialisation of decision-makers and their consultants and informants. Political deciders, consultants and other informants are often more generally based in and shaped by the academic environment of urban centres. Both the understanding of the terms *art* and *culture* as well as the notions of the conditions of rural areas are, in general, still highly emotionally charged and denote fluid and wide-ranging areas, and are therefore difficult to grasp. Furthermore, the research on the significance of culture in and for rural areas is still a relatively new field that has received little attention to date and is itself still characterised by researching movements and a lack of reliable data. So, it might not surprise us that political decision-making based on insufficient data and knowledge in a fluid field with undefinable edges and wide-ranging cross-cutting topics and characteristics is more than challenging.

EU's Cultural Policy Strategies, named as such, can be found mainly:

- to enhance the mobility of Europe's residents; and
- to support the EU's external and internal relations, mostly related to arts and cultural heritage.

This leads to the assumption that the values of arts and culture are considered by the majority of the EU's Member States as mainly suitable instruments for fostering internal identity-building and external image-building. These functions appear to be quite useful and easy to deliver common topics and welcome instruments of mutual participation of cross-border mobility and exchange-programmes. Cultural exchange, understood as an approach of comparing ascribed cultures and cultural self-images, includes a huge variety of assets to be shared, compared, or taken as a common base for mutual exchange of playful competition. Examples like the ECOC initiatives, the Eurovision Song Contest or smaller cultural cross-border projects clearly show the use and success of this kind of instrumentalised arts and culture.

Regarding the mentioning of arts and culture related to non-urban areas, cultural policies focus mainly on cultural heritage and its potential to foster touristic economy or, in a more undefined way, on the tangible or intangible values of an historically-grown European identity based on a rich and diverse history of its Member States.

Beyond that, CCIs embedded in culture and creative ecosystems of non-urban territories are hardly directly addressed and seem to be more or less unseen in their innovation potentials for non-urban territories in transformation, even if they are not excluded in those programs which address related issues like regional development, education, cohesion, sustainability and others. Nevertheless, the fact that those programs and strategies are obviously not having in mind the possibilities and working conditions of CCIs in non-urban areas makes it difficult for the stakeholders and their network organisations to fully benefit from the EU programs and funding or even be aware of the possibilities. Like the IN SITU report D5.1 pointed out, EU's innovation strategies areas address the non-urban territories quite profoundly and in a widespread manner but widely miss the focus on the CCIs and their relatedness to the cultural and creative ecosystems. In particular, when it comes to innovation for social cohesion and societal transformation, the potentials of CCIs are neither addressed nor fostered according to the place-based needs and aspirations (ENCC, 2020; Culture Action Europe et al., 2020; IETM, 2020; Schneider, 2014; IN SITU, 2024c). However, if funding strategies are specially designed to enable stakeholders in non-urban areas to use their potentials, to cope with place-based challenges and to fulfil their needs, they might be suitable also to use their creative potential to foster sustainable innovation in transforming non-urban territories, be it social and cohesion-based, technological, digital, educational or incorporating other kinds of innovation (see also Culture Action Europe, n.d.).

Although more concrete ideas and proposals will be developed in the research process towards the next report (D5.6) on cultural and innovation policy recommendations, initial conclusions show the need to dive deeper into the research topic. To develop suitable programmes to support the Member States in their cultural policies it might be useful to:

- collect, bring together and analyse more reliable data and knowledge about potentials, challenges and needs of the stakeholders and their organisations in the field;
- involve network organisations as a bridge between cultural policy and stakeholders with good knowledge of the place-based diversity and potentials, challenges and needs of a broad range of CCIs in cultural and creative ecosystems in non-urban areas;
- consider more strongly the potentials of CCIs and the culture and creative sectors in their potential of fostering social cohesion by diversity-based methods to empower democracy in non-urban, rural and remote areas; and
- consider better connectivity to programmes like ECOC, LEADER and others.¹⁶

Contributing to this objective, the IN SITU project will develop – based on exemplary project results on innovation and CCIs in non-urban areas (e.g., IN SITU, 2024d) and in consideration of specific conditions in each of the Lab regions – data and experiences that will be discussed with CCIs, administrations, politicians and other stakeholders to provide recommendations for a cultural policy which focuses on the potentials, challenges and needs of CCIs embedded in cultural and creative ecosystems for innovation in transforming non-urban territories.

7. Cultural policy for non-urban territories at the national and territorial level – an overview

The guiding principle of subsidiarity, stated in the EU’s legal grounds, causes the fact that cultural policy is seen as responsibility of each single Member State and not as duty or right of the EU as a political steering entity of national or regional policies. Nevertheless, the EU describes in its Article 167,1 TEC the obligation to support the Member States in the pursuit of their cultural policies, “while respecting their national and regional diversity [...]” (Art. 167, 1 TEC). To understand in which way this support should be designed and implemented regarding the role of CCIs and cultural and creative ecosystems for innovation in non-urban territories, a close look on the topic-related Member States’ cultural policies will be therefore relevant.

¹⁶ These and other points will be elaborated more deeply in the upcoming IN SITU report D5.6 on policy recommendations.

Through an exemplary review of cultural policy for the non-urban territories of the six IN SITU Lab regions, the report will show, as a first step, the *status quo* on cultural policy at the national and territorial level, which will be identified and analysed, including leading policy priorities and models, decision-making structures, relevant strategies and their implementation measurements in the light of the stakeholders' potentials, challenges and needs in non-urban areas. In a second step, those findings will be analysed in order to move towards the development of possible policy recommendations at the territorial, national and EU levels, which will be discussed and presented in later reports (IN SITU Deliverables 5.4 and 5.6) as the result of further research steps.

The following chapters describe exemplarily the national and territorial cultural policies and decision-making structures related to the six IN SITU Lab areas, including regional and local perspectives, stately and also non-governmental actors, if available. The research was challenged by the huge diversity of different approaches, concepts, self-understanding and historical backgrounds, administration and decision-structure, public communication and resources related to cultural policy for non-urban territories. Furthermore, some of the Member States or regional and local entities changed their concepts, structures and strategies during the research process or replaced or deleted relevant information from their websites. Other policy stakeholders, especially those related to local cultural policy, did not offer sufficient information or information was not easy to translate from national languages. Nevertheless, wherever it had been possible to get in direct contact with stakeholders and residents of the researched areas, interviews and expert talks helped to understand the national and territorial situation, with field research¹⁷ and focus-group workshops supporting the knowledge genesis.

8. Cultural policy in Finland and its non-urban territories (Rauma and Eurajoki areas)

The non-urban areas of Rauma and Eurajoki had been in the centre of field research during a one-week stay (from 31 May to 2 June 2023) of the SUH research team in the region. Beyond the multi-perspective and ethnographic approaches in field research through participatory observation, narrative interviews and conversations with different stakeholders and inhabitants of the region, the findings were deepened by literature and desktop research as well as by digital focus group discussions with diverse stakeholders in the field of cultural policy, administration, regional development and cultural practice. In addition, interviews on cultural policy and gender issues as well as insights in

¹⁷ Field research took place in the Azores, Portugal; in the region in and around Rauma and Eurajoki, Finland; and in the West Coastal area of Galway County. Further field research to deepen the insights and findings of Latvian (Valmiera county), Icelandic (West region) and Croatian (Šibenik-Knin County) cultural policy will be realised in the upcoming research period.

cultural practice during the mentoring process of two locally based IN SITU case studies¹⁸ gave a broad comprehension into the state of cultural policy for CCIs embedded in the locality, which was sharpened by exchanges with the research partner of the Finnish Lab, the University of Turku, and the results of two participative workshops on cultural policy conducted during the Consortium Meetings in Finland (31 May – 1 June 2023) and Ireland (19–21 February 2024).

8.1. The research area Finland and its Lab region Rauma and Eurajoki

Finland is divided into 19 regions (Finnish: *maakunta*) in which 309 municipalities as self-governing administration units are situated. Groups of municipalities within the regions build 69 sub-regions (*seutukuntas*) (Association of Finnish Municipalities, 2021). With only about 5.5 million inhabitants living on a territory of a similar size as Germany (303,919 km²), it is one of the European countries with the lowest population density (18.31 persons/km²) (Brinkhoff, 2023b).

The municipalities Rauma and Eurajoki, as one of the IN SITU Lab regions, are researched as examples on cultural policy for non-urban areas of Finland. Both municipalities belong to the region of Satakunta, a coastal area in the Southwest of Finland with a predominantly rural character (see Figure 9). In total, Satakunta consists of 16 municipalities, 7 of them with the status of cities. Pori, in the centre of the region, is the largest city and seat of the regional administration. Rauma is the second largest city in the Southwest of the Satakunta region and is inhabited by about 38,700 persons (31 December 2022), while Eurajoki is home of about 9200 persons (31 December 2022), both with continuously declining population numbers (Brinkhoff, 2023a; Tilastokeskus, 2023).

¹⁸ The two IN SITU case studies based in Rauma and Eurajoki municipalities, Finland, are: "Footprint of a Giant (Jättiläisen jalanjälki)" and "Mapsion International Projection Mapping Festival." Information on these and other case studies of the IN SITU project are available on the IN SITU website (<https://insituculture.eu/case-study-projects/>).

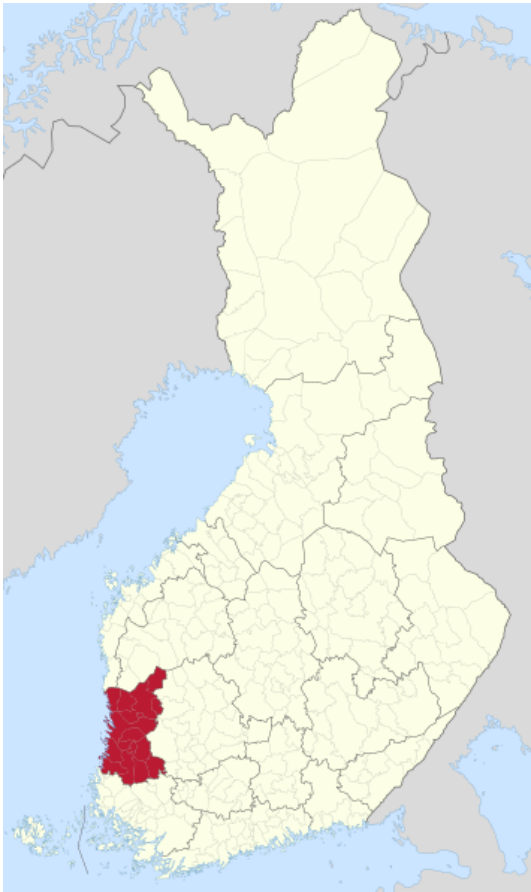


Figure 9 - Location of Satakunta in Finland

Source: (Fenn-O-maniC 2022)

8.2. Grounds and strategies in Finnish cultural policy

Finland is a parliamentary republic with its central government based in the capital, Helsinki. The municipalities act as self-governing administrative units and represent the local level of administration in Finland. The regions are governed by regional councils as cooperation of the delegates from the regional municipal councils. Their task is limited to regional planning, economic development and education. Municipalities are governed by elected councils. A municipal manager as civil servant is in charge of the leading duties while, for some of the cities, like Rauma, this task is taken over by a mayor.

Following the historic significance of self-sustaining agricultural communities and relatively independent parishes in the extensive areas of the vast country, the municipalities, as local authorities, still have a broad responsibility for self-government based on local democracy and decision-making. The municipalities are responsible for providing a wide range of public basic services to their inhabitants, such as educational and cultural services, library services, youth work and others. To simplify the implementation of their duties, especially smaller municipalities are allowed to found

joint authorities with two or more municipalities. For the financing of basic services, municipalities have the right to levy a percentual income tax, charge fees for the services and can be supported additionally by central government transfers. Since 2022, new *wellbeing service counties*, related to the regional borders, were established to improve the health care and social services, and relieve the municipalities of at least some of their obligations. The wellbeing service counties are as well self-governed by directly elected councils and follow the social reform initiated by the Cabinet of Sanna Marin (Soumi.fi, 2022).

8.2.1. Grounds and strategies at the national level

In the fundamental overarching national constitution, laws and other legal grounds, culture or cultural policy is barely mentioned. Nevertheless the *Constitution of Finland* (731/1999) states in its section 17 the “right to one’s language and culture,” the right of everyone to use Finnish or Swedish as official languages, as well as the task for public authorities “to provide for the cultural and societal needs of the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations of the country on an equal basis,” complemented by the statement that “the Sami, as an indigenous people, as well as the Roma and other groups, have the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture” (Ministry of Justice, Finland, 1999). Furthermore, the Constitution states the common responsibility of its residents toward the environment, including the *national heritage* as a responsibility to everyone.

More detailed and grounded cultural policy guidelines laid out in the Government Programme and in separate programmes for specific sectors, future-based strategy papers that shape guidelines for implementation and topics of focus, diverse acts on granting, duties and other specific issues concerning cultural policy, can be seen as fundamental frameworks of cultural policies in Finland.

Following the logics of the right to individual practice guaranteed by section 17 of the Constitution of Finland (731/1999) (Ministry of Justice, Finland, 1999), the *National Strategy of Cultural Policy*, developed by the Finnish National Ministry of Education and Culture, describes national cultural policy in Finland as a policy field that guarantees the “fundamental and cultural rights of individual citizens” (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, 2017). As part of these fundamental civic rights, the strategy paper names the “right of everyone to self-development, the freedom of arts, and that the right to one’s own language and culture are safeguarded as part of cultural rights” (p. 13).

The strategy paper states furthermore that the central and local governments have the duty to create the basis for using these rights by maintaining and supporting the library system and cultural institutions and by subsidising artistic work as well as cultural activities and by promoting them. It describes the need for arts and cultural education and concludes that arts subjects have to be taught as part of general education, basic art education and liberal adult education as well as cultural education has to be provided in early childhood education and care. The tasks and objectives of cultural policy laid down in the national *Strategy for Cultural Policy* “are also connected with promoting creativity, diversity and inclusion in society at large” (p. 13). Artists and other creative

workers are described as central stakeholders for the promotion of creativity, cultural activities and lifestyles of the civil society as forms of expression of creativity. The diversity of cultural productions and activities is described as source to “ensure vibrant cultural life and strengthen our cultural heritage, which can and should be used in society in many different ways” (p. 13). Safeguarding cultural rights and the engagement of individual citizens, either in local communities or in society at large, is seen as an impact factor towards the desired increase of participation in cultural activities, which are recognised in their potential to strengthen democracy and contribute to the well-being of individual citizens. As a conclusion, the support to the development of “a creative, democratic and successful society” (pp. 13-14) is described as a central aim, overarching task and guideline of cultural policy in Finland.

Due to historic development of self-sustaining municipalities and a relatively small domestic market, the public sector plays an important role in Finland’s cultural policy. The National Ministry of Education and Culture states in its strategy paper on cultural policy that civil society and market-based actors influence cultural developments and the cultural policy significantly. Nevertheless, it describes the state’s responsibility for the implementation and safeguarding of the following cultural political aspects:

- Ensuring artistic freedom and prerequisites for artistic and other creative work
- including copyright protection of products of creative work and the promotion of the prerequisites for processing, distributing, and disseminating cultural contents and products
- safeguarding citizens’ linguistic and cultural rights and possibilities to take part in arts and culture
- safeguarding the basis and continuity of culture, especially the protection and conveying of cultural heritage and developing the cultural infrastructure as well as arts and cultural education. (p. 14)

In addition, the National Ministry of Education and Culture describes Cultural Policy as a policy field which is continuously developing in interaction with international actors. Various EU programmes and strategies, as well as the structural fund policy of the Union have an impact on national cultural policy.

The *Act on Cultural Activities in Local Government* describes the task of the Ministry of Education and Culture in creating the condition “which enable local authorities to provide cultural activities” and names:

- the Finnish Heritage Agency (Finnish Heritage Agency, n.d.);
- the Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Arts Promotion Centre Finland, n.d.-a); and
- the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY-keskus, 2023)

as national agencies and services, responsible for “promoting culture and art in the regions in accordance with the relevant legislation” (The Parliament, Finland, 2019, Section 4).

The transfer of operating costs for cultural services in local governments is described in the *Act on Central Government Transfers to Local Government for Basis Public Services* (1704/2009). In addition, transfers may be granted to local authorities for investment projects in premises necessary for cultural activities (The Parliament, Finland, 2019, Section 9).

The national *Strategy for Cultural Policy*, developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, describes the duties of the national government concerning cultural policy, evaluates the current state of the arts and culture in Finland and sets strategic objectives for the current strategy period.

Nowadays, the situation related to arts and culture is described as determined by societal and demographic transformation with growing diversities in consumption habits, service expectations and service needs, challenging status of public finances and new chances offered by a more digitalised, interconnected and globalised world with increasing opportunities for new development in the creative sectors.

The societal impact of cultural policy steered by the Ministry of Education and Culture has been analysed and rated as centrally important in the Ministry's strategy paper. The aim of the government's cultural policy is therefore described as fostering "creativity, plurality and inclusion in Finland" by promoting work in

- the arts and other creative work,
- the conditions for the production and distribution of art,
- the availability of art and cultural services, and
- the conservation of cultural heritage and cultural environments (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, n.d.-f).

In autumn 2024, the Ministry of Education and Culture will submit a new detailed report on cultural policy and a cross-administrative growth strategy for the creative industries, improving internationalisation of the Finnish Government as part of the government programme (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, n.d.-f; Finnish Government, 2023).

The Act on the Financing of Education and Culture lays down the general provisions on central government transfers and subsidies granted to municipalities, joint municipal authorities, registered corporations or foundations or state enterprises for operating costs and other funding for activities provided, for example, to museums (see Museums Act 314/2019 and Act on the Promotion of the Performing Arts 1082/2020 in Ministry of Justice, Finland, 2009).

Granting central government transfers to basic education in the arts is described more detailed in the *Act on Basic Education in the Arts*, to public libraries in the *Act on Public Libraries* (Ministry of Justice, Finland, 2016) and to the cultural policy tasks of the municipalities in the *Act on Municipal Cultural*

Activities (Ministry of Justice, Finland, 2019). Provisions concerning the operating costs of the cultural activities referred to in municipalities are laid down in the *Act on central government transfers for basic municipal services* (Ministry of Justice, Finland, 2009, 2021).

Furthermore, a range of topic-related or topic-cutting strategy papers have been released in the last years – some of them at the national level and others at the regional and local levels. Those strategy papers support knowledge-transfer on backgrounds, potentials, challenges and needs and give guidelines and descriptions of future-based tasks and action planning to the relevant policy levels and administration. At the national level, the following strategy plans are cited in an overview on relevant cultural policy lines by the research partner in the IN SITU Lab Finland, the University of Turku:

Strategy of the National Commission on Sustainable Development 2022–2030: a prosperous and globally responsible Finland that protects the carrying capacity of nature (Prime Minister’s Office, Finland, 2022). This national strategy on sustainable development policy addresses the development of planning, conservation, economy as well as culture in the Lab area.

Roadmap for the national development of cultural tourism (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, 2023): defines national development strategies and measures for cultural tourism for the upcoming years. It serves as a national guiding document for the Council of Europe’s route activities. It is based on the proposal of a working group appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. One of its five chapters directly addresses the field of cultural tourism product offering and the utilisation of international cultural activities in cultural tourism. Each chapter contains proposals for measuring the objectives’ implementation.

Roadmap for the creative economy: published by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2020, it describes measures for fostering the growth and internationalisation of businesses in the creative industries (Tarjanne, 2020).

8.2.2. Grounds and strategies at the territorial level

The territorial level in Finland has to be described by two interconnected layers – the regional part, related to the 19 administrative units as planning units, and the local level, related to the municipalities as basic and implementing entities of cultural policy. Based on the legal grounds of the Constitution and on the described Acts, topic-related strategy papers are developed by both territorial levels.

For the researched territorial level of the Satakunta region, the following strategy papers are related to different fields of cultural policy:

The *Satakunta Regional Strategy* (Regional Council of Satakunta, 2021b) combines ideas and measurements of three strategy plans focusing on innovation and regional development in the Satakunta region:

- the Satakunta Regional Plan 2050, as long-term planning (still pending, finalisation planned in 2025 to 2026);
- the Satakunta Regional Programme 2022–2025, for midterm planning, Satakunnan maakuntaohjelma 2022–2025 (Regional Council of Satakunta, n.d.-c); and
- the Strategy for Smart Specialisation 2021–2027 (Regional Council of Satakunta, 2022b).

All strategy papers have been developed by the Satakunta Regional Council as regional authority responsible for the regional development (Regional Council of Satakunta, n.d.-d). The Strategy guides focuses innovation and underlines the importance of Cultural and Creative sector to regional planning:

- *The Satakunta Regional Programme 2022–2025* can be seen, until now, as the most relevant of the planning programs. It describes the objectives and grounds and develops guidelines for regional development in a broad sense. One of the main objectives is the development of an “attractive, diverse and quality environment” in order to attract new residents, businesses and tourists, contributing to the vitality and ecological sustainability;
- *Satakunta Cultural Strategy 2022–2030* (Regional Council of Satakunta, 2022a) is a regional strategy developed by the Satakunta Regional Council, guiding all actors in the Satakunta Region, especially the CCI sector. It outlines local cultural policy in detail and engaged municipalities and CCIs from the Lab area in its planning. The Satakunta Cultural Strategy 2020 was completed in 2015 and its priorities include: well-being through culture, vitality through culture and art, cultural industries, and cultural and arts education. Cross-cutting themes are accessibility of culture, cooperation and networks, cultural and artistic education and training, and visibility of cultural and artistic activities (Regional Council of Satakunta, 2022a);
- *Satakunta Tourism Strategy 2030* is a regional growth strategy for tourism, strongly connected to the cultural tourism sector. The strategy is the framework for rural tourism development in the Lab area (Regional Council of Satakunta, 2020);
- The *Satakunta Cultural Environment Programme*, as a regional valued landscape strategy paper, includes a programme that supports the safeguarding of the *cultural environment* in Southwestern Finland and is addressed to all actors in the Satakunta Region as well as strongly connected to the CCI sector. The programme shows a high relevance in the regional frame because its usage fosters the valuing of cultural landscapes, built environments and prehistoric sites as richness of the region. Satakunta Cultural Environment Programmes contain an inventory of the regional valued cultural environments, an assessment of their state and suggestions for measures to be taken (Ympäristö Nyt, n.d.).

- *The Regional Plan for Satakunta. The Handbook of Future in Satakunta 2035* (Regional Council of Satakunta, 2021a) outlines – together with the Satakunta Regional Strategy – concrete policy guidelines on culture, tourism, environment and economic life relevant at local level and contributing to a future-based development of the Satakunta region. It focuses on the experience economy, cultural entrepreneurship, art and culture with high relevance for the region.

8.2.3. Grounds and strategies on the local level

“Municipalities [...] are responsible for organising cultural activities that support local cultural life and those involved in it. It is the local authority that decides on the content of public cultural events and how they are accomplished” (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, n.d.-g, n.p.).

The *Act on Cultural Activities in Local Government* (166/2019) describes the freedom as well as the responsibility of municipalities to organise cultural activities and to give every inhabitant the possibility to engage in cultural and artistic production. It is in the hands of the municipalities to then act for themselves, or in collaboration with stakeholders of the third or private sector to fulfil this task (Parliament of Finland, 2019).

The duties of local authorities to achieve the described objectives are laid down in the *Act on Cultural Activities in Local Government*, Section 3, as to:

- Promote equal and diverse access to arts and culture,
- Create conditions for professional artistic work and art services,
- Promote active involvement in the arts and culture and related civic activities,
- Offer opportunities for goal-oriented artistic and cultural education covering different forms and fields of cultural and art,
- Promote the preservation and use of cultural heritage, and activities that foster and develop local identities,
- Promote the arts and culture as part of residents’ health and wellbeing, inclusion and community engagement, and local and regional vitality,
- Promote cultural interaction and international activities and carry out other artistic and cultural activities. (p. 1, Section 3)

To fulfil the described duties the municipalities should take “local circumstances and resources and the need of different population groups” into account and are obliged by this legal act to “provide sufficient and diverse expertise” for providing the described cultural activities (p. 1, Section 3).

Furthermore, it is described in the Act on Cultural Activities in Local Government that the following legal acts have been taken into account by municipalities while organising and carrying out cultural activities, if related to the respective subject:

- the Public Libraries Act (1492/2016),
- the Basic Art Education Act (633/1998),
- the Museums Act (729/1992),
- the Theatres and Orchestras Act (730/1992), and
- the Act on Liberal Adult Education (632/1998). (p. 1, Section 3)

Cross-sectoral cooperation of local authorities and – if necessary because of local circumstances and resources – cooperation with other local authorities, other authorities in general, the region and parties both in the field of culture and art and in other fields are recommended (p. 3, Section 7).

Data gathering and evaluation of cultural activities as part of the assessment and monitoring of their local government strategies (see *Local Government Act* (1326/2010: Section 37) and as part of the promotion of health and wellbeing (see *Health Care Act* (1326/2010: Section 12) are also included.

The Local Government Act (419/2015) supports the right of residents of municipalities to participate in and influence the municipalities' cultural activities and, moreover, the drafting of decisions concerning such activities (see *Local Government Act* (410/2015: Section 22).

8.2.4. Grounds of cultural policy at the international level related to Finnish CCIs in non-urban areas

In addition to national and territorial cultural policy grounds taking in account the topics of CCIs in non-urban areas, the research partners of the IN SITU Finnish Lab described several landscape and heritage-related international policies as especially relevant to cultural policy for CCIs in non-urban areas. In particular, the *UNESCO Convention and its Frameworks concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972), the *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003) and the *Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (Faro Convention, 2005) were mentioned.

The *UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972) for selection and nomination of world cultural and natural heritage has a high meaning for those non-urban regions in which sites of UNESCO World Cultural or Natural Heritage had been nominated or selected. For the research area of Rauma and Eurajoki there are two of Finland's seven World Heritage sites: the preserved historical Nordic harbour town with its wooden houses *Old Rauma*, World Heritage since 1991 (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.-a); and the Bronze Age Cairn Area *Sammallahdenmäki*, since 1999 (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.-b).

The *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003) is also relevant for the cultural and creative ecosystems in non-urban areas of Finland since it concerns the richness of intangible heritage still alive, especially in smaller and rural communities (UNESCO, n.d.). The grounds and defined values for safeguarding the tangible heritage can be found in the *COE Framework*

Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, part of the *Faro Convention* of 2005 (Council of Europe, n.d.-a).

Regarding the meaning of landscape as source of culture, as it was described during the Lab meetings in the Finnish IN SITU research area of Rauma and Eurajoki, the Finnish Lab Partner (the University of Turku) see the *Landscape Convention*, developed by the Council of Europe (ETS no. 176), as an important ground on European Level which is strongly related to Cultural Policy in Finland's non-urban areas. This Convention "aims to encourage public authorities to adopt policies and measures at local, regional, national and international level for protecting, managing, and planning landscapes throughout Europe relating to all kinds of landscapes that determine the quality of people's living environment." The Convention proposes flexible legal and financial measures at national and international levels for diverse actions which are suitable to shape the landscapes in line with the aim of the Convention. In the frame of the Convention, a Landscape award has been developed, knowledge is shared through a website, a Landscape Observatory had been founded, ongoing workgroups and meetings have been organised and a yearly "celebrated International Landscape Day" has been initiated (Council of Europe, n.d.-b).

8.3. Structures and implementations of strategies

Structures of cultural policymaking are strongly linked to size, related tasks and areas, systems of decision-making and administrative workload as well as to personal staffing and historical developments and place-based circumstances. The implementation of strategies can be realised by enabling structures, grants and funding programmes, consulting, and other measurements. These all depend on structures, knowledge about potentials, challenges, needs and capabilities of the implementing bodies as well as on the knowledge about the funding opportunities, the capacities, challenges and needs of potential applicants respective to the fit of the objectives in focus with the target groups.

8.3.1. Structures and implementation of strategies on the national level

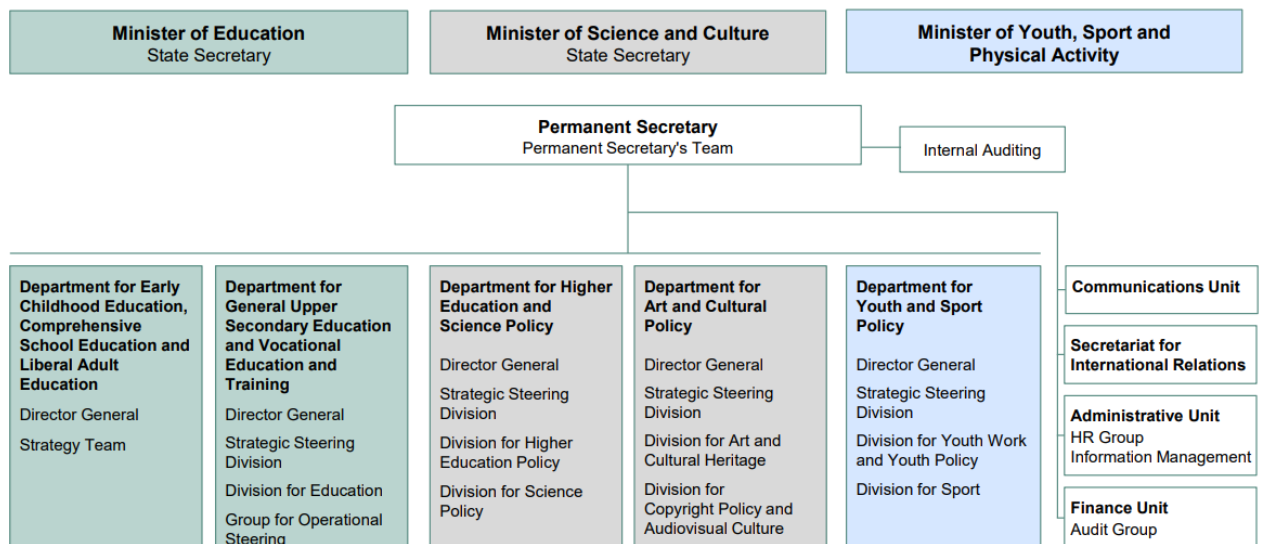
The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (*Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö*) is one of 12 ministries that form the Finnish Government (see Figure 10). The Ministry of Education and Culture participates in the work of the Government by planning, outlining and implementing its policies, and is responsible for matters related to the distribution of the budget funds. It shows responsible for legislation, central government financing and strategic steering as well as for providing prerequisites for artistic and cultural activities. It is responsible for the development and promotion of an overall cultural policy framework focussing on creativity, plurality, and inclusion in Finland. The duties are divided in three branches: 1) Education, 2) Science and Culture, and 3) Youth, Sport and Physical Activity, each headed by a minister, assisted by states secretaries and a permanent secretary (see Figure 11).

Prime Minister's Office	Ministry of Finance	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	Ministry of Defence
Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment	Ministry of Interior	Ministry of Transport and Communication	Ministry of Justice
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Ministry of Education and Culture	Ministry of Environment

Figure 10 - Finnish Government

Source: Authors' visualisation according to: Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland (n.d.). Ministry of Education and Culture – Home. <https://okm.fi/etusivu>

Ministry of Education and Culture



30.6.2023

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Figure 11 - Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland

Source: Jakonen and Sokka, S (2022)

In 2023, the overall budget for the administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture amounts to €7,7 billion. The mandate of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture covers different areas of expertise, like early childhood education and care, education, research, arts and culture, libraries, copyright, sport, youth work and religious affairs.

Arts and culture are described as “broad-scoped” with an “abundance of cultural institutions, and actively participating citizens as typical for Finland’s art and cultural scene.” Under the term *arts and culture*, the Ministry includes audio-visual culture, performing arts, literature, design and architecture, music and visual arts (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, n.d.-a).

The Ministry of Education and Culture concludes *performance agreements* with art and culture-related agencies and units under its administration “which specify objectives and resources for social impact and operational performance.” The Ministry’s agencies operate in the following areas of arts and culture:

- the Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Arts Promotion Centre Finland, n.d.-a), and
- the Finnish Heritage Agency.

The Ministry of Education and Culture grants subsidies for projects relating to culture, some of them as statutory state aid and others as discretionary subsidies. The Ministry also grants funds towards the cost of selected organisations’ operations, the activities and construction of cultural establishments, and for information society projects.

To ensure the expert-proofed relatedness of support to relevant stakeholders, organisations, programmes and projects according to the national strategies of cultural policy, the Ministry of Education and Culture finances and commissions different service agencies, like the Finnish Arts Promotion Centre TAIKE, that allocate grants to professional artists and subsidies to communities for projects and programmes based on arts (Arts Promotion Centre Finland, n.d.-a).

The Arts Council System, which awards grants funds to artists based on peer assessments, operates as part of Arts Promotion Centre Finland (TAIKE). The *Finnish Film Foundation*, the *National Gallery*, the *Finnish National Opera* and the *Finnish National Theatre* are all under the Ministry of Education and Culture’s performance management, as they are for the most part funded by the State (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, n.d.-a)

The National *Arts Promotion Centre Finland, TAIKE*, is described as expert and service agency on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Culture for promoting and funding arts on national and international level as well as supporting aspects of culture that are not covered by any other official body. It is seen as one of the most important granting organisations for CCIs, especially related to professional artists.

TAIKE is led by a director appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture and supported by a Leadership Team. The Leadership Team is responsible for the preparation of TAIKE's financial and operation plan, performance agreement, financial statements and annual reports. The members of the Leadership Team are the Director and the Heads of Human Resources, Finance, Development, Arts Support and Communication. About 50% of the approximately 80 employees are civil servants, responsible for administrative tasks, while the others are artists and art experts on fixed-term employment contracts. Decisions regarding grants and subsidies are made by national and regional arts councils and the board of grants. The main office of TAIKE is situated in Helsinki, with regional offices spread throughout the country (Arts Promotion Centre Finland, n.d.-a).

The National Arts Councils award grants to professional artists ranging from half-year to five-year grants, applicable once a year. About 600 artists are funded by TAIKE grants each year with an approximately €2000 monthly grant (Arts Promotion Centre Finland, n.d.-b).

The Finish Heritage Agency, Museovirasto is, among others, responsible for protecting environments with cultural history value, archaeological and architectural cultural heritage and other cultural property on behalf of the National Ministry of Education and Culture. It collects and presents a national culture historical collection (National Museum of Finland), research on cultural heritage material, supports and develops the national museum field and provides a wide range of services for all citizens.

Appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, a general director heads the Finnish Heritage Agency supported by an executive board. An Advisory Board for Cultural Heritage is responsible for the consulting of decisions. The tasks of the Heritage Agency are divided in six main resorts:

- the management of the National Finish Museum as the overhead of eight museum sites and two castles including the sector of Museum Services to develop museum activities;
- the Cultural Environment Services, responsible for expert and official tasks related to cultural heritage and landscape, guidance and development of restoration and others;
- the Archives and Information Services, with its library, archives, archaeological and picture collections, knowledge management and archaeological field services;
- the department of marketing and communication;
- the administrative Support Services; and
- the department responsible for the development of the museum sector.

All subsectors are led by directors and teams of experts and administrative staff (Finnish Heritage Agency, n.d.).

The responsibility to maintain and support museums and cultural heritage are described as specific tasks on national level – at least concerning the “state-owned cultural heritage” (Ministry of Education

and Culture, Finland, n.d.-h). In Finland, 300 museums sites are run by 150 professionally operated museums. About 1000 local museums are managed on a volunteer basis. The Museum of Finland, the Finnish National Gallery and the Finnish Museum of Natural History are national institutions. In addition, Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture steers and promotes museum operations in 22 regional museums and 16 national special museums. "National special museums co-ordinate national storage, research, and exhibition activities within their area of specialisation. In addition to this, the Ministry of Defence has designated the Military Museum a national special museum of military history" (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, n.d.-h).

Approximately 40% of museums' operating costs in Finland are funded by municipalities and the State, and additionally the Ministry of Education and Culture grants museums discretionary assistance. Sectoral assistance is granted partly as well by the Finnish Heritage Agency.

Other sector specific granting organisations operate under the supervision of the Department of Cultural Policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture and receive their funds for the agreed tasks by this national Ministry, like the *Finnish Film Foundation* (Finnish Film Foundation, 2021a).

The Finnish Film Foundation offers funding to the professional production, distribution, and exhibition of films. Supervised by the Department for Cultural Policy at the Ministry of Education and Culture, it is governed by a Managing Board nominated by the ministry and a CEO nominated by the Board. The Managing Director nominates the Foundation's personnel (Finnish Film Foundation, 2021b).

Culture for children – "Culture for children means education in arts, culture and cultural heritage for children and young people, provision of arts and cultural heritage, and art and culture produced by children and young people themselves. Culture for children entails both the experience of art and culture and the learning of related knowledge and skills. Culture for children relates to activities for children under 18 years old" (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, n.d.-e, n.p.). The Ministry of Education and Culture describes the promotion of culture for children as a priority, following the guidelines of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the rights of children to have access to art and culture as enshrined in the Constitution of Finland. Therefore, the Ministry aims to strengthen and enable art and culture "to be a permanent element in the lives of children and young people" (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, n.d.-e, n.p.). The work of children's arts centres, organisers of basic courses in the arts, arts institutions and departments, museums, theatres, orchestras, libraries, heritage associations, and other organisations and institutions involved in the arts and culture are described as essential to fulfil this task. The Ministry sponsors the work of 26 regional children's arts centres, the Association of Finnish Children's Cultural Centres and Taiteen perusopetusliitto (the Finnish association for basic education in the arts). The financial support includes yearly applicable project grants administered by the regional arts councils. Since 2000, the Children's Day Prize is awarded to two organisations each year for their outstanding work in promoting "artistic endeavour and education in the arts." It is granted by the Arts Promotion Centre Finland.

Since 2016, the Ministry of Education and Culture has promoted children's and young people's participation in cultural activities by offering opportunities for taking part in various arts and culture activities during the school day. The provision of such opportunities during the school day is based on the wishes that children and young people themselves have expressed. The activities are organised by professionals in arts and culture. Leisure activities have been organised in daycare centres, too. (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, n.d.-e)

With a festival policy action program, the Ministry of Education and Culture provides state subsidies for *national arts and culture festivals*. Established national arts and culture festivals are awarded by discretionary grants and related activities can be supported as part of the promotion of different art forms; for example, art and cultural events for children may receive grants under the government policy on culture for children. Cooperation between festivals through sponsorship of national organisations can be promoted.

The *Creative Economy* is promoted by the national Ministry of Education and Culture by supporting product and service development, creative expertise, exports and market entries, and cultural tourism. The Ministry also seeks to develop the networking possibilities, internationalisation and competitiveness of actors in the creative industries (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, n.d.-c).

As the total value added of the economy has decreased since 2016 (2.9% in 2020), the Ministry of Education and Culture sees its task in improving the *status quo* to be able to reach the average of reference countries figures of about 7%. Therefore, the *Creative Economy Roadmap* (2020) had been developed in 2020 by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Tarjanne, 2020). It consists of five main strategic fields, identifying:

- ecosystems and networks and changes in value chains,
- different kinds of skill gaps,
- business development services,
- measures to promote growth and internationalisation, and
- assessment methods and indicators.

Culture-related cooperation between different countries in various international organisations as well as in the preparation of cultural matters in the European Union is seen as another task of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. It is responsible for the coordination of Finland's international cooperation in arts and culture with and within the following organisations: UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Culture Fund, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and their cultural bodies as well as their neighbouring areas.

Focused on the development of the CCI sector, the *Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (NDPC)*, as one of the international relations bodies, runs a cooperation platform in the cultural and creative sectors ecosystem with a wide pool of expertise and experience related to CCS development across the Northern region. Organised by a secretary and a steering committee of national ministers' representatives, common guidelines are developed and networking possibilities with experts on ways of development of the cultural and creative sector are offered. It is part of a partnership network on Northern Dimension Policy including, additionally, a Partnership on Public Health and Social Well-Being as well as a partnership on Transport and Logistics. The Northern Dimension Partnerships on Culture follows a joint policy of partners including the European Commission and the Ministries responsible for culture in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden (the Russian Federation has been suspended) (Northern Dimension Partnerships on Culture, n.d.).

Linking Programmes and strategies of the European Union to the development of the creative and cultural sector, the *Creative Europe Programme* is regarded as a key instrument for the funding of the European community's cultural activities. In Finland, the *Finnish National Agency for Education* and the *Finnish Film Foundation* work together as the contact point for Creative Europe.

The *European Capital of Culture* initiative, as further EU program, plays a minor role for cultural development and promotion of selected cities and their surroundings. In 2026, the Finnish city Oulu will become a European Capital of Culture (Oulu Cultural Foundation, n.d.). Helsinki held the title in 2000 and Turku together with Tallinn in 2011 (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, n.d.-b, n.d.-i).

Beside those exemplarily named foundations, service agencies and partnerships working in cooperation with, on behalf or supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture, some nationally working NGO associations, groups and initiatives are, as well, related to cultural policy and might play a relevant role for shaping societal transformation and innovation in non-urban territories by their strategies, programmes, and funding structures.

The *Association for Rural Education and Culture, (Maaseudun Sivistysliitto)*, as one of those examples, combines several member organisations with focus on the development of rural territories by means of education, community building, arts and culture (Association for Rural Education and Culture [Maaseudun Sivistysliitto], n.d.). The association offers diverse services, consulting, training and supports artists and cultural stakeholders as well as the development of resilience and vitality of rural municipalities, NGOs and communities through art and culture. It is managed by a board of representatives of the member organisations and other expert members. Experts from different fields (e.g., artists, community developers, scientists and others) lead the several departments and services offered by the organisation. Members of this umbrella organisation are, for example, *ITE Arts*, as a national association promoting contemporary folk and amateur arts, and the national local

development association *Villages in Finland* with its regional branches and cooperation to LEADER groups and other rural organisations. The central party is strongly involved with several associations as members of this network (Suomen Kylät Finlands Byar, n.d.).

The *Association of Finnish Children's Cultural Centers* (Association of Finnish Children's Cultural Centers [Suomen lastenkulttuurikeskusten liitto], n.d.), the *Association of Finnish Cultural Centers* (Suomen Kulttuuritalot, n.d.), the *Association Culture for All* (Culture for All Service, 2024) and the *Finnish Amateur Theatre Association* (Suomen Harrastajateatteriliitto, n.d.) are only some of the NGO umbrella and network associations on national level which offer services and support to stakeholders of the cultural and creative sector as well as to municipalities and other relevant actors in the field, partly funded by the national ministry of education and culture.

8.3.2. Structures and implementation of strategies at the territorial level

Satakunta is one of **19 regions** in Finland, each of them governed by a **Regional Council**. Every municipality belonging to the region is member of the regional council as joint municipal authority for the area. The highest decision-making body of the Regional Council is the **County Council**, whose members are elected for the municipal election period. The county council is responsible for budgeting and financial planning and reporting, approving regional plans, bylaws and administrative rules of the Regional Council and elects the **regional government** as well as an **audit committee** for supervising. The regional government is responsible for financial management and administration of the Regional Council of Satakunta. A Regional Board steers and supervises the activities of the Regional Council of Satakunta's office. A Regional Director is leading the Regional Council of Satakunta. Duties and activities are divided into:

- Regional Development Division,
- Land Use Division,
- Administration Division,
- Regional Director's work team, and
- The management team, managing the operations of the Regional Council.

Three delegates of the municipality of Eurajoki and ten of the municipality of Rauma represent as personal deputies the local interests in the Regional Council of Satakunta, with its overall 52 members (Regional Council of Satakunta, n.d.-b).

The *Regional Council of Satakunta* is responsible for the regional development and planning, including questions of land use, maritime spatial and transport system planning, as well as "*for promoting the safeguarding of a good environment in cooperation with municipalities, authorities and other parties*" (Regional Council of Satakunta, n.d.-a).

A *Smart Specialisation Strategy for 2021–2027* (under the EU cohesion policy) had been developed by the Regional Council of Satakunta to make better use of European Structural Funds and to increase synergies between EU, national and regional policies, and public and private investments by bringing regional stakeholders together to support the future vision for the region. In this strategy, culture and creativity in relation to the CCI sector is described as a driver of innovation and mentioned as part of the *Knowledge and Innovation Cluster of Experience Economy*. The strategy focuses on the investment in know-how and product development as a prerequisite for the development of tourism services and the events industry by:

- Promoting the creative economy e.g. by supporting the activities of creative industry networks, promoting creative products and services, and making use of digital solutions in the events industry, among other things,
- Promoting the responsible and sustainable development and production, accessibility, safety, quality, and digitalisation of tourism and cultural services and events, and improving know-how and internationalisation capabilities in the field,
- Developing competitive, high-quality services and products that meet the needs of year-round domestic and international demand, as well as strengthening the tourism and events industry clusters, cooperation, and cross-sectoral expertise, and by
- Strengthening expertise and research and innovation activities in the fields of tourism, culture, arts, sports, and wellbeing to promote the vitality and growth of the region. (Regional Council of Satakunta, 2022a, p. 11)

The *Regional Councils of Satakunta* grants structural fund support for projects of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The *Satakunta Regional Fund* is devoted to promoting and developing the arts, the sciences, and other fields of endeavour in the region by providing annual grants and awards and supporting other activities in the region's 22 municipalities of Satakunta. Applicants can be individuals, groups and organisations who focus on promoting the versatile culture and undertakings that strengthen the sense of community of the Satakunta region. The fund consists of a general fund and special donations, including grants for exemplary projects lasting up to three years, spearhead grants, art for everyone grants and local cultural projects as well as donor funds. Decisions on applications are taken by an expert led administrative council (Finnish Cultural Foundation, n.d.).

The Arts Council of Satakunta is one of the 13 regional branches of TAIKE, the national Arts Promotion Centre Finland. Professional artists and art journalists as well as working groups of professionals can apply for a period from six months to five years for regional grants to cover work, material, production or travel expenses as working grants or project grants (Arts Promotion Centre Finland, n.d.-c).

Rauma belongs to the *LEADER-Region Ravaka*, Eurajoki – since the new funding period – to the new *LEADER-Region Satasilta*. Both LEADER-Regions are led by an Executive Director and the practical work

of the associations is carried out by a staff under the Director's leadership. Due to the LEADER method, all decisions concerning the choice of projects to be funded are made by the LEADER boards of locals that steer the direction of the regional LEADER operations and monitor the implementation of projects and strategies (Satasilta, n.d.; Leader Ravakka, n.d.).

LEADER Regions give the possibility to apply for smaller grants ranging from €1000 to €8000 if corresponding to the objectives of the actual LEADER development strategies and related to rural development issues of the addressed LEADER region (Leader Ravakka, 2024). For the new funding period, both LEADER groups developed strategies based on place-based issues from 2023 to 2027. According to the focus group talks as part of the research in IN SITU, culture and creative stakeholders as incubators of innovation for shaping transformations in the rural regions are not directly addressed in those development strategy papers.

Beside the public administration there are regional civic organisations promoting and supporting arts and cultural projects. The independent association *RaumArs* offers, for example, a regional Artist in Residence Programme. It aims to promote regional cultural offerings by producing open and "high-level art projects for everyone." Community and environmental art projects are in the focus of RaumArs as well as enabling national and international connections between Satakunta artists and cultural sector operators. RaumArs cooperates with museums, schools, art institutions, art, music, dance schools, festivals and other municipalities in the Satakunta region. RaumArs is a member of the international ResArtis artist residency organisation. RaumArs is mainly funded by the Arts Promotion Centre Finland (TAIKE) and applies regularly for grants from the public administration, the city and various foundations and collects fees of its members (RaumArs, n.d.).

"There are also some national level NGOs with regional / local branches focusing on the countryside that support diverse cultural activities (receiving some government subsidies for that). They co-operate a lot with village associations and some CCIs as well. Among them are the Finnish Local Heritage Federation¹⁹ (Kotiseutuliitto, "Heimatverbund" a direct translation) and ProAgria²⁰ (former "Women in agriculture and housekeeping"). We have Milla Nikko from ProAgria in our Horizontal Network." (Interview with Group B21, 2023)

8.3.3. Structures and implementation of strategies on the local level

The *Finnish municipalities* like *Rauma and Eurajoki* are self-governing entities. The promotion of general cultural activities is seen as a general municipal task by enabling, organising and supporting

¹⁹ More information: Suomen Kotiseutuliitto (n.d.).

²⁰ More information: ProAgria (n.d.).

²¹ See Annex D for more information on the interviewee groups.

cultural activities among local residents by providing grants, making facilities available, organising events as well as maintaining arts and cultural institutions.

The *Act on Cultural Activities in Local Government* describes the task of municipalities:

- To support the opportunities for creative expression and activity, for making and experiencing art and culture;
- To foster the equal opportunities of all population groups to engage in art, culture and education;
- Improve the local residents' wellbeing and health along with their inclusion and community engagement; and
- To create the right conditions for enhancing the vitality of the local area.

The National Government supports the local municipalities in their tasks covering parts of the costs of the cultural activities offered to the local communities. The purpose of the system of central government transfers to local government is to guarantee the availability of public services and to balance out differences between municipalities when it comes to the costs for arranging the services and decide about the allocation of the central government transfers. The local authorities can allocate the payments received from the Ministry of Education and Culture at their own discretion or could apply for an allocation to other providers of cultural services. The grants help promote equal access to arts and cultural services across the country, making use of regional and national approaches. Through this allocation practice, the Cultural Policy bodies follow the strategy of considering place-based potentials and needs and remove regional, social and economic obstacles to service access and engagement (Heiskanen et al., 2014).

8.3.3.1. Rauma

The leading decision-making body is the *City Council* with its 43 members, elected in a municipal election held every four years. The meetings take place once a month.

Decisions made by the City Council are prepared and implemented by the *City Board* which ensures compliance with the current legislation. The City Board administers the municipality and manages its finances. Meetings take place at least once a week.

The *City Management* is led by the Mayor and a Management Group of Directors of six different topic-related divisions: Corporate Services, Education and Culture Services, Technical Division, City Development, Personnel, Communication, Finances and Administration.

The *Education, Culture and Leisure Division* is responsible for the services related to the education and leisure, lifelong learning, growth support, well-being and prevention, as well as for measurements to increase and maintain the “attractiveness” of the city. The range of duties include the overall management of the secondary vocational and polytechnic education as well as university-level

education and the monitoring of activities and finances of the art institutions that receive subsidies from the city. The tasks include:

- early childhood education, pre-school education, after-school activities, primary and special education, and upper secondary education;
- library, cultural, museum, sports and youth services; and
- music and civic education, including fine arts, crafts, theatre and further education.

Under the title of Leisure and Sports Public Services in the fields of culture, sports, youth, museums, UNESCO World Heritage Sites and sea and archipelago can be found. The Museum and Cultural Director is responsible for the Cultural Services. Under the header of “culture,” access to information on Rauma’s three music- and one film-festival, the Lace Week and an Ice Hockey Lace Tournament are available. Other sub-pages inform about several museums in the municipality and the UNESCO World-heritage sites of Old Rauma as well as the Bronze Age burial site of Sammallahdenmäki (Rauma.fi, n.d.).

Rauma hosts several artists and galleries, arts schools, museums, library, exhibition rooms, music and theatre locations, a cultural centre and other cultural venues and stakeholders. Networks support their members by capacity building, arranging exhibitions, projects and exchange of knowledge and ideas.

- Rauma Artist’ Association supports its members by organising exhibitions and trading artwork (Rauman taiteilijaseura ry, 2021);
- Rauma Printmakers Association supports printmaking and arranging exhibitions;
- Keramiikkiryhmä Keramos is an Association of Ceramic Artists;
- Inspira, an Association aiming to increase creative visual arts in Rauma and its surroundings, organises annual joint art exhibitions, courses and training activities related to visual arts; and
- RaumArs, as regional network, hosts international artist residencies, producing high-quality projects, open for everyone, focusing on all art forms (RaumArs, n.d.).

8.3.3.2. Eurajoki

Similar to Rauma, the municipality of Eurajoki is led by a *Mayor* and decisions are made by a *Municipal Council*, prepared and implemented by a *Municipal Board* which administers the municipality and manages its finances. Several committees and boards, among those the *Education and Culture Committee*, discuss topic-related issues.

As one of the so-called *Wellbeing Services*, led by directors and assisted by staff members, Eurajoki offers to residents and visitors ranges culture, sports, youth services and libraries, NGO clubs and organisations operating in the municipality are listed as well as upcoming events.

The tasks of the *Cultural Services* under the overarching task of wellbeing services are described as “to create opportunities and conditions for practising art, local heritage work and traditions. Cultural Services provides services related to cultural and traditional activities and carries out other tasks, such as organising public events, maintaining the preservation of traditions, and is partly responsible for twinning and tourism-related tasks in cooperation with clubs, associations and companies” (Eurajoki Municipal Office, n.d.-c). Other departments like the *education* or the *tourism department* offer additional services related to culture.

The Municipality of Eurajoki runs a leisure committee that allocates small grants to associations, clubs and communities in Eurajoki, as well as to non-profit associations and other village associations, to support local sports, youth and cultural activities in order to implement social benefits, health and wellbeing (Eurajoki Municipal Office, n.d.-a).

Beside the municipal local cultural policy structures, there are a range of civic initiatives and NGO associations, respectively local branches of national or regional associations in the cultural and creative sector, as well as artists and other CCI stakeholders working as free-lancers, mixed free-lance and employed occupations or on volunteer basis in the cultural and creative field, who at least are partly engaged in the shaping of cultural policy.

On the official website of Eurajoki municipality, associations operating in Eurajoki are listed and information supporting association activities can be identified. In March 2023, 12 associations related to the headline *cultural association* are listed there, ranging from heritage societies to choirs, theatre groups and a youth band. Other initiatives and organisations related to the creative and cultural sector are listed under the header of heritage, youth, non-profit and other topics (Eurajoki Municipal Office, n.d.-e).

Civic participation in allocation of grants and other cultural policy and community-based decisions is organised in form of *participatory budgets*. Eurajoki participatory budgeting gives the possibility to use the public instrument to give *proposals for initiatives* directly to the municipality whose task is to inform about what has been decided regarding the proposal (Eurajoki Municipal Office, 2024). The municipality acts as networking agency and aims on bringing together CCIs and other stakeholders of the municipality for mutual support and common ideas (Eurajoki Municipal Office, n.d.-a).

According to interviewees, the administrative territorial reform in which the formerly independent municipalities of Eurajoki and Luvia were merged into a single municipality has not yet led to a common local identity. “Luvia belongs now to the region Eurajoki, but this was a pure desk-decision and is not really accepted by the people. There is no feeling of common identification with the region. Luvia has its own community” (Interview with Group B, 30 May 2023). There are still two relatively separate communities and two cultural centres with youth and village community centres, a church, schools, a library, and event spaces that are just as disconnected. Joint cultural and community-

building activities are rare. There is, however, a community-wide mobile library service in the form of a library bus, which provides regular services at fixed stops in smaller villages (Eurajoki Municipal Office, n.d.-b). The entire municipal area was only assigned to the new LEADER region Satasilta in 2023; previously, it was also divided into different LEADER regions. However, the inhabitants of the more northerly Luvia are still orientated more towards Pori, while the people from the original municipality of Eurajoki are more connected to Rauma. Projects to create a common identity and social innovations to shape the ongoing societal transformation are still rare.

In interviews and by participating observation a glance behind the facades of the official site of cultural policy and municipal efforts another reality could be revealed.

“After the elections we now have a new government, which is really not good for cultural policy. They see culture as “luxury good” and won’t spend money on it. I guess we expect severe cutting in cultural budgets.” (Interview with Group B, 30 May 2023)

The dissatisfaction with the new government and the cultural policy it has reoriented was clearly noticeable among many of the interviewees. They identified a lack of awareness of the potential and meaning of arts and culture resulting in a growing neglect of the cultural sector. The municipal employees, responsible for cultural services and cultural education, for example, were in charge of tasks which went widely over pure administration, support or enablement of cultural activities and capacity building. They realised multiple tasks of cultural services by their own contribution to cultural education in museums, the coordination and training of volunteers for the museums’ programs, booking and coordination of programs with schools, organisation of material and programming, promotion and more, to be able to offer at least some hours of open museums to fulfil the schools’ needs for hands-on-actions and authentic learning related to local heritage.

“There is no real cultural policy here. It is really not in the mind of politicians that cultural policy might be important. There is no money, no funding – if we didn’t have the volunteers, we could not do the work here.” (Interview with Group B, 30 May 2023)

Due to this situation the potentials of the local heritage – to name only one example – could not be exhausted. Investments in buildings might be relevant for the safeguarding of heritage but without regular staff to open and close the doors, answer questions, mediate and host the visitors, develop a concept and face the challenges of every day’s business, the doors of museums, cultural centres and other venues stay closed. There might be chances that those volunteers with expert knowledge, with an interest in heritage or with useful skills and experiences might be involved in museums’ work and cultural education, but they need reliable coordinating structures, persons which are aware of the special needs of volunteer engagement. Schools, locals or visitors of the region can only visit the Volunteers, willing to assist in cultural education depend on stable structures and someone to address to (Eurajoki Municipal Office, n.d.-d).

“There is no money from municipality to open the house beside special events, there is no paid staff. Only money to maintain the building.” (Interview with Group B, 30 May 2023)

Active network of stakeholders in the field could help to reduce challenges by mutual help, peer-to-peer consulting and inspiring ideas developed by topic-related exchanges but not everywhere it is easily possible to find a network and keep it alive. In the rural and vast areas around Rauma and the municipality of Eurajoki the people have to cope with long commuting distances and less time. To meet in the evening or on the weekends in pubs or cultural venues is not as usual in these regions as it might be in vibrant cities – and not easily possible everywhere, where doors of cultural venues are closed and no one is there to host the networks and is experienced in bringing people together, creating trust and giving impulses to common projects. In Rauma, city networks which are really active and lively exist, but in the more rural Eurajoki the situation is more challenging.

“We don’t have real networking or cooperation with the museums. I think there is a network of artists in the region and the schools visit the municipal museums, there is a library and some other initiatives with handcraft, music, theatre. But they don’t work so much together.” (Interview with Group B, 30 May 2023)

The IN SITU LAB Focus Group Talks with local cultural and creative professionals that took place in April 2023 revealed those “hidden” actors and cultural places like:

- the active village communities in Ylisenpää village where the villagers run a museum and summer café;
- the village association in Rikantila which consists of active artists, who organised the Capri Café and the “Cup of Culture” project and that are completely local, village-based and not really visible by digital means or other outspread information beyond the village and its surroundings or municipality; and
- the locals that cooperate in yearly classical music festivals Bel Canto and do a lot of events in the fields of culture, which are partly more visible but still not really known (Focus group notes, Finnish Lab of IN SITU project, 18 April 2022).

8.4. Lessons learned

Cultural policy in Finland focuses, on the one hand, strongly on the self-administration and autonomy of self-sufficient municipalities and, on the other hand, on a firm orientation towards the development of forward-looking strategies at national and regional level. The importance of art as a driver and incubator of innovation and the shaping of changing societies is clearly emphasised in the strategies and is understood as a political task. The Arts Promotion Centre Finland, TAIKE, has a central role to play in enabling and promoting art of professionals with a granting system that, in contrast to many other European Countries, allows the artists even to apply for grants that can be regarded as living

income. Nevertheless, it had been obvious during interviews and focus group talks with CCI stakeholders, cultural policy deciders and representatives of TAIKE, regional LEADER groups and municipalities' cultural services, that cultural policy and arts funding is more urban-centred and does not sufficiently focus on the situation of non-professional cultural actors, volunteer cultural workers and the conditions of artists and cultural actors in rural and remote territories. An information gap was described between the statements in national and regional strategy papers and the capacities and knowledge transfer between municipalities and CCIs in local territories as well as between the national and regional stakeholders and the municipalities. Besides this, the CCI actors of both municipalities saw the need for a more intensive exchange, domain-based activities, better communication structures and a strengthened role of local development agencies like the LEADER groups to join forces. In particular, the participants of the Lab meetings saw a clear need for improvement in terms of information and consulting on granting.

Workshops with local stakeholders and communications in exchange formats between the Lab research teams, cultural and regional policy stakeholders and IN SITU researchers on cultural policy revealed that there is still a lack of networking and exchange on ideas and practical place-based implementation strategies focusing on innovative ways of 'vitalising' landscape-related potentials through art and culture-connected projects and measures. In a focus group, talks with stakeholders of the municipality of Eurajoki, the LEADER-Group Satasilta, researchers and CCIs of the local IN SITU Lab area, as well as external IN SITU researchers on cultural policy, it became obvious that the needs and ideas discussed were not new to the local stakeholders of cultural policy but "national strategies on culture [often] do have an urban focus and the role of culture in other development strategies (sectoral, regional, etc.) tends to be both marginal and instrumental" (Interview with Group B, 26 June 2023).

"Although our municipalities have, legally speaking, a wide responsibility on cultural services, I would not put too much blame on them, though, because especially the smaller rural municipalities lack the resources, people and know how to properly back up strategic planning and development on culture. If happening at all, this would often occur in project form, lacking continuity and monitoring." (Email statement from Group B, 26 June 2023)

They stated that some measurements concerning the identified issues had been approved in the past "and didn't work out successfully because of costs, lack of helping hands, lack of engagement of people contributing, unforeseeable challenges, lack of expertise and unsolvable interest conflicts with strong local stakeholders" (Interview with Group B, 30 May 2023), like state-owned enterprises that produce environmental services, with customers ranging from private individuals to major companies concerning the sustainable use, management and protection of state-owned land and water areas.

“None of the ideas seem to be really realizable without changings of the actual framing and finding solutions to the lack of “active doers” (money, persons, influence of key stakeholders, engagement of stakeholders and volunteers, ...).” (Interview with Group A, 30 May 2023)

“It is a big patchwork of “surviving somehow” as an artist or cultural worker in rural areas. I had the impression that national strategies neither seem to face really the reality of working conditions in rural areas nor have real strategies leading to enable the potentials of CCIs for rural development outside the urban areas. Whereas the municipalities have no ideas how to build enabling structures to foster the regional and local CCIs, vitalize networks, make them more visible or give them the frame and support and ideas of working together for village-gapping and future-based ideas. There seems to be a lack of knowledge and of ideas, but at least some interest in learning about new ways.” (Interview with Group A, 23 June 2023)

Topic-related ideas started to be revealed during and in digital exchange following the different focus groups and expert talks. Among the results, what is strongly needed in the region can be identified in the form of: a coordinating and capacity building framework that makes CCIs, their work, the people behind them, as well as their potentials and challenges more visible to each other, in the region and beyond; strengthening, deepening and enlarging the existing networks, not only through mutual exchange on municipality-led meetings, but with a more participatory approach, with the aim of doing culture projects together in a way that can fill in gaps at local level, and with interest in future-based rural development; offering a 1:1 consulting on how to deal with concrete challenges and needs and address why and how to make applications, especially if tailored in a personal and place-based way; a thematic exchange of CCIs to help each other and strengthen mutual exchange and help; giving impulses or organising the exchange of impulses to develop ideas for regional projects making use of different contributions of the diverse CCIs present (for regional network projects) and applications for bigger project grants with lump sums or micro-funding for the sub-projects of the CCIs linked to the regional narratives.

9. Cultural policy in Ireland and its non-urban territories (Western coastal periphery)

The non-urban area of Ireland’s Western coastal periphery had been the focus of multi-method research relying on desktop and literature research as well as on empirical research methods, such as digital focus group discussions and expert interviews with different stakeholders of cultural policy, administration, regional development and cultural practice, deepened and supplemented by the results of two participative workshops on cultural policy during the Consortium Meetings in Finland (31 May – 1 June 2023) and Ireland (19–21 February 2024) and an exchange on findings with the IN SITU researchers and Lab coordinators at the University of Galway. In particular, the IN SITU Lab Partner, the University of Galway, supported the findings by research results, practice based experiences and thoughts on Irish cultural policy. In addition, interviews on gender issues, film

production and cultural policy in the cultural and creative sector of the Western coastal periphery gave a further insight into the state of cultural policy in Ireland's non-urban territories.

9.1. The research area Ireland and its Lab region Western coastal periphery

The republic of Ireland was founded in 1922 (Elvert, 1999) and roots in Celtic settlements reaching back to the pre-Christian age (Harbison, 1988). The first parliament had been established in 1297. In the course of an eventful history, Ireland had to cope with several wars, the great famine, emigration of wide parts of population and other crises. In 2022, about 5.02 million people lived in Ireland; a long and a slight increase in population as well as an incredibly low average age of 38.8 years characterise the demographic situation. The most populated agglomeration is the capital Dublin – about 25% of all inhabitants live in the city and the surroundings of County Dublin. Cork, as the second biggest city, is inhabited by 131,423 residents (2022), with only three other cities (Galway, Limerick and Waterford) reaching a number of inhabitants between 50,000 to 100,000 persons. Twenty-three cities are inhabited by 10,000 to 50,000 persons. Except for the city of Galway, all settlements in the IN SITU research area have less than 10,000 inhabitants (Brinkhoff, 2023d).

Ireland is divided into 26 counties but, for research reasons and comparability to other IN SITU regions, NACE categories were used to focus on a region of combined counties (see Figure 12). The so-called Western coastal periphery region is not an administrative governmental entity but could be seen as an area of common identity and historic roots based on the former division into provinces and its current division into touristic destinations. The Western coastal periphery region is, as suggested by the name, a coastal periphery in Northwest Europe and in the West of the Republic of Ireland, inhabited by about 486,000 persons (April 2022), with a general upward trend compared to April 2016 due to different kinds of migrations (Central Statistics Office, 2023).

This region comprises County Galway, Galway City, County Mayo and County Roscommon, including the Aran and other smaller but inhabited islands. Galway City is a university town located on the Atlantic Ocean and is inhabited by about 84,414 persons (April 2022) on an area of 50.6 km², which leads to a population density of 1.669 inhabitants/km². Nearly one-third of the population are students registered at the University of Galway and the Atlantic Technical University. The surrounding rural areas are more sparsely inhabited by about 370,000 people living on an area of 14.230 km² and with an average population density of only 26 inhabitants/km² (Brinkhoff, 2023c). In the West of Galway there are still several Irish-speaking areas, called Gaeltacht. Galway, the coastline and the landscape of Connemara are highly appreciated tourism destinations. Other parts in the East are still more based on agriculture and have to cope with labour and educational migration, ageing and brain drain. Culture, especially traditional and contemporary music, film and arts festivals, have a high importance for residents as well as for visitors to the region (IN SITU, 2023b). Although Galway City is known for its various festival, there are also festivals in the surrounding rural areas, including festivals

on islands, which attract a wide range of visitors and locals. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Galway City celebrated under restricted possibilities the activities related to its designation as European Capital of Culture 2020.



Figure 12 - NACE categories, Ireland

Source: Tyireland. File: NUTS3 boundaries Ireland.png, October 23, 2020. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=95371473>

9.2. Grounds and strategies in Irish cultural policy

Ireland is a unitary parliamentary republic with a two-chamber system and is administratively divided into 26 counties. The Ministry for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht²², Sport and Media acts as main steering entity, advised and assisted in the implementation of strategies by a relatively powerful arts council and in the implementation of operating tasks by sector-related public-private agencies in order to create the possibility of being closer to the reality of autonomous artists and other CCI stakeholders

²² *Gaeltacht* is the Irish word for regions where *Gaelic* is the vernacular language. Since 1937, the Irish language is constitutionally defined as first official language of the Republic of Ireland (Art. 8, 1) and, since 2007, has been recognised as one of the official languages of the European Union (European Parliament, 2007).

in different regions of the country. The implementation of the principle of *arm's length* is described in several resources as “increasingly limited over the last 15 years” in favour of a more governance-oriented cultural policy whose strategies are developed and implemented at the ministerial level rather than in bottom-up processes (O’Brian, 2021).

Close to the European cultural policy principles, the Irish cultural policy focuses on support of creativity, participation in cultural life and cultural rights understood as the right to participate in public cultural offerings. The focus on identity building by fostering heritage, the Irish language and related cultural activities as well as the enhancement of the arts and, especially, the fostering of the film industry can be regarded as significantly relevant. Promotion and access to culture for all citizens had been relevant throughout the years, recently with a growing weight on strategies that highlight the potential of culture to wellbeing (Compendium Cultural Policies & Trends, 2022; Government of Ireland, 2020).

9.2.1. Grounds and strategies at the national level

The constitutional ground for cultural policy is laid down in Article 1 of the Irish Constitution, ratified in 1937 and amended several times: “The Irish nation hereby affirms [...] to develop its life, political, economic, and cultural, in accordance with its own genius and traditions.” A strong link between cultural affairs and identity-building through creativity and related to cultural heritage can thus be identified in this first legal ground at the national level (Constituent Assembly Ireland, Parliament of Ireland, 2020, Art. 1).

The history of governmental cultural policy in Ireland started in 1947 when, 25 years after the State of Ireland had been founded, a first Cultural Relations Committee (CRC) was established within the Department of Foreign Affairs. Its task had been seen as dealing with the stimulation of cultural activities and the promotion of Ireland’s image in international affairs. By 1951, the first legal act on arts (Government of Ireland, n.d.-a) had been released and arts and culture officially introduced as policy fields and issues of governmental portfolio in the sense of the Keynesian welfare state’s model, ensuring economic stability and providing social security as measurements. The individual artist of CCI stakeholders were relatively marginal as subject of arts and cultural policy at this time, since the strategies were more focused on the promotion of arts to the public (Cooke, 2011, p. 98). In 1973, the Arts Act was amended and the arts funding could be enlarged, now including funding for film and, for the first time, allowing local authorities to support the arts at a local level. A Film Board to support the development of the film industry in Ireland was established but later disbanded (1987–1993) to regain the governmental control on implementation of policy strategies at the national level. A first regional arts officer was appointed by the government in 1985 and others followed in the next years. In almost every local municipality, such administrators started their work in small administrative arts offices, realising the first municipal arts programmes.

The Department of Arts, Culture and Gaeltacht was established in 1993. Ten years later, the Arts Act was further amended with a wider definition of arts and the first legal acknowledgement of the role of the Department as responsible for policymaking. In the upcoming years, different semi-state bodies were established, and a lobby group of artists and art workers was found, raising against governmental cuts on culture and arts and making visible the arts community. In the meantime, further Acts on the safeguarding and use of the Irish language (Government of Ireland, 2003) and for a cultural policy on heritage (Government of Ireland, 2018) were developed and launched, referring to the Minister of Arts and Culture as the legislative body responsible. In 2016, a national Consultation for the establishment of a new cultural policy for Ireland was launched by the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht which led, in 2020, to the new strategy paper on cultural policy *Culture 2025* (Compendium Cultural Policies & Trends, 2022; Government of Ireland, 2020).

Culture 2025, as the national cultural policy framework for Ireland, is described by Hadley, Collins, and O’Brien (2020) as “first single national cultural policy since the formation of the Irish State in 1922” (p. 145). It incorporates various sectors including language, arts, heritage, and creative industries. The purpose of the Strategy Paper is described by the Ministry for Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht as “ensuring a unified and coherent approach to cultural policy across government and to planning and provision across the cultural sector” (Compendium Cultural Policies & Trends, 2022; Government of Ireland, 2020). The Strategy Paper focuses on three principles as central grounds of Ireland’s cultural policy:

- The value of culture and creativity for lives of individuals as well as for the society,
- The support of creative practice and cultural participation, and
- The cherishing of cultural heritage. (Government of Ireland, 2020, p. 9)

A range of tasks are subsumed under the three principles that act as guidelines for governmental actions. According to the described principles, objectives and their relatedness to existing legislation, thematic government programmes and strategy papers are stated and show the embedment of the strategies in a wider political framework (pp. 4-5):

- promotion and strengthening of culture and creativity (Creative Ireland Programme) (Creative Ireland Programme Office, n.d.-a);
- improvements of funding structures in the arts and heritage sectors (*Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018–2027*) (Department of the Taoiseach, Ireland, 2018);
- interior support of Irish culture (Project Ireland 2040, Pillar 5 in the Creative Ireland Programme);
- exterior promotion of Irish culture worldwide (“Global Ireland 2025” campaign) (Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Ireland, 2020);
- achieving of goals for promoting the Irish language (*Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010 – 2030*) (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Ireland, 2020);

- supporting the role of built and natural heritage for communities, economy, and society (*Heritage Ireland 2030* plan) (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Ireland, 2020);
- achievement of goals regarding the natural environment and sustainability (*National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017–2021*) (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Ireland, n.d.);
- enabling Ireland to become a global hub for the film industry (Audiovisual Action Plan);
- Continuous informing of arts policy by the Arts Council Strategy (*Making Great Art Work 2016–2025*) (Arts Council, Ireland, 2015); and
- contribution to the development of EU and international cultural policy through participation in the EU Culture Council, the EC Commission’s Creative Europe Programme and the membership in key UNESCO cultural conventions and programmes.

The Strategy Paper for Cultural Policy and other strategic papers at the national level are related to the overall strategy of the Irish government laid down in the **National Development Plan 2021-2030** (NDP) as well as the *Programme for Government* launched in 2020. **Project Ireland 2040** is the government’s long-term overarching strategy for a more sustainable and resilient future of the country. The strategy corresponds to National Strategic Objectives and combines the related sectors and topics in a cohesive manner. Interdepartmental and topic-related measurements bring together different policy fields and actors in the field. Arts, culture and creativity as well as the development of stakeholder related and territorial issues for innovation in non-urban areas, could be identified as policy field under this overarching line (Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, Ireland, 2019). The *National Planning Framework* and the *National Development Plan 2021–2030* are combined in this project.

Among a wide range of strategic issues, the *National Development Plan 2021–2030* addresses directly the contribution of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media by describing Strategic Investment Priorities to be followed to enhance *Amenity and Heritage* (Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, Ireland, 2021, pp. 115–120). Other parts of the Strategy paper are related mainly to other departments but some of them can be seen as cross-related to cultural policy issues. The strategies dealing with a focus on innovation for the development of non-urban areas and the fostering of frameworks and strategies are one of those examples in which cultural policy could at least play a role in fostering CCIs beyond the urban²³. The described objective – “to revitalise our rural towns and villages [...] and make rural areas attractive places to live and work,” strengthening rural economies and communities – could be a policy field

²³ For example, by case studies on digital hubs in the County of Galway with an emphasis on the creative and digital media sector (Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, Ireland, 2021, p. 29).

which could be seen at least as partly relevant in the field of cultural policy (Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, Ireland, 2021, p. 68), ranging from measurements against vacancies to the expansion of remote working possibilities and enterprise development as well as to infrastructure and community strengthening cohesion projects for especially remote and island villages. A wide range of schemes, programmes and funds are related to implement the strategies.

The *Programme for Government (PG)* had been developed considering the societal challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and shaping the overall policy towards a mission-led strategy. Eleven thematic and intersectoral missions are described as guidelines and strategies for governmental work, among them – and as a first mission – *A Better Quality of Life for All*, focusing on “Wellbeing and Progress” as central topics, including the strategy of *Town Centres First* (Department of the Taoiseach, Ireland, 2020, p. 11) related to the development of lively and resilient non-urban areas and a revitalisation of its central towns. The missions of *Balanced Regional Development* (p. 59) and *Building Stronger and Safer Communities* (pp. 83–92) are also related to cultural policy. The latter, explicitly formulated in the sub-chapter *Arts and Culture* (pp. 88–89), includes *Film, TV, Audiovisual, Digital and media production* as well as *Community arts, Night-time culture, Creative and cultural infrastructure, and Commemoration*, beside others. The Programme states the importance of cultural policy in describing the arts as “essential to the wellbeing of our society and in bringing communities together”. A central aspect of the mission statements is seen in the expressed will to make “the arts even more accessible and inclusive to everyone.” The paper recognises “the diversity of artistic and creative activities in Ireland and sees the significant economic and social value of our creative culture, both nationally and internationally.” Among others, this Programme of Government affirms again the national identity as fostered by the arts. Ireland has an international “reputation for excellence in the arts. We want to place emphasis on the economic, social, and cultural value of our Indigenous and exceptionally talented creative community. Arts and culture engender enormous national and local pride” (Department of the Taoiseach, Ireland, 2020, p. 88).

The national *Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)*, established as part of the sector-bridging strategic *Project Ireland 2040*, seeks to provide investment to support the objectives described in the strategic planning paper *Our Rural Future* (Department of Rural and Community Development, Ireland, 2021). Relevant issues and funding schemes include cultural policy-related issues for non-urban territories like:

- strengthening and building resilience in rural communities;
- assisting in the regeneration, development and growth of towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000 and outlying areas;
- improving access to remote working hubs;
- fostering the policy of town centres first, aiming to create (non-urban) “town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also

functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community” (Local Government Management Agency, n.d.);

- the CLÁR programme as an investment programme, which provides funding to small-scale infrastructural projects in rural areas that have suffered the greatest levels of population decline (Government of Ireland, 2023a);
- the Community Enhancement Programme, which provides small grants to community groups to enhance facilities in disadvantaged areas and is administered by Local Community Development Committees in each Local Authority area (Department of Rural and Community Development, Ireland, 2018); and
- Libraries Investment Capital funding for libraries that will support the continued implementation of the Public Library Strategy and strengthen libraries as essential community facilities (Government of Ireland, 2023b).

9.2.2. Grounds and strategies at the territorial level

“What constitutes the ‘region’ is not fixed in Ireland,” states a working paper, published by the Irish Research Council in 2021 (Kanaan et al., 2020). The *Local Government Reform Act* (2014) defined three *functional regions*, replacing eight previous existing regional authorities: the Northern and Western Region, the Eastern and Midland Region, and the Southern Region (ESPON, 2023). The so-called Regional Assemblies are managed by Executive Offices, in charge of tasks related to spatial and economic development strategies for the respective regions. Over 60% of the inhabitants of Ireland live in densely populated urban areas, some of them described recently as Metropolitan areas according to the Metropolitan area Spatial Plan (MASPs) related to the National Planning Framework of 2018 (Project Ireland 2040, n.d.).

MASPs had been produced for Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Galway by the regional assemblies. Due to the principle of arm’s length policy, regional closeness to stakeholders appears necessary for national agencies dealing with topics and people allocated in different parts of Ireland (Kanaan et al., 2020). To organise a good allocation of services and funding or identify topic-related spatial units, the agencies operate with their own regional agenda. Additionally, by following the administrative boundary delineations, the 26 Irish Counties might be regarded as *regional* entities too (Government of Ireland, 2014; Boyle et al., 2020). Beside the attribution of the term *regional* to Counties, they are described as well as *local* authorities. The smallest scale of legal entities can be seen in the 100 municipal districts as original local authorities. To mark the difference between county and municipal level, this review will focus on municipalities and their settlements as *local* while all levels of larger legal entities will be regarded as *regional* in contrast with national authorities.

9.2.3. Grounds and strategies at the regional level

After the founding of the Republic of Ireland in the beginning of the twentieth century, culture wasn’t seen as policy field until the end of the 1940s. Culture was, during this time, self-organised, part or

deriving from community arts and shaping togetherness of local, mostly rural societies. Artists depended on market chances or employment in high culture institutions (Government of Ireland, n.d.-a). Before 1973 local authorities were not allowed to support the arts at a local level. Cultural policy departments, regional or local arts councils didn't exist up to this time. In 1973, the Arts Act was finally amended and an allowance of local support was integrated in the legal ground so that cultural policy was now a field of relevance both at the regional and municipal level. The Act describes this new allowance in the right to “assist with money or in kind or by the provision of services or facilities [to organise] an exhibition or other event. The rationale behind is described by the idea of succeeding in this way to stimulate public interest in the arts, promote the knowledge, appreciation, and practice of the arts, or in improving the standards of the arts” (Government of Ireland, n.d.-b).

The *Arts Act of 2003* requires local authorities directly to prepare and implement plans for the development of the arts within their functional areas. Local authorities have developed their own strategy papers reflecting – among other topics – on the inclusion of rural and remote territories and offer diverse possibilities to support the cultural and creative stakeholders in their projects and work in and for the development of non-urban regions (Government of Ireland, n.d.-c).

The actual *National Culture Policy Framework, “Culture 2025”* describes the role of the national government in fostering increased collaboration between all cultural stakeholders in Ireland, including local State bodies, and expresses therefore its will “to examine the provision of cultural services at national and local level building on existing connections between local authorities, the Arts and Heritage councils, Cultural institutions” as well as institutions promoting the Irish language and their agencies (Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Ireland, 2019, p. 9).

The Arts Council's Strategic Paper describes in its mission statement: “We work in partnership with the Department of the Arts and with other government departments as well as with local government and with agencies and organisations within and beyond the cultural sector” (Arts Council, Ireland, 2015, p. 15). One of the central goals in this strategy paper is the inclusion of spatial and demographic planning in all fields of work and the implementations of strategies and given tasks. In its description of action, planning based on this central goal is stated, for example, affirming that opportunities for increased engagement in the arts by particular communities will be created, like:

- investing in artists and arts organisations with a commitment to high-quality collaborative, community-focused arts practice;
- supporting high-quality arts work in Gaeltacht communities;
- making community-engaged arts practice a key focus of relationship with local governments;
- acknowledging that artists work as lone practitioners and as collaborators in a wide range of contexts, from arts environments to social settings, to the creative and cultural industries; and

- advising central and local government on legislative and regulatory provision and on other actions that would support artists to have productive and economically viable careers.

Other agencies, such as *Creative Ireland*, designed their strategy from the beginning at regional level. Through programmes like *creative communities* or *creativity in older age*, a wide range of community-led projects could be funded in 2022 in cooperation with 31 local authorities. Local community programmes were co-financed by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, investing €6.6 million in creative projects for respective in local communities in 2022 (Creative Ireland Programme Office, 2024; Government of Ireland, 2021).

Beneath the regional work of *the national agencies*, the **counties** understand themselves as responsible for cultural policy for their regions. The IN SITU Lab-research region comprises Galway County, Mayo County and Roscommon County with a core focus on Galway.

Galway County has developed its own *County Council Arts Plan 2020–2024*. In this plan, the County Council of Arts describes “access to arts and culture as an essential component for communities to thrive and understand that creativity as the foundation of innovation [as] the most coveted skill across all areas of life in the 21st century” (Arts Office, n.d., p. 3). The County Council Arts Plan is related to other national and regional policy legislative frameworks and the financial resources available for the stimulation and development of the arts in Ireland and refers to the Arts Council’s *National Cultural Framework 2016–2020* (Arts Council, Ireland, 2015); the Arts Council strategy paper *Survive, Adapt, Renew* (Arts Council, Ireland, 2020), which is related to the COVID-19 crisis; the Galway County Council *Corporate Plan 2020–2024* (Galway County Council, 2019); the *Galway County Development Plan 2015–2021* (Galway County Council, 2018); and the *Galway County Local Economic and Community Plan 2016–2022* (Galway County Council, n.d.-b). The development of the regional strategy paper was based on desk research, consultations through public meetings, focus groups and key informant interviews. Additionally, information was collected by action research during the project Agents of Change, led by the Galway County Arts Office in collaboration with other regional Arts Offices and regional Theatre Institutes as a “pilot programme for mentoring and capacity building for practicing arts producers, curators and festival/event organisers based in Galway and Roscommon” (Arts Office, n.d.).

The Culture & Creativity Strategy 2023–2027, launched by the Galway County Council and supported by the Creative Ireland Programme and Agency, can be seen as the second actual and directly cultural policy-related strategy paper of the region of Galway County. It focuses first on goals, strategies and action planning to empower all residents of the region to realise their creative potential and lays down the strategy for the encouragement throughout Galway County to strengthen “collaboration between communities, creatives and agencies producing dynamic, innovative and engaging programmes and

collective engagement to contribute to social, economic, and environmental wellbeing” (Creative Ireland Galway County, n.d., p. 2). Five strategic priorities are laid out as guidelines for upcoming years:

- Strategic Priority 1: Broaden access and participation,
- Strategic Priority 2: Leverage culture and creativity as an economic catalyst,
- Strategic Priority 3: Build capacity and further strengthen the creative programme,
- Strategic Priority 4: Creative place-making, and
- Strategic Priority 5: Celebrate and promote Galway as a creative county (Creative Ireland Galway County, n.d., described pp. 14–16).

Further strategic planning, legislative frameworks and action planning has been done by the Galway City Council for the more urban scope of Ireland’s third biggest city. In particular, the process and outcomes of the *Galway 2020 European Capital of Culture programme* during the COVID-19 pandemic helped to develop new formats, policies and understanding of the value of CCIs and the culture and creative ecosystem. Like Aarhus (ECOC 2017), Leeuwarden (ECOC 2019) and others, Galway based its programme on a wide range of participatory projects and place-based issues, addressing the city’s population as well as the rural region of Galway County.

In 2021, the evaluation of the ECOC process was launched by Galway City and Galway County Council and led by The Audience Agency, including learnings and culture policy recommendation. Some of them addressed the involvement of cultural and creative stakeholders and community-engaged creative projects of the rural areas around Galway, which highlighted challenges recommended to be considered more precisely in cultural policymaking (Galway 2020, n.d.)²⁴.

There were many successful community engagement projects, especially in rural areas. These are often small set ups, led by volunteers (often creative practitioners) who are local and committed, but developing projects and activity in addition to their ‘day jobs’. There is an opportunity for these to continue and whilst some will progress of their own momentum, in order to realise their potential, they need support, advice and funding. A further consideration is the way in which established cultural organisations with paid professional staff might be able to partner community group. (The Audience Agency, 2021, p. 172)

9.2.3.1. Roscommon County

The less densely populated rural Roscommon County, situated in the Northwest of Galway County, might be in a wider distance to the vibrant Galway – European Capital of Culture 2020 – but, nevertheless, arts, creativity, culture and the CCI stakeholders play a crucial role in the regional policy of the region. In 2023, the Arts Council launched the *Roscommon County Council Arts Plan 2023–2028*,

²⁴ The cultural policy recommendations of the evaluation of Galway 2020 will be reflected more deeply in the work on IN SITU policy recommendation in report/Deliverable 5.6.

a strategy paper and action plan built on vision, missions, and values that worked out four priorities as well as measurements for implementation. The vision of the strategy paper is concentrated in the mission statement: “Place for Art: Art for All.” The priorities range from focusing on the role and needs of the artist over public engagement and the target group of children and young people to a special focus on arts infrastructure (Roscommon County Council, 2023c).

Like the Galway County arts plan, it is embedded in national cultural policy, legal grounds, frameworks and strategies and is related to the activities of and supports the Creative Ireland agency. The Arts Office, as responsible and executive body related the strategy paper to local policies, identified several interconnections between the development of the arts and the wider socio-economic and cultural development of the county laid down in the Roscommon County Council *Corporate Plan*; Roscommon County *Development Plan 2021–2027* (Roscommon County Council, 2023a); the Roscommon County *Local Economic & Community Plan 2023–2029* (Roscommon County Council, 2023b); the County Roscommon *Migrant Integration Strategy 2023–2028*; the Roscommon *Age Friendly Strategy 2024–2028*; the *County Heritage Plan*; the *Roscommon Tourism Statement of Strategy*; the Roscommon PPN *County Vision for Community Wellbeing*; and the Roscommon County Council *Climate Action Plan 2024–2029*.²⁵

9.2.3.2. Mayo County

The Culture & Creativity Strategy 2023–2027 was launched by Mayo County Council, developed by the Culture and creativity team of Mayo and supported by the Creative Ireland Programme and Agency. It reveals the cultural policy of the third largest county in Ireland (5,351 km²), inhabited by about 137,970 residents and situated in the North of Galway County, characterised by the longest coastline of all Irish counties. Despite the fact that only two of the about 34 settlements are inhabited by slightly more than 10,000 persons, cultural policy strategies are defined and laid down by the regional arts council office supported by the Creative Ireland public agency. The strategy paper focuses on objectives which can be described as enabling the creative potential of every child and fostering creativity in every community, investing in creative and cultural infrastructure, as well as supporting more general objectives like promoting and supporting CCIs in Ireland as a Centre of Excellence in Media Production. Seven strategic priorities were laid out as guidelines for the upcoming years:

- Enabling creativity in every community;
- Enabling the creative potential in every child of Mayo;
- Creative engagement for teenagers and young people;
- Promote democratisation of culture through heritage, arts and cultural organisations working with communities;
- Value and support artists, crafters and other creatives;
- Develop creative industry in Mayo through encouraging participation and innovation; and

²⁵ Not all plans are available online.

- Promote the green agenda on climate change. (Creative Ireland Mayo, n.d., pp. 12-21)

9.2.4. Grounds and strategies at the local level

The IN SITU research areas of the Western coastal periphery comprise a huge number of small settlements, villages, and towns around the central city of Galway. Following the *Local Government Reform Act 2014* (Government of Ireland, 2014), the former system of local authority levels changed to a new two-level government. Since this reform, groups of neighboured settlements build the administrative entities of *municipal districts*. Several municipal districts are merged on a second tier to Councils and City Councils. The County of Galway is comprised by five municipal districts, Roscommon by three municipal districts and Mayo by four municipal districts. The municipal districts have been designed to promote more efficiency democratic governance, subsidiarity and accountability. The municipal districts primarily represent electoral districts, which make it possible to elect representatives for the regional councils who represent a wide range of local communities. Structures and implementation of strategies on a municipal level is not related to governmental organisations. Cultural policy by public bodies, allocations of grants and the implementation of strategies and measurements related to public documents and planning takes part on the county or national level.

9.3. Structures and implementations of strategies

In Ireland the structures and implementation of strategies are related to the culture policy principle of the architect model. All main policies are based on planning and strategies developed at national level. Nevertheless, autonomous, and responsibility-focused semi-state-agencies had been established since 1951 to support the allocation of grants and to inform and advocate between the cultural stakeholders and political decision-makers. Because of this, a certain degree of the arm's length principle could be realised. With only 0.2% of the GDP, Ireland – together with Greece – holds the negative record of the lowest expenditure for cultural services of all European Member States, according to the numbers of 2022 (Eurostat, 2024). With a new record expenditure for cultural activities and cultural and creative stakeholders in 2023, the average expenditure may possibly rise in the statistics in the next year (Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Ireland, 2022).

9.3.1. Structures and implementations at the national level

The Constitution of Ireland (Bunreacht na hÉireann), as highest legislative ground, defines the governmental bodies. The President (*Uachtarán*), as head the State, is in charge of mainly representative tasks. The Government of Ireland (*Rialtas na hÉireann*), as executive power, is comprised by a Prime Minister (*Taoiseach*) as head of the government, a Vice-President as deputy head (*Tánaiste*) and up to 13 ministers, as heads of the sector-related departments (see Figure 13). The *Taoiseach* is nominated by the *Dáil* (the House of Representatives as Lower Chamber of the Irish

parliament²⁶) and appointed by the *Uachtarán*. All other ministers are nominated by the *Taoiseach* and appointed by the *Dáil*.

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	Department of Defense	Department of Education	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Department of Environment, Climate and Communication	Department of Finance	Department of Foreign Affairs	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science	Department of Health
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Department of Justice	Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform	Department of Rural and Community Development	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
Department of Social Protection	Department of the Taoiseach	Department of Transport		

Figure 13 - Departments of the Irish Government

Source: Authors’ visualisation according to: Government of Ireland, “Departments,” updated 2023 (first published 2018). www.gov.ie/en/help/departments/

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media (An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán) views its mission as:

- supporting the tourism industry in increasing revenue and employment through enhancing competitiveness and through marketing and product development;
- promoting, nurturing and developing Ireland’s culture and arts;
- supporting and promoting the use of the Irish language and to facilitating the development of the Gaeltacht;
- contributing to a healthier and more active society by promoting sports participation, supporting high performance and the provision of facilities; and

²⁶ The Irish parliament (*Oireachtas*) is headed by the Irish President (*Uachtarán*) and comprises two chambers: the *Dáil Éireann* (House of Representatives and Lower Chamber) and the *Seanad Éireann* (Senate and Upper Chamber). The *Dáil* representatives are elected directly in a five-year cycle and owns the legal power. The Senate is seen mainly as a consulting organ.

- developing broadcasting and media policy, including online safety legislation, and providing oversight of the BAI (Broadcasting Authority of Ireland), RTÉ (Raidió Teilifís Éireann, Ireland’s National Public Service Media) and TG4 (Teilifís na Gaeilge, the Irish language television channel).

The mission topics and related tasks are assigned to five divisions, four of them led by an Assistant Secretary General (see Figure 14). A Secretary General’s duty is related to overarching tasks; a director is in charge of the division of Irish language (An Ghaeilge & an Ghaeltacht). A team of principal officers, directors, and assistants, as well as supporting staff members, are responsible for the sector-specific tasks and strategic development and operational management of national cultural institutions. The main lines on cultural policy and its implementation are driven by the cultural division with its nine sub-office, but additionally related policies, strategies and programmes can be found in other divisions and sub-divisions, or other ministerial departments and their internal divisions and offices like the Department of Rural and Community Development (see Figure 15), which is strongly related to community based cultural policy in non-urban territories of Ireland, and the challenges of transforming societies.



Figure 14 - Organisational chart for the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Ireland

Source: Authors’ visualisation according to: Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Ireland (2023)

The complexity and size of the administrative units alone show a strong focus on stately and centralised steering of cultural affairs in Ireland. Cultural policy, its strategy building and its implementation seem to be part of a top-down related architect model; bottom-up processes and the realisation of the arm’s length principle involving the expertise of local or regional stakeholders is at least not visible by analysing the organisational structure of the national government.

The core cultural policy goal is described by the Department as “to enhance access to and to recognise the social and economic role of the arts, culture, and film sectors in Ireland by promoting and encouraging artistic expression, cultural awareness, and participation, through an appropriate policy, legislative and resource framework. To provide a capital infrastructure for the National Cultural Institutions” (Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Ireland, 2015, n.p.).

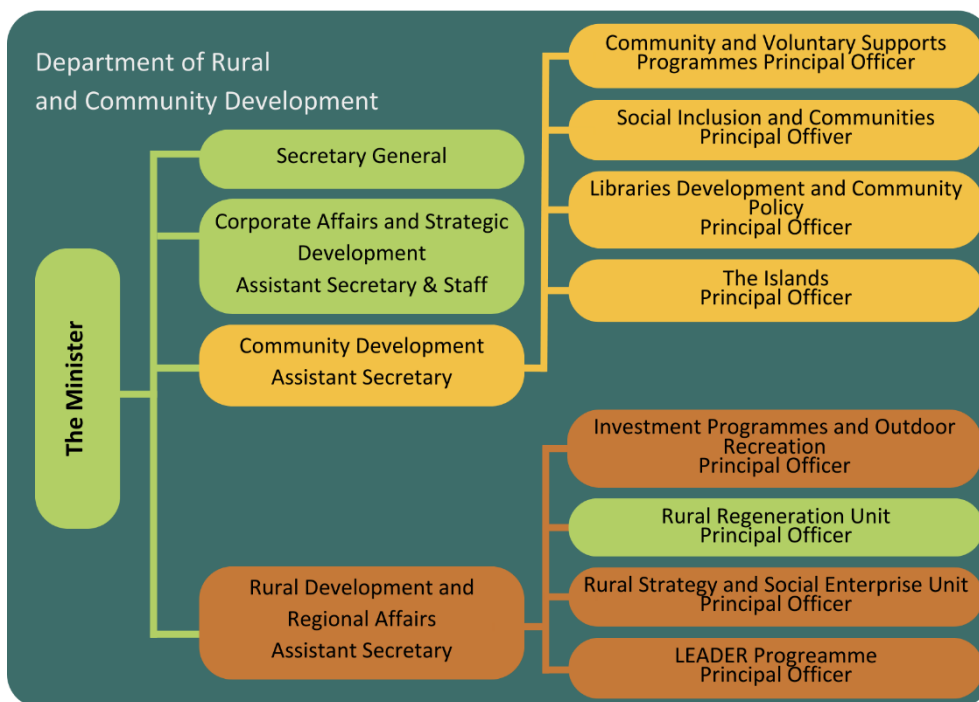


Figure 15 - Department of Rural and Community Development, Ireland (related to cultural policies for non-urban territories)

Source: Authors’ visualisation according to: Department of Rural and Community Development (2023)

This goal shall be achieved by:

- [development of] a detailed, integrated policy, creating and sustaining involvement in the cultural sector, encouraging access and participation;

- [progress of] cultural capital programmes related to the National Development Plan²⁷ and the Programme for Government (Department of the Taoiseach, Ireland, 2020) within the financial resources available;
- [improvement of] effectiveness, efficiency, and quality in the mechanisms of State support for the cultural sector through the State agency structures;
- [enhancement of] collections of the National Cultural Institutions²⁸ and access to these; and
- [servicing] the requirements of the government's Commemoration programme.²⁹ (Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Ireland, 2015, n.p.)

To implement the strategies and measurements of the governmental divisions and department, to allocate national grants and to inform and advocate between the cultural stakeholders and organisations and political decision-makers and administrators, autonomous and responsibility-related semi-state agencies have been established and commissioned successively since 1951. Some of the most relevant national agencies fostering arts and culture in Ireland are listed here:

The Arts Council is the oldest of the national agencies, established in 1951. Its tasks are to promote and develop the arts³⁰ in Ireland by stimulating public interest in the arts and promoting the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts. A wide range of target group and topic-related funding opportunities are promoted, and the related national budget is allocated on an application-based system by the Arts Council. A wide range of different funding programmes are offered, including cross-artform practices like festivals, local arts, creative schools, and others as well as sector-specific forms of arts and culture like theatre, traditional arts, film, dance, street arts and spectacle, and circus, among others. The Arts Council is a voluntary body³¹ of 12 members and a chair, appointed by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media, and supported by a team of employed staff members to carry out the organisational work. The Arts Council works closely together with arts advisers, who provide expert knowledge and strategic advice (Arts Council, Ireland, n.d.-a).

²⁷ *Tionscadal Éireann 2040* (Project Ireland 2040) is the title of the National Development Plan 2021–2030 which was launched in 2021 as a national overarching strategy paper, related to all policy fields (Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, Ireland, 2021).

²⁸ Besides the Crawford Art Gallery in Cork, all other National Cultural Institutions are situated in Dublin, the capital of Ireland.

²⁹ The Irish Commemoration Policy is part of an identity shaping national policy which highlighted diverse centenaries of historical events that are seen as relevant to Irish history and national identity (Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland, 2024).

³⁰ Here, the term *arts* includes cultural practices and actors of a broad defined cultural and creative field.

³¹ Members and chair receive only limited compensation for their efforts, ranging from €5000 to €9000 yearly (Arts Council, Ireland, n.d.-b).

The Heritage Council was established in 1995 as a statutory body under the Heritage Act (1995). It provides policy advice to government on heritage issues including preservation, sustainability, landscape management, high nature value farming, forestry and climate change. Beside this, it supports professional development programmes in the field and developed a Heritage in School Scheme to encourage interest and participation from an early age. The Heritage Council organises the National Heritage Week and involves and supports communities in their cultural work on heritage. The Heritage Council board members are appointed by the Minister for Housing, Local Government, and Heritage. A staff of experts on heritage, funding and organisational work implements the tasks of the Council. Beyond the Community Heritage Grant Scheme and the Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme, there are several additional possibilities to obtain funding from the Heritage Council (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Ireland, n.d.).

Údaras na Gaeltachta was established in 1980 as a national semi-state agency and acts as regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht. It is related to the safeguarding and promotion of the Irish language and the development of the Irish-speaking regions. The agency allocates funding and fosters enterprise development and job creation initiatives by supporting strategic language, cultural and community-based activities (Údarás na Gaeltachta, n.d.).

Screen Ireland focuses on promotion and development of the film industry, supports writers, directors, and production companies by providing investment loans and funding. Development support and production support are the main lines of the funding programme (Screen Ireland, 2024).

Creative Ireland, as the youngest agency established as a semi-state agency within and supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, is understood as all-of-government culture and wellbeing programme, aiming to foster creativity of all people through special projects and funding opportunities, and partnerships with local/regional and national government, agencies and local enterprises with a focus on “creative youth, creative communities, creative health and wellbeing, creative climate action and creative industries” (Creative Ireland Programme Office, n.d.-a; Compendium Cultural Policies & Trends, 2020; Government of Ireland, 2021).

9.3.2. Structures and implementations at the territorial level

A regional level in terms of a legally binding constitutional form does not exist in Ireland, but the counties at least could be regarded as administrative entities which act on a territorial basis, each of them comprising a range of municipalities and respective municipal districts as ‘merged’ local entities which are too small to be responsible alone for all regular municipal services. Governmental strategies and support for the place-based development and implementation of related measurements are supported by the sector- and topic-related agencies which work independently but on behalf and financed by the Irish ministerial departments. The agencies collaborate with the regional and local authorities like *the Counties’ Arts Councils* or *Culture and Creativity Teams* in smaller entities.

These top-down processes include at least participatory consulting by public questioning, focus group talks and expert interviews and other community or stakeholder-based methods. Nevertheless, the National Plan on Cultural Policy and its Framework as well as the National Development Plan (NDP) and National Planning Framework (NPF) are long-term development plans with a wide but binding framework for regional measurements (OECD, 2019a) and a process of implementation that can be described therefore as an “one-for-all policy” strategy by an “all-of-government approach.” Neither the National Plan and Framework on Cultural Policy nor the National Development Plan and Framework are focusing generally on non-urban issues but consider certain aspects which could lead to place-based strategies and measurements if these are related to place-based topics during the development processes for the regional and cultural planning.

9.3.3. Structures and implementations at the regional level

Ireland’s local authorities are also significant stakeholders in the arts. Their spend on the arts for 2020 was almost equal to the investment by the Arts Council before the government awarded the latter the Covid-19 emergency support package. Despite the comparable funding, local councils are 'not explicitly mandated' to invest in arts or culture, though they are the primary stakeholder for art centres. (Graham, 2019, n.p.)

Arts and culture within local and respective regional authorities are managed by the county arts offices. They are dependent on the funding allocated by local authorities and the national Arts Council due to strategy plans and frameworks defined at the respective national level and those missions, strategies and action planning developed from this at the regional level. Graham (2019) analysed the organisational structure and working processes for those administrative units in rural areas of Ireland and identified, on one hand, the significance of those stakeholders for CCIs and the cultural and creative ecosystems and, on the other hand, revealed severe challenges due to often understaffed, under-resourced offices sometimes lacking expert knowledge in the field (National University of Ireland, Maynooth, n.d.; Graham, 2019). The arts offices are supported and funded in their work by the respective County or City Council from its annual budget, which is approved by elected officials, through funding from the Arts Council, Creative Ireland, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, and other related government departments and national agencies.

The Arts Office of Galway County is part of the services of Galway County Council, responsible for the administrative areas of County Galway, excluding Galway City as independent municipality. Thirty-nine councillors of the county’s five municipalities are members of the council. The delivery of services that enhance the economic, social, and cultural life of the citizens is described as the mission statement of the county council. The Arts Office is run by an Arts Officer, with an Assistant Arts Officer supported by an Arts Office Administrator. Additionally, an officer related to the Creative Ireland Engagement Office belongs to the small team. The tasks are described related to the topics Film,

Funding Programmes, Public Art, and the Creative Ireland Programme 2023–2027 (Galway County Council, n.d.-a).

The Arts Office of the City of Galway manages the City Arts Service. The team, similar to the City Council's Arts Office, shares the tasks between the Arts Officer and the Arts Development Officer supported by the Arts Office Administrator. The Office collaborates with various sections and departments within the council from Tourism, Community, and the Galway Culture Company. The Galway Arts Office manages and coordinates the investment in public money in the arts on behalf of the city council, funding a wide range of arts, cultural and creative activities across the city. It was one of the first arts offices, established in 2001, is responsible for the development and support of artists in Galway City and advises the Council with its expertise in contemporary art practice. The Art Service runs an own programme of residencies, events, artistic interventions and strategic partnerships (Galway City Council, n.d.).

The Mayo County Council Arts Service is run by an Acting Arts Officer, a Co-ordinator for Arts & Disability services, a Co-ordinator for Acting Public Arts, supported by an Assistant Arts Officer and a Community Employment Supervisor. The Arts Service is part of the services of the Mayo Council represented by 30 elected councillors from the four municipal districts of the County of Mayo (Mayo County Council, n.d.).

The Roscommon Arts Office is part of the services of the Roscommon County Council responsible for the administrative areas of the County Roscommon and representing the municipal districts of Atholone, Boyle and Roscommon with 18 elected councillors. The Roscommon is led by one of the directors of Services who is in charge of Services for Housing, International Protection and Culture. As Arts Officer, the person is responsible for Creative Ireland programmes and funding and serves as a coordinator. In the Culture and Creativity Team, the Arts officer collaborates with a Creative Communities Engagement Officer, coordinators, further service officers and directors of related local institutions (Creative Ireland Programme Office, n.d.-b).

Among the Arts Offices and related services and regional responsibilities for libraries, art centres, creative community engagement, heritage, archives and others, the services and responsibilities on regional development are at least partly relevant for the CCI sector and its embedment in the cultural and creative ecosystem.

In particular, the *Galway Rural Development (GRD)* contains programmes and strategies to support the community groups and individuals in rural areas' towns and villages by advocating and implementing rural community development programmes to revitalise communities, support enterprise development and maintain the natural and built heritage throughout the County Galway. GRD implements, among other items, LEADER strategies and initiatives (Galway Rural Development, n.d.). Similar organisations in the IN SITU Lab research area of the Western coastal periphery are the

Roscommon LEADER Partnership (RLP) (Roscommon LEADER Partnership, n.d.) and the *Mayo Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)* as an independent sub-committee of the Mayo County Council, related to the Mayo North East LEADER group.

9.3.4. Structures and implementations at the local level

Beyond the public structures, cultural policymaking takes place in municipal districts, in small towns and in villages as well. Cultural policy is seen as discussion-led negotiation on objectives and measurements on ways to shape the local togetherness of individuals and communities in transforming societies, on defining the local identity and on developing innovative ways of living in non-urban areas, which can be found in diverse forms. The field research in urban, rural and remote places in Galway County provided a first insight into the meaning of local cultural policymaking.

In Connemara's village *Letterfrack*, inhabited by about 200 residents, the *Connemara Community Radio* has been developed by locals into a place and instrument of shaping togetherness and identity in a changing world. Started as a pirate community radio by locals in 1988, the first legalised broadcasting began in 1995. "Nearly everyone has taken part for radio-productions here, playing music in one of the sound studios, being invited guest to a radio show or engaging for the content-related or technical development, acting as moderator, programme-maker, or journalist," reports a resident of Letterfrack when asked about the meaning of the community project. The local radio is deeply rooted in the collective narratives and identity of the locals. On average, 85 volunteers are active throughout the year for "their" radio. Topics and programmes are often based on local issues and personalities, the music played is selected and often played by locals or regional music groups. Topics that affect the local population are discussed by them on air and on the cosy sofa which serves as meeting point in the office and, at the same time, a third place where people meet and contribute with ideas and stories. Photos on the walls show the long history of the community radio and lots of neighbours, friends, family members and guests who are gave the community a voice and shaped the local society by their engagement (Connemara Community Radio, n.d.).

In *Killimore*, a village in the East of Galway County inhabited by 317 persons (April 2022), it is difficult to detect the signs of cultural policy or a cultural life at all. Agriculture still plays a role, with the village including a tiny library, some paper sheets attached to a window announcing creativity courses led by a local artist, three pubs, a shop, the church, and its parish hall, surrounded by a huge cemetery. Few people are on the street which links the villages in the region. Talks with locals reveal what is hidden behind the walls. A self-organised history club plays a role, women meet to prepare parish activities and celebrations and share concerns and ideas by visiting each other while men meet in the living room atmosphere of Duffy's Bar to discuss what should or could be done for the community. Sport events play a big role and include all generations and genders.

Inishbofin, an Atlantic Island about 45 minutes by ferry from the West Coast, is inhabited by about 180 persons and is a destination for many tourists coming throughout the summer. A small team of

municipal employees lead a community centre which is at the same time kindergarten, after-school-care, tourist office, café, sports-hall and shop for art and creative handcraft products made by residents. A blackboard shows some promotion for yoga courses and flyers show that in summer a wide range of cultural programmes, including an arts festival, offer a big variety of cultural events. The young tourist office employee is enthusiastic about the cultural life of the small community and the way the locals shape their togetherness and invite impulse givers, connect to artists and cultural scene and try to implement learned techniques and ideas into the cultural life of the island³².

“Before the pandemic I decided to leave the island and to emigrate to Canada. During the pandemic we were enclosed, and nobody could leave the island. So, we started to make the best out of it and developed a wide range of activities and looked for good ways to have a good life together. We found great ways in this time and so I decided to stay in this community where everyone is needed and is essential part of its development.” (Interview Group D, 23 February 2024)

9.4. Lessons learned

Numerous plans, policies and frameworks build a complex environment for the CCI sector in Ireland, developed and introduced in a top-down structure. Local authorities take their legislative lead from the Local Government Act (2001) to create arts development plans within their areas. The development and collaborating discussion on the adequate strategies on local level reveal an intensive examination of ways to achieve a cultural policy that is based on national strategies and planning but fitting to regional and local place-, actor- and community-based challenges and needs.

The process towards Galway ECOC 2020 at territorial level and the experiences by the COVID-19 crisis all over Ireland led to a vision on cultural policy as an overarching policy field. Culture and creativity are more and more recognised in its broad meaning and the actors in the field considered relevant, not only by arts councils but also by regional development policies, for a sustainable and future-related economy, as incubators of innovation, necessary in educational issues, social cohesion and community wellbeing as well as for other policy fields and goals related to non-urban areas.

On one hand, the top-down structure and simultaneous relevance of cultural policy undoubtedly strengthens the awareness and promotion of art and culture. On the other hand, the question arises as to whether the population in the regions is carried along by these framework conditions and experiences a sense of community, as is the case in Iceland, for example, that we will see next.

³² For more information: Inishbofin Development Company CLG (2021).

10. Cultural policy in Iceland and its non-urban territories (West region)

The non-urban area of West Iceland (Icelandic: Vesturland) had been the focus of multimethod research through desktop and literature research as well as through empirical research methods like digital focus group discussions and expert interviews with different stakeholders of cultural policy, administration, regional development and cultural practice, deepened and supplemented by the results of two participative workshops on cultural policy during the Consortium Meetings in Finland (31 May – 1 June 2023) and Ireland (19–21 February 2024) and an exchange on findings with the IN SITU researchers of the Icelandic IN SITU Lab of the University of Bifröst. In particular, Njörður Sigurjónsson from Bifröst University, expert in cultural policy; Sigursteinn Sigurðsson as cultural coordinator of the region of Vesturland, Iceland; and the IN SITU Lab researchers at Bifröst University, supported the findings by providing research results, practice-based experiences and thoughts on Icelandic Cultural Policy. In addition, interviews on gender issues in the cultural and creative sector of the rural area of Vesturland provided further insights into the state of cultural policy.

10.1. The research area Iceland and its Lab region West Iceland (Vesturland)

“We only have the capital as an urban area and then the rest is kind of rural. What we have, a place in the north, Akureyri, which is more urban, but still is a non-urban area. Yes, Iceland is quite small, and we don't have that much of a population, although we're growing.” (Expert talk/interview with Erna Kaaber, 13 September 2023)

Iceland is divided into eight regions (Icelandic: *landshlutar*) (see Figure 16). Contrary to other Nordic nations, the Icelandic regions are not territorial units in an administrative sense but follow more or less the borders of historical identification areas.

The capital region of Reykjavik, Höfuðborgarsvæðið, is the main living area with about 63% of all Icelandic residents. The area is relatively densely populated by nearly 250,000 inhabitants on an area of slightly more than 1000 km² and a population density of 237.6 inhabitants/km². In the West Iceland region, the IN SITU researched territory, about 17,500 inhabitants live in an area of about 9500 km², leading to an average of 1.84 inhabitants/km². Other regions in the Northern and Eastern part of Iceland are even less densely populated.

Following the OECD definition of *functional urban areas*, only the capital is seen as core of a functional urban area, its surroundings comprising the related commuting zone (see Figure 17). None of the other Icelandic regions has a similar status.

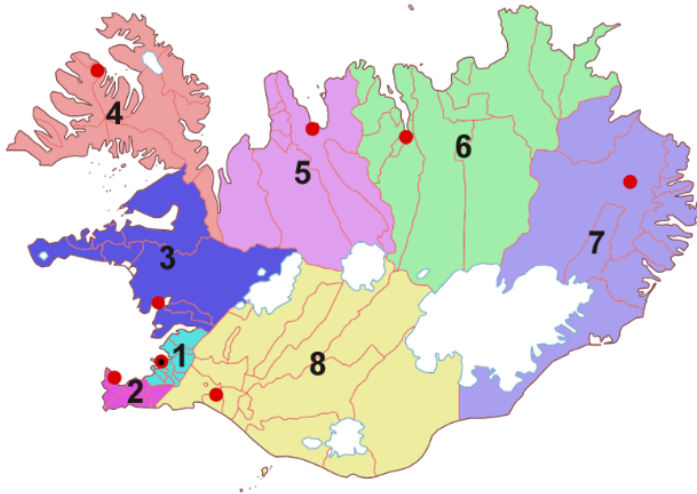


Figure 16 - Regions of Iceland

Source: S. Bjarki, Regions of Iceland.png, 17 July 2005.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Regions_of_Iceland.png



Figure 17 - Functional urban areas in Iceland (related to population density and commuting activities)

Source: OECD (2022)

The natural, climatic and landscape-related environment had through all the times an influence on the allocation and structure of settlements and its administrative organisation. Regions with glacier zones in the mountainous centre of Iceland, smaller islands and zones with volcanic activities were regions without any settlements or agricultural use and therefore not necessarily involved in organisational structures. From the beginning of settlements, the Icelandic municipalities had been fundamental units to the country's constitutional structure.

The significant population growth in the larger towns, above all Reykjavik, contrasts with a population decline in the rural municipalities that are no longer located in the commuting zone of the capital region or other labour market centres. While Iceland has seen a population increase of around 35% since 2000 (279,049 in 2000; 376,248 in 2022), the influx in the Vesturland region analysed was even higher. In Arkanes and Borgarbyggð, the number of residents increased by almost 47% each, which is partly due to the location of the region in the wider commuting area of the capital region, but also to good opportunities for remote employment, especially since a large tunnel was built in 1998 which made the transport connection via National Road 1 to Reykjavik considerably easier. The commute from Akranes to the capital can now be completed in 30 to 40 minutes. In addition to the well-utilised commuting options, the region itself offers a large number of jobs, above all in the Grundartangi heavy industry complex, with an enormous number of commuters, 1100 employees, and corresponding employment opportunities in the extensive service industry with a further 1000 employees. The harbour facilities at Grundartangi are among the most important in Iceland, and the ferrosilicon plant there is the second largest production facility in the world. In addition, there are still agricultural businesses and tourist facilities.

The historic Hanseatic town of Akranes is also home to one of the country's most important fishing harbours with a traditionally large number of employment opportunities in the fishing and fish processing industries. The largest cement works can be found here, as well as a not insignificant service sector.

"You know in Akranes. It used to be fishery but then it actually was taken over by Grundartangi, that's aluminium smelter, very close by, but then there was like a new part of employment scene, that's even higher. [...] People [are] living in Akranes and working in Reykjavik, [...] because Akranes is very close to Reykjavik. It's only about like 30 to 40 minutes to drive [...]. So, this is very easy to live in Akranes and have employment in Reykjavik. So, we are actually seeing just a whole new a group of people, that are coming in." (Interview/expert talk with Group D, 13 September 2023)

10.2. Grounds and strategies for Icelandic cultural policy

“We are working very hard in Iceland. You know, being so few is a challenge, that we are actually addressing.” (Interview/expert talk with Group D, 13.09. 2023)

Iceland is a parliamentary republic. Culture policy in Iceland is described similar to policy models of other Nordic countries like Finland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden that base their policy on the work of relatively strong ministries and arts councils as well as on strategies which are close to the British cultural policy model of the “arm’s length principle” (Sigurjonsson, 2013; Kaaber, 2022; Mangset et al., 2008). In Iceland, various policy bodies and institutions also follow the British “arm length’s principle”³³ and show a strong interest in artistic autonomy, freedom of expression and a centrality of governmental provision of funds for cultural and creative stakeholders and institutions (interview and correspondence, cultural policy expert, 2023). The IN SITU Lab in Iceland listed 16 culture- and innovation-related policies: four on a local level, three on regional and nine on national level (IN SITU, 2023b).

10.2.1. Grounds and strategies at the national level

The history of cultural policy in Iceland seems to be a short one compared to those of other Nordic or European countries. It was only in 2013 that the first formal cultural policy document on national level was passed as resolution, regulating cultural policy and administration of cultural affairs in general. A few national documents followed. Nevertheless, the annual state budget reveals the parliamentary intentions on fostering cultural affairs: “Strong individualistic values, belief in the self-made man, and market-driven self-interest solutions, give Icelandic culture a more liberal disposition” (Ólafsson, 2003), and may have influenced policy in Iceland like in other strongly rural- and agriculturally-based countries with a long history of more or less self-sustaining settlements and small societal systems. This fact seems to be one of the reasons of the reduced and relatively late commitment of Iceland’s national policy in cultural affairs. Icelandic municipalities are public entities with a high level of independence and decision power as well as responsibilities to offer services to their residents. The Icelandic Constitution states in its Article 78 that municipalities shall manage their affairs independently and have the right to decide about the allocation of their income.

“The rationality behind [cultural policy] has historically, and still does, mostly to do with [this] independence [and] nationalism. Which is different from many other countries” (Interview/expert talk with Group D, 13 September 2023). In comparison to other European countries, Hungary and Iceland have the highest expenditure for cultural services with 1.1% of GDP spent for cultural affairs (Eurostat,

³³ As previously mentioned, the arm’s length principle is based on the idea that arts councils should exist and operate with relative autonomy from central government. It is believed that political influence over council activities should be kept to a minimum (Quinn, 1996).

2024). Nevertheless, beside the high ranking of expenditure, these facts can't tell us much about cultural policy grounds and strategies or even if there are remarkable similarities between the cultural policy in both countries. Comparing Iceland's cultural policy to another nation with a very high budget for Cultural Affairs and a focus on nationalism, the strategies and practice in Iceland seem to lead into a more diversity- and innovation-based way of identity-building, aiming for ways and expressions which include the acceptance of societal transformation and diversification as part of an ongoing way to shape a "corporate identity" based on togetherness in diversity.

"In Iceland, there's been a lot of development in the last few years, especially on a regional level and at the local level. You can see that with the culture politics in Reykjavik and [...] of smaller towns, that this is an institutional level, [...] including people from various different backgrounds and try to open up."
(Interview/expert talk with Group D, 13 September 2023)

The interviewed experts stated that, since 2000, several policy reforms in Iceland have been introduced, putting culture on the political agenda, governments have started to formalise cultural policy and state its objectives more explicitly at the national and the local level. The policy aims to increase professionalisation and decentralisation, emphasising the need for arm-length's policy and an administrative structure for public cultural funding (interview, cultural policy expert, 2023). Besides different reforms and cultural agreements with municipalities, Performance Management Contracts with the main cultural institutions through special Parliamentary Acts have secured a more formalised and policy-related relationship between the national ministerial level as administrative supervisor and the CCIs and cultural stakeholders as recipients of funding, clearly stating objectives and duties of the relationships. This new way of cultural policy is seen, for example, in the professionalisation of museums by the parliamentary decided Museum Act no. 141/2011, which secures the tasks and rights of the Icelandic Museum Council as national "Arts Council" deciding over the distribution of museum funding. By this act, the parliamentary decision-making power was handed over to museum professionals and stakeholders in the field, following the political strategy and principle of arm's length. The objective of further decentralisation and more transparency in cultural policy and administration can be identified in the development Cultural Agreements with regional associations and municipalities. The content of those agreements has been the task to develop one's own cultural policy objectives based on bottom-up processes, including formats like discussions of actors and cultural stakeholders. These Cultural Agreements were, at the same time, defined as instruments to stimulate discourses, develop and strengthen networks and alliances of cultural policy in the multilevel policy system as well as between policymakers, stakeholders and experts of the cultural and creative sector, representatives of cultural institutions and non-governmental grassroots organisations and initiatives.

After the last national election, the focus on cultural policy started to shift more towards the economic aspect of culture and creativity. Economic and Cultural Affairs are now combined as tasks of one Ministry, and Culture is no longer as strongly related to education as before.

“Now there’s also been sort of a development towards looking at culture more of a sort of developmental or economic force so that we would be able to use the various benefits of culture and cultural work to help in other sectors, going to try to promote, maybe, promote more a sort of creativity, maybe and especially in relation to tourism around the country.” (Interview/expert talk with Group D, 13 September 2023)

As its main responsibilities concern cultural policy, the Ministry of Economic and Cultural Affairs describes the task: “to create the conditions for artistic variety, creativity, and initiative to flourish and to support arts and culture” in a way that every resident of Iceland has the opportunity “to enjoy arts and culture regardless of the social status” (Government of Iceland, n.d.-a, n.p.). The governmental duties related to the overarching objectives are seen primarily on the operation of national arts institutions and support for professional artists, supporting preservation of material cultural heritage. The Ministry operates key cultural heritage institutions and supports research and education in history and culture. Furthermore, the Ministry operates the Media Commission and the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service (RÚV) and holds responsibility for non-formal youth affairs, sports and anti-doping programmes (Government of Iceland, n.d.-a).

The first overarching paper on national culture policy strategy was developed between 2009 to 2013, released in 2013 under the former Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and states in its introduction to “implement a policy on the arts and the cultural heritage [and having for] the first time a specific public policy [...] drawn up in this domain” (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Iceland, 2013). The *National Cultural Policy Strategy* had been seen as an instrument “for government and lawmakers in future debates, in policymaking in specified areas and in decision-making” (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Iceland, 2013, p. 3). The formulated cornerstones were related to:

- Creative work and participation in cultural life,
- Easy access to the arts and to cultural heritage,
- Cooperation between government and the large number of people and institutions which are active in the field of culture, and
- Participation by children and young people in cultural life. (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Iceland, 2013, pp. 3-4)

Due to the severe financial crisis and recession in Iceland after the 2008 crash that affected all municipalities, the need for collaboration between government and independent local authorities was stressed in the National Cultural Policy Strategy as well as in other papers and, as a result, cultural contracts were drawn up with regional associations supporting cultural activities outside the capital regions.

In 2018 and 2021, follow-up national action plans for cultural affairs were released (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Iceland, 2021). In 2021, a first marketing council for Creative Iceland was established as a joint effort of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Education and Culture,

the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Industries and Innovation, Promote Iceland and the arts and creative industries “to promote the promotion of creative industries and Icelandic art abroad under the working name Creative Iceland” (Government of Iceland, 2021, n.p.).

With the introduction of the Cultural Policy of 2013, efforts towards a professional framework and administration for cultural affairs were enhanced and the general objective of fostering the quality of in-service production and other welfare tasks were described. Kaaber (2022) remarks that these strategies laid an “special emphasis on children and their opportunities to participate in cultural activities and thus shape society” (Kaaber, 2022, p. 106). The new action plan for culture, published in 2021, focuses more on ongoing transformation processes and “makes considerations for immigrants, as well as for the effect of societal changes linked to technological development and research on cultural consumption and participation” (Kaaber, 2022, p. 106). Approximately at the same time, due to the lack of collected and transferred knowledge and data, the launch of a “Creative Research Centre [...] at Bifröst Statistics Iceland [that will] publish cultural indicators” and some other measurements concerning the implementation of the cultural action plan was announced (Government of Iceland, 2021). In the new 2021 strategy, diverse cultural activities are stated as key factors of Iceland’s economy, especially in their role of influencing tourism, intellectual property and technology.

10.2.2. Grounds and strategies at the territorial level

The 64 municipalities of Iceland, such as cities, towns and parishes, are combined in eight regional units, which pursue joint interests of their local authorities, coordinate efforts and perform special operational tasks (interview, cultural policy expert, 2023). On one hand, legal grounds state the independence of municipalities due to historic development and self-understanding while, on the other hand, the idea of a national responsibility for the functioning of the Icelandic economy and towards a common national identity based on narratives, as well as the importance of dealing with a wide range of societal transformations, have led at least to a certain focus on coordination and strategy building on regional level combining both policies. “So, we don't have in Iceland a regional level of government. Not officially, not as you would have in Germany, for instance, but the culture policy is special in that sense that the collaboration on the regional level is almost taking the shape of an official body” (Interview/expert talk with Group D, 13 September 2023).

10.2.3. Grounds and strategies at the regional level

Seven of the eight regions of Iceland are based on a joint cultural policy, a common cultural fund and a cultural administrator to allocate funding grants. The Capital Region is not part of this cooperation due to the special tasks and circumstances as the only region in Iceland which is described as a core area with an urban function (see OECD, 2022). The cooperation of regions is based on contracts between the former Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the regional cultural councils developed for the period of 2004–2014. Due to these contracts, local authorities were expected to “contribute with at least 25% of the cultural fund and share administrative costs” (Interview/expert

talk with Group D, 13 September 2023). The strategy paper described the aims to “stimulate cultural activities and to channel the support of the state and local authorities in one direction” (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Iceland, 2009, p. 21), supporting the decentralising of cultural funding. In 2015, the cultural agreements and regionally developed cultural policy strategies were merged with comprehensive region-specific Growth Agreements into Regional Plans of Action as Strategic Plans (Sóknaráætlun), operated by Regional Development Agencies. The Act on Strategic Regional Plan (Act. N. 69/2015) and Regional Plans on Action from 2015 aimed to support regional development and increase consultation in regional affairs between ministries, in each region and between administrative levels (Ministry of Infrastructure, Iceland, 2022). These strategic plans integrate social and economic development and provide a framework for regional support. Each Regional Strategic Plan is part of a contract between the Icelandic government and the Regional Development Office, with – normally – a four-year time frame. The main focus in Regional Strategic Planning is related to economic aspects like stimulating of investments, increasing employment opportunities, encouragement of networking and cooperation (OECD, 2023b). Despite the focus on economics, cultural affairs are considered in the regional strategic planning and this has led to the development of region-related cultural policy plans since 2013.

The focus group in the IN SITU Lab region of West Iceland (Vesturland) ranked the West Region’s Regional Plan of Action with high importance for Cultural Policy affairs on a territorial level:

This plan sets out measurable goals and priorities for the development of the region and includes culture as one of its five pillars. Alongside this, the Cultural Policy of the West Region promotes the regions’ unique cultural identity and was produced with the goals of the Regional Plan of Action in mind. The West Region’s Innovation Network was established to connect different groups, share information, and assist in business development and new projects in the region. (IN SITU, 2023b, p. 72)

The specific Cultural Policy Strategy on the regional level is laid down in the *West Iceland Cultural Strategy*, the actual version related to the period of 2021–2024 (Association of Municipalities in West Iceland, 2022b). The work on an follow-up Cultural Policy Plan has started and involves a wide range of policy levels, administration, the regional coordinators, researchers, municipalities, artists and cultural stakeholders. The Cultural Policy Plan describes a policy intending to form the basis for West Iceland’s decision-making in cultural matters, including decisions on allocation of project grants, establishments, and operating grants from the Western Development Fund, coordinated by the West Iceland Regional Office (*Samtök Sveitarfélaga á Vesturlandi*, short: SSV) as agent.

The West Iceland Cultural Policy Plan combines the economically oriented priorities – following the general regional plans – with social and participation-oriented aspects and the arm’s-length principles as a red line by stating that:

[t]he policy aims to increase the share of creative industries in the economy, promote cultural activities and make a tangible contribution to the region's value creation. Municipalities in the region will work together on cultural issues and the development of culture-related industries, with the aim that West Iceland will be known for its strong cultural work, arts, culture-related innovation, and creative industries. Emphasis is placed on the diverse artistic creation of everyone in society, regardless of age, position, or origin. (Association of Municipalities in West Iceland, 2022b)

10.2.4. Grounds and strategies at the local level

The special state and self-government of the local authorities is based in Article 78 of the Constitution and Article 2 of the Act on Local Authorities, with the tasks that are required by law based on Article 7 of the Act on Local Authorities. In general, those tasks can be divided in three main fields:

- administration, including the monitoring of public health, construction, business and commercial work;
- general technical services for the residents, like waste management, firefighting and public transportation; and
- welfare, social, educational, and cultural services like operation of compulsory schools, preschools, music schools, public libraries, youth work and others.

For the financing of those services and tasks, the municipalities have some leeway in determining taxes. The biggest income is based on municipal income tax.

Due to the smallness of the municipalities (in terms of inhabitants and population density), local policy has always encountered advantages but also severe challenges. The closeness and personal relationship between authorities and residents can be a fruitful ground for participative efforts in bottom-up policymaking and civic engagement but, at the same time, small communities are strongly related to impulse-givers and networkers, knowledge and creative potentials as well as to the will to engage for the community and its locally based policymaking. It might be difficult to perform the diverse governmental functions and services with which those tiny municipalities have been charged. As a result of structural reforms that led to the merging of municipalities with a low population density, the complexity of the tasks and areas of responsibility assigned to the municipalities has increased significantly in recent years. The existing municipalities generally cooperate and share responsibilities of the required operating services, especially in smaller communities. Cooperation on a regional and national level is seen in general as a chance to cope with the challenges. This had been one reason for the establishment of an *Association of Local Authorities* in Iceland (*Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga*), founded 1945: “under the Act on Local Authorities, the association is a joint advocate for the local authorities in Iceland” (Sverrisson and Hannesson, n.d., p. 13). All Icelandic municipalities are members of this association with different levels of voluntary participation.

The Local Government Act (No. 136/2011, Version 149a, 20 January 2019) formulates the common policy on individual issues developed by the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities as a joint representative of the country's local public entities (Government of Iceland, 2019b). The association defends their interest towards the government and other parties in Iceland and abroad.

Larger municipalities usually decide for strategy papers or action plans on cultural policy and regard cultural policy as their own strategic field. Cultural Policy as its own policy field on the local level appeared in 2001 on the municipal political agendas (Interview/expert talk with Group D, 13 September 2023). The reason for taking culture seriously as a political issue derived from changes in the urban-centred and internationally related policy of the Reykjavik City Council. Following this approach, cultural policy was founded and developed as a political issue for municipalities in specific cultural agreements between the former Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the larger municipalities as well as agreements with regional cultural councils.

The IN SITU research region of West Iceland (Vesturland) includes nine municipalities with its settlements, villages and small towns. "And some of them have their own culture policies, you know, even smaller ones, they actually do [it] for their own little areas. So, and the main challenges [are] to make all these, policies actually cohere and speak together" (Interview/expert talk with Group D, 13 September 2023). Local cultural policies for municipalities or even smaller entities of settlements like towns and villages were rated as highly important by the cultural actors participating in the Icelandic IN SITU Lab of Bifröst (IN SITU, 2023b). Even if a cultural policy concept could not be identified in every town or settlement, Stykkishólmsbær, Borgarbyggð, Akranes and Dala Auður were named as examples of place-based cultural policy strategies and their policies described as "local strategies for supporting cultural life, improving cultural infrastructure, maintaining cultural awareness and improving cultural education" (IN SITU, 2023b, p. 72). Policy strategies of a participatory development project Dala Auður (Dalabyggð, 2022) had been additionally highlighted due to its focus on enhancement of local power in declining settlements by encouraging innovation and stimulating the initiative of residents in social projects, implemented in the municipality of Dalabyggð in a very sparsely populated area of the West Iceland Region (IN SITU, 2023b).

10.3. Structures and implementation of strategies

10.3.1. Structures at the national level

The Icelandic parliament, the *Alþingi*, is the overarching decision-making body of Icelandic national policy. It has both legislative and at the same time fiscal powers. The standing committee on Judicial Affairs and Education deals with cultural policy issues and the Budget Committee is responsible for all major decisions on year-to-year funding of cultural institutions and major projects. "Debates on cultural policy matters sometimes take place at Alþingi, questions are put to government Ministers, and Ministers submit reports to parliament on various public issues, either on their own initiative or

in response to a request from parliament” (email statement from Group D, September 2023). The Alþingi is responsible for the funding of major cultural institutions and supports other cultural institutions by different ways of funding, for example, on a project basis.

The national government’s policy and administrative tasks are divided into 12 ministries following a new structure and allocation of tasks since 2011 (see Figure 18).

Prime Minister's Office	Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate	Ministry of Health	Ministry Social Affairs and Labour
Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs	Ministry of Infrastructure	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation	Ministry of Justice
Ministry of Food Agriculture and Fisheries	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs	Ministry for Education and Children

Figure 18 - The Icelandic government

Source: Authors’ visualisation according to: Government of Iceland (n.d.-c)

After a political period where a Ministry of Education, Science and Culture had been responsible for administering cultural policy on a national level in Iceland, cultural policy is now seen as more economically-related and the Ministry’s task and name had been changed to a task-combined Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs (Menningar- og viðskiptaráðuneytið).

The Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs is led by a minister and supported by the Department of the Permanent Secretary of the Minister, divided into the sub-level departments of Business Affairs and Tourism and Culture and Media (see Figure 19). A third sub-levelled department of Finance and Operations acts as a cross-cutting administrative level. The work of the Ministry is furthermore supported by political advisors.

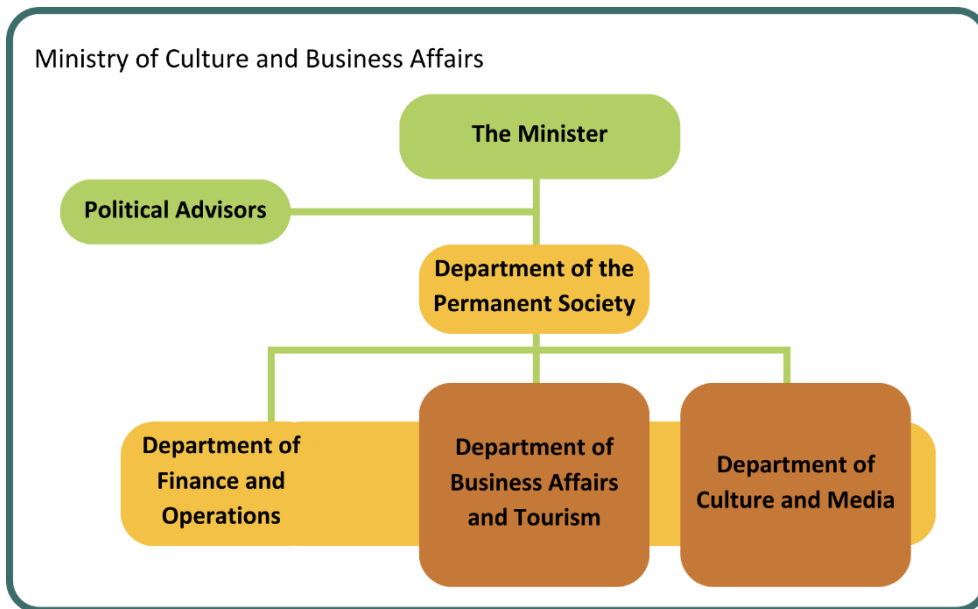


Figure 19 - Icelandic Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs

Source: Authors' visualisation according to: Government of Iceland (2023)

The Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs has been given the role “to create an environment for cultural work, business and tourism that promotes prosperity and value creation for society” (Government of Iceland, n.d.-d, n.p.). Related to this overarching task, the Ministry is responsible for national institutions of arts and cultural heritage. Even if the Ministry is not supposed to interfere with the operational day-to-day running of the cultural institution, it usually nominates the leading management as board or shares this task by nominating chairpersons, while NGO associations or other Ministries nominate other board members: “This practice has the potential to undermine the independence of the cultural organisations from political power, even if the Ministry and its administration make an effort to keep its proper distance” (Interview/expert talk with Group D, 13 September 2023).

The Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs allocates funds from the national budget to artists, NGOs and local authorities for cultural affairs. For decisions of allocation, due to the principle of arm’s length, expert committees are formed. They are usually nominated by cultural stakeholders’ associations like artists’ associations or municipalities of a particular region.

For the *Artists’ Salary Fund*, for example, the Ministry of Cultural and Business Affairs appoints every three years a board of three experts in the field, one of them nominated by the Federation of Icelandic Artists, one by the Iceland Academy of Arts and one without nomination. They decide on the artists’ applications on travel costs for artists and for yearly artists’ salaries as budgets “to enhance art and

the making of art in Iceland” (Rannís, n.d.-b). Professional designers, visual artists, authors, performers, musicians and composers can apply once a year for these grants (Act 57/2009).

The *Children’s Culture Fund of Iceland* addresses artists, arts and culture institutions, associations and others involved in cultural activities for children and youth in accordance with official cultural policies, including children’s culture by artistic and cultural projects performed *for* as well as *with* the active participation of children. The Minister of Culture appoints the five members of the board for the Children’s Culture Fund for the decisions on allocation. One member is nominated by the Prime Minister herself, one by the Federation of Icelandic Artists, one by the Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs, one by the Ombudsperson for Children and one by the Youth Council of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The Icelandic Children’s Cultural Fund was established as a public initiative and laid down in the parliamentary resolution on an action plan for the promotion of children’s culture for the years 2024–2028 (Parliament of Iceland, 2023).

Others with similar structures and relatedness to CCIs, creative and cultural sectors and the allocation of national and respective budgets built by EU funding are: the *Library Fund*, *Music Recording Fund* to empower Icelandic music by giving grants to record and release music, *Support for publishing books in Icelandic*, the *Performing Arts Fund* for individual projects and the *Music Fund* for general music activities, and for the promotion and marketing of music and musicians (Rannís, n.d.-c).

The *Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís)* is appointed to support research, innovation, education and culture in Iceland by the national ministries. It coordinates the existing national funding programmes in these areas of responsibility as well as the Icelandic participation in European culture-related programmes such as Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, Digital Europe, Life and Creative Europe (Rannís, n.d.-a).

Beside the Ministry of Cultural and Business Affairs, other ministries are also related to cultural policy tasks, like the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** which is responsible “for the promotion of Icelandic culture abroad or the **Ministry for Finance and Economic Affairs** for financial framework, budgets and tax policies that affect cultural production” (interview, cultural policy expert, 2023). The *Ministry of Infrastructure* is related to local government affairs and regional policy. The *Department of Local Government and Regional Affairs* is responsible for regional and rural policy, research and the development of strategic planning and programmes, including the regional action plans which focus, among other topics, on cultural policy (Government of Iceland, n.d.-b).

10.3.2. Structures at the territorial level

Iceland is a country with only about 372,000 inhabitants, with more than 50% of them in the metropole area of Iceland’s capital, Reykjavik. All other areas of Iceland can be described as *rural* and most of the municipalities with a significantly low population density. A regional level does not exist in terms of a constitutional form like in other European countries but for practice-related coordination

and communication structures, local authorities cooperate in *regional associations* related to the different regions of Iceland, supported by a *governmental steering committee of regional development* in preparing plans of action and in negotiations between the Associations and the Ministries. The regional plans of action are developed in participatory processes involving local authorities, government agencies, representatives of the private sector, cultural organisations, academic communities and other stakeholders in the respective regions (Government of Iceland, 2019a, n.d.-b).

The *regional development plans* lay down priorities and needs of the respective regions, including the main objectives of regional planning, national planning policy, strategic plans, cultural policy and others. The state funding for regional or local issues is allocated to the **regional associations** related to their plans of action. Each region allocates the funds to projects in the cultural field and other industries in general. Funding of lead projects and support by a development competition funds are the two main lines of allocation of regional development funding (Kaaber, 2022). The Icelandic *Regional Development Institute* supports all rural regions through financial assistance and loans, regional strategy development to implement government goals, and a network of eight *industrial regional development agencies* whose goal is to promote innovation (OECD, 2023b).

Each of those regional development agencies has employed an *agent for cultural matters*, someone at least, in part, working on cultural matters.

10.3.3. Structures at the regional level

The West Iceland Regional Office (Samtök Sveitarféiaga á Vesturland, short: SSV) is one of eight Icelandic regions dealing with regional development. It is a regional joint association combining the tasks of the Federation of Municipalities in West Iceland (FMW) and the West-Iceland Regional Development (WRD). The FMW advocates the interests of the municipalities of Vesturland on a general base, the WRD assists individuals, companies and municipalities in job creation and innovation, including consulting, capacity building and networking, assisting in providing funds and giving impulses, related also to CCIs and to all kinds of cultural issues (West Iceland Regional Office, n.d.). The person in charge of these tasks for West Iceland's cultural sector on a regional level describes his position as a cultural administrator: "I usually work on behalf of the municipalities. We are also like a voice to the artists [...] to give them advice and counselling, recording, which fund to apply to and often very young artists [...] helping them out and just reading over the applications and I also do that for the municipalities" (Interview/expert talk with Group D, 13 September 2023).

Beside the cultural policy of the regional development Office of Vesturland, the IN SITU Lab Partner named the following organisations as stakeholders for cultural policies and its implementation:

West Iceland's innovation network (NýVest) is the region's private/public sponsor in matters of innovation, connecting entrepreneurs and business partners, offering grant support and consultation (<https://nyvest.is/>). Similar and in personal union with the SSV, the Association of Municipalities in West Iceland employs a cultural officer who works on various co-operation projects and consultancy on cultural issues (Association of Municipalities in West Iceland, 2022a, 2022c). Part of the task consists of cooperation with the Structural Fund and provision of information and advice to applicants for cultural grants. Additionally, the Cultural Officer works with the Cultural Affairs Professional Council on proposals for the “allocation of cultural grants from the West Iceland Development Fund and manages communication with the fund's beneficiaries” (Nýsköpunarnet Vesturlands, n.d.). The NýVest network aims at innovation and regional development and specifically addresses the creative industries.

Creatrix ehf., as a private initiative aims to consult and support cultural, creative and educational projects, focuses mainly but not exclusively on educational matters. Additionally, Creatrix supports grant applications, consults in strategic and creative planning processes as well as in capacity building, offering workshops and courses and cultural projects (Creatrix ehf., n.d.).

10.3.4. Structures at the local level

With societal, technological, economic and other transformations, the role of authorities has changed throughout recent years and the challenges in fulfilling their tasks has increased substantially. Collaboration of municipalities or even the merger of local authorities have become a way to cope with the challenging situations, enforced by dynamics of demography. The number of municipalities has therefore substantially decreased in recent years, while their scope has expanded – regardless of size or number of inhabitants. In 1990, 204 municipalities were still existing and then merged until today to only 64, but some of them are still only populated by less than 100 inhabitants (Sverrisson and Hannesson, n.d.). The Association of Local Authorities operates in eight regional associations of local authorities and pursues the joint interests of the municipalities in the respective region. At least one representative of each municipality takes part in the annual congress, where the association's board is elected, consisting of nine representatives. The tasks are divided between three departments – the Development Department, the Management Department and the Office and Service Department. On one hand, the board and the employed staff members communicate with the Parliament and the Cabinet, participate in the preparation of cases, provide commentary on parliamentary and matters, draft proposals and advocate for the common interests of the local communities; on the other hand, the Association serves municipalities through providing information and guidelines for decision-making, consulting in all issues concerning the municipal tasks and projects, handling collective bargaining for wages of municipal employees, and acting as representative for the municipalities (Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga, n.d.). The main office is located in the capital Reykjavik and regional offices can be found in several regions as well as a digital service (Sverrisson and Hannesson, n.d.).

The IN SITU research region of West Iceland (Vesturland) consists of nine municipalities:

- Akraneskaupstaður (with Akranes as an independent city, 7997 inhabitants on 9 km²);
- Borgarbyggð (4090 inhabitants on 4926 km², the central settlement is Borgarnes with 2165 inhabitants);
- Snæfellsbær (1678 inhabitants on 684 km²);
- Stykkishólmsbær (1308 inhabitants on 253 km²);
- Grundarfjarðarbær (861 inhabitants on 148 km²);
- Hvalfjarðarsveit (765 inhabitants on 482 km²);
- Dalabyggð (655 inhabitants on 2421 km²);
- Eyja- og Miklaholtshreppur (114 inhabitants on 383 km²); and
- Skorradalshreppur (75 inhabitants on 216 km²).

With a total density of about 1.6 people per km², the region is slightly higher populated than the rest of Iceland. Most of the municipalities stated small increasing of population in the last year. Akranes and Borgarnes are the largest *towns* in the region while other settlements and villages in the region's municipalities are significantly less populated³⁴. The local authorities are in the heart of the Icelandic community and have roots all the way back to the Commonwealth Period (930–1262 AC), deriving from parish communities.

The *Icelandic municipalities* are governed by directly elected councils varying in size from 5 to 15 members, depending on the population. Most of the municipal entities employ an executive and politically independent municipal manager (sveitarstjór) for most of the rural or peri-urban municipalities or a mayor (bæjarstjóri or borgarstjóri) for more urban municipalities. The elected officials form committees as working groups dealing with the administrative and policy fields. Most of the larger, in the sense of more populated, municipalities build a *cultural committee* responsible for cultural institutions, libraries and music schools as well as other cultural activities related to municipal tasks and under municipal supervision. These committees are, at the same time, decision-making bodies on municipal grants for local cultural activities including the local work of CCIs embedded in the cultural and creative ecosystem.

For *Akraneskaupstaður*, nine elected members comprise the **municipal council**. A *Culture and Museum Committee* with five members is elected by the Municipal Council. The municipality's administration is divided in several departments, one of them responsible for **Education and Leisure** which is responsible, among other topics, for culture and museums, administered by an employed **director for culture and museums**. The Culture and Museum Committee manages the District Museum, cultural programming and events, the municipal library, photo and district archives in the

³⁴ Statistics Iceland (2023), all data 1 January 2023.

charge of the municipal council and supported by the employed Mayor. Part of the responsibility is the decision on the allocation of cultural grants. For 2023, an amount of 3,520,000 ISK (€23,637.54) was allocated to realise 20 cultural projects ranging from arts exhibitions to a multilingual storytime project, from concerts, music and theatre workshops to a podcast production and sociocultural community building projects, funded by amounts between €268 up to €3000. The allocated sum had been only about 11.6% of the money which had been requested in the 40 applications. In its decision, the Culture and Museum Committee focused on “supporting projects and events that are conducive to strengthening the town spirit, encouraging diverse artistic creation, supporting cultural upbringing and/or enriching the cultural life of the town” (Akraneskaupstaður, 2024, n.p.). Akranes runs at least two town fairs every year - Irish Days in July and the cultural fair “Vakandi dagar” in November - and organises a wide range of concerts and other cultural programmes. The municipality also runs a museum with a focus on local heritage, a library and the municipal archives. A wide range of CCI stakeholders, NGOs and initiatives are situated in the town of Arkanes, including a high-class documentary film festival (Markaðsstofa Vesturlands, n.d.). The city council nominates the *Artist of the City* and the *Cultural Prize* each year.

For *Dalabyggð*, as another example, seven elected members comprise the **municipal council**, managed by an employed *municipal manager* and supported by a *deputy municipal manager*. The latter is additionally in charge of all municipal tasks according to employment, marketing, culture and tourism, and web media management. Three of the members of the municipal council are active in the *Culture Committee*. The very sparsely populated municipality runs the Dalasýsla *Cultural and Development Fund* which focuses on project funding in the municipality. For the upcoming year (2024), the fund received seven applications amounting to 4,294,517 ISK (€28,757) while only 1,000,000 ISK (€6696) could be allocated. The Committee decided to fund all seven projects with partly reduced amounts ranging from 50,000 ISK (€335) to 200,000 ISK (€1339), among them two Christmas events, a music project, courses in ancient crafts and storytelling as well as family events. The applicants range from a singing group to the District Archive, the Scouting Association, a heritage NGO and single artists. The municipality also runs two museums – a regional heritage museum (Dalir, n.d.-a) and the District Art Museum for art works of local artists (Dalir, n.d.-d), a District Library (Dalir, n.d.-b) and the District Archives (Dalir, n.d.-c).

In even smaller municipalities, there is still an elected municipal council with at least five elected members and an employed municipal manager, but there might not be a special cultural committee. Some tasks are fulfilled by cooperation with neighbouring municipalities but, besides the public instruments and processes of cultural policy, it can be observed that CCIs and stakeholders in the embedded creative and cultural ecosystem play an important role in cultural policymaking and innovation and in shaping ongoing transformation, especially in the rural and remote parts of the researched region. Sometimes purely place-based and local, sometimes regional or far beyond, artists and cultural stakeholders influence the creative atmosphere, foster networking and development of

civil engagement, give impulses, open-up discourses on visions and get going new steps towards innovative ways.

In expert interviews and focus group discussions, we were informed several times about one outstanding example for this bottom-up policymaking by an artist and cultural entrepreneur who symbolises the potential of those stakeholders but, at the same time, makes it obvious how precarious and challenging the conditions of existence for those actors are – even in an advanced and arm length’s cultural policy system like the Icelandic one. Kári Viðarsson, founder and leader of “The Freezer” (The Freezer, n.d.) is one of those personalities who started an innovative way of shaping the changes of a very rural society in a remote region by his special way of creative entrepreneurship, a self-organised cultural start-up initiative. Growing up in the tiny village of Rif, a two-hour drive from Reykjavik, Kári Viðarsson left to study performing arts in London. After finishing his degrees, he returned home with the idea to develop a theatre project there in an empty old building that had served for a long time as the freezer for the local fish industry. Knowing the locals, the networks and the narratives of the region, his first low-budget theatre project succeeded and, more than that, he began building up a creative community in the rural region, bringing together people who stayed all their life in Rif, other people who returned and still others who moved to the village partly because of the creative atmosphere. In the meantime, he developed the Freezer into a third place for the region, for residents, guests and tourists meeting at the bar; visiting concerts, performances and exhibitions; taking part in theatre workshops or other events; or staying as guests in the social hostel³⁵. He offers theatre workshops in local schools and can be seen as a central networker, impulse generator and driving force for the rural region, bringing together people, shaping togetherness in the transforming life of the rural community and creating an atmosphere of diversity-based playful experimenting from a bottom-up perspective. Well-known and often awarded as outstanding CCI stakeholder for innovation in non-urban areas, he nevertheless can only manage to secure his existence and go on with his projects through a risky and unstable, permanently changing mix of financing by funding and grants, ranging from international and EU programme-related contributions to national, regional and local grants. A lot of time and efforts have to be spent in this “art of surviving” and the related promotion of activities. Nevertheless, Kári and all those CCI stakeholders working in a similar way don’t show up in data – such as in statistics of employment or trademarks – but are the ones who shape the future of rural and non-urban areas by their innovation potential and engagement despite the precarious conditions (Großmann-Krieger, n.d.).

“Kári is such a great driving force for the whole region. He actually has become an example in policymaking. [...] We are thinking about how can we make our policy in that manner, that we create

³⁵ The social hostel is one of the innovative formats Kári established. The prices of the hostels are not fixed and the guests are asked to decide what they think is the adequate amount of money to pay for their stay.

more 'Freezers' and more 'Káris' and try – but if I am super honest, it is a very difficult task, you know.”
(Interview/expert talk with Group D, 13 September 2023)

10.4. Lessons learned

The reason of the *status quo* in cultural policy had been seen by interviewed experts and Icelandic Lab researchers at least partly in the historic development and self-understanding of cultural policy in Iceland and described the positive, challenging and future-based aspects of these policies:

The overall organisation of cultural policy develops in the direction of seeking to ensure the arm's-length principle in allocation of funds, emphasis on professionalism and quality, accessibility, participation, and collaboration. A lack of action plans to complement policies, clarification on actions taken to promote measurable goals, or statistics for evaluation, plus the slow process of implementation reduces the effects of the more systematic approach. (Kaaber, 2022, p. 105)

It is obvious that in Iceland's non-urban regions (similar to Finland) a more place-based policy closer to the needs and potentials of the people living in non-urban areas, is the focus, and the historically developed and identity-based independence of local entities is reflected in all policy fields, but especially in those policies addressing cultural and regional issues. Due to the widespread rurality and remoteness of the mostly small settlements and sparsely populated villages or small towns in Iceland, the policy in Iceland seems more related to persons and practice-based issues than laid down in strategy papers or top-down planning. When existing, planning processes for the development of action plans as strategic instruments are based on the knowledge of experts and stakeholders in the field, regional administrators and cultural coordinators, policymakers, and administrators of related responsibilities in the multileveled system. This bottom-up perspective is highly appreciated by the local IN SITU Lab Partner, interviewed stakeholders and experts in the field. Beyond the widespread positive resonance of the participative aspects of a policy involving place-based needs and visions, some of the communication partners in the research process stressed the fact that there can be observed a certain gap or even contradiction in the new orientation of the national Icelandic cultural policy. This tension is situated in the top-down regulation efforts towards a more economically driven strategy and the focus on guidance or top-down coordination by an arm length's policy on a regional level while, at the same time, focusing on the independence and self-organising power and the sometimes-challenging fulfilment of tasks by the rural and often extremely sparsely populated municipalities.

It seems to be obvious that the societal transformation and demographic as well as migration-related changes lead to permanent challenges regarding the shaping of togetherness, cohesion and diversity-based identity building in non-urban areas. By analysing examples of cultural practice in rural areas of West Iceland it becomes obvious that success measured in social innovation towards more vitality and resilience can be identified where artists and cultural stakeholders act as networkers and impulse-

givers and have the support to experiment with ways of bringing people together, involve locals actively in cultural participation, address families in intergenerational projects and create third places where long-time residents meet with newcomers. This successful bottom-up policy is based on personal relationships rooted in networking, trust, time, humour and a good knowledge of place-based needs in the very rural and diverse areas. While many forms of place-related CCIs could grow, they seem to struggle hard to survive through a mix of risky financing strategies. Until now, there are no possibilities for permanent funding to cover permanent costs. Huge amounts of time and experience knowledge are necessary for applying to grants. Sponsoring or collecting bigger amounts of donations in rural, sparsely populated areas is difficult.

The CCIs are normally one-person-initiatives, freelancers or even volunteers with only few or no paid employees. Their contribution to markets and the cultural field is not measurable through statistical data on trademarks and employment and stays, and therefore are often invisible. An interesting fact that strengthens this argumentation can be seen in the statistics on CCIs' successful applications for public grants. A total of 68% of all granted applications came from those who are considered as employed (Statistics Iceland, 2023); 49% were applications made by legal entities, 68% of those with more than one employee; and 33% by individuals – private and account workers. This indicates their ability to fundraise for stakeholders if they are not forced to be everything at the same time and on high level – artists and/or cultural experts, account workers with expertise in applying for funds, organisers, initiators, networkers, cultural managers, facilitators and even more.

Measurements to establish “high professional” art and cultural events in rural areas or small towns seem to have at least some difficulties to be accepted by residents. However, the interview partner stated that reasons for this could be seen from diverse perspectives; for example, a lot of residents of small towns are not used to forms of high culture that were, for a long time, not present in non-urban areas. Traditionally, people commuting to the capital were used to participate in high-culture events by visiting the urban region, with the distance and outstanding character of visits to the urban cultural scene being a part of the desired events. Thus, it might be not always successful to copy high cultural events which normally take place in an urban context to non-urban places, where they are not deeply embedded in local cultural ecosystems. At least, it can be questioned whether measuring audience development relates to answers about innovation potential for non-urban areas. Instead of comparing cultural consumption of non-urban and urban territories, other indices like social innovation, development of vital networks and resilient communities engaged in the creative shaping of togetherness and future-based implementation of place-based ideas, enriched by impulses from outside, could lead to other kind of measurements and political recommendations for non-urban areas.

Research on these aspects seems to be neglected to-date. One of the most striking reasons might be the choice of research methods and the extreme lack of data. There is nearly no existing data on CCIs

in non-urban regions nor has a method been instituted by administrators for categorising them. This is a problem of all researched non-urban regions. In Iceland, such data could theoretically be provided by the Regional Offices with their good knowledge on regional CCIs.

11. Cultural policy in Latvia and its non-urban territories (Valmiera county)

The non-urban area of Valmiera, Latvia, has been examined through a multimethod research approach involving desktop and literature research as well as focus group discussions and expert interviews with different stakeholders of cultural practice, complemented by research on cultural policy, and deepened and supplemented by the results of two participative workshops on cultural policy during the Consortium Meetings in Finland (31 May – 1 June 2023) and Ireland (19–21 February 2024). In addition, interviews on gender issues in the cultural and creative sector of the rural area of Valmiera provided further insights into the state of cultural policy.

11.1. The research area Latvia and its Lab region Valmiera

Latvia is a parliamentary democracy, a unitary state with a prime minister as the head of the republic’s government. The country is divided into 110 one-level municipalities (Latvian: novads) and nine cities, the latter having their own councils and municipal administrations (Figure 20). The IN SITU research area, Valmiera (Valmieras novads), has the status as one of the nine cities under state jurisdiction.



Figure 20 - Political map of Latvia

Source: Ezilon.com, Latvia, political map.gif, no date. <https://www.ezilon.com/maps/images/europe/Latvia-political-map.gif>

The capital of Riga is the living area of about 32% of all Latvian residents. In comparison to all other regions of Latvia, Riga is relatively densely populated by 632,614 inhabitants on an area of slightly more than 2.000 km², which means a population density of 304/km². The IN SITU research region of Valmiera is inhabited by 50,565 inhabitants living in an area of 2,947,9 km², leading to an average of 17 inhabitants/km². The historic city of Valmiera is the centre of the region and is inhabited by 22,748 residents (National Statistical System of Latvia, n.d.).

The landscape and location of Valmiera influences the settlement structure. The region borders Estonia to the North. Lakes and rivers as well as the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve and the Gauja National Park characterise the landscape. The city centre of Valmiera and the natural environment are tourism destinations. A variety of festivals and events attract local and international visitors throughout the year. In particular, the Valmiera Summer Theatre Festival, the Vidzeme Song and Dance Festival (celebrating Latvian tradition), and the Valmiera City Festival attract broad audiences and offer participation for artists and cultural groups. The cultural sector has been increasingly recognised in recent years, particularly following Valmiera's bid to become European Capital of Culture in 2027. Despite being a regional centre for manufacturing and education, hosting the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, the region is affected by severe demographical changes, shrinking and aging population (Official statistics portal of Latvia, 2024; IN SITU, 2023b).

11.2. Grounds and strategies for Latvian cultural policy

Cultural policy in Latvia is strongly connected to Latvian history and the deep-rooted societal transformations until and after the regaining of independence in 1990. The journey from a totalitarian state to a democratic society brought crucial societal, political and economic changes affecting wide parts of public and private life: "These changes resulted in the introduction of democratic processes, administrative reforms, liberalisation of the economy and introduction of a free market, stabilisation of the new political and economic institutions through privatisation of cultural enterprises, decentralisation of cultural processes and introduction of new legislation" (Compendium Cultural Policies & Trends, 2019b, p. 5).

In the first decade after the re-foundation of the Latvian State, the question of the cultural identity of the young state and its residents became crucial and reaching a common understanding on how to live in the renewed democracy, how to develop a corporate identity to strengthen togetherness and creative power for the challenging transformation influenced the cultural policy and the public debates and the shaping of cultural activities. As one result of this ongoing process, the following paragraph was added to the preamble of the Latvian Constitution:

Since ancient times, the identity of Latvia in the European cultural space has been shaped by Latvian and Liv traditions, Latvian folk wisdom, the Latvian language, universal human, and Christian values. Loyalty to Latvia, the Latvian language as the only official language, freedom, equality, solidarity, justice,

honesty, work ethic and family are the foundations of a cohesive society. Each individual takes care of oneself, one's relatives and the common good of society by acting responsibly toward other people, future generations, the environment and nature. (Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, 2019, n.p.)

Arts, culture and creativity in Latvia are seen as strongly relevant and in the heart of all policymaking. Since the founding of the independent republic, cultural policy is seen as a national task, implemented by a cultural policy architect model by planning, steering, structuring, developing and funding through top-down processes that are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry is seen as responsible for strategy-building, organising and coordinating state cultural policy, social integration policy and media policy as well as cultural education, including vocational education in music and arts schools and related subjects of higher education (Compendium Cultural Policies & Trends, 2019a, p. 7). In 1998, at least, the funding pattern changed from a national responsibility to the delegation of cultural funding to the new established State Cultural Capital Foundation and opened-up cultural policy, at least partially, to follow a policy model based on an arm's length principle. Latvia became a member of UNESCO in 1991, joined the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe in 1992 and signed the Berne Convention in 1995. In 2004, Latvia became a member state of the EU.

11.2.1. Grounds and strategies at the national level

The Latvian cultural policy model is centred around the Ministry of Culture, which formulates and coordinates state cultural policy following an architect model of cultural policy (Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, 2020). There have been recent shifts towards decentralisation and involving non-governmental organisations and civil society in the cultural sector. The Ministry of Culture has signed agreements with non-governmental organisations and has delegated specific tasks to them. Advisory boards or councils comprising cultural professionals, experts and representatives from various sectors actively participate in the policymaking process. On one hand, decentralisation has been accelerated with the Ministry of Culture considering transferring responsibility for amateur art, cultural education and some professional institutions to municipalities. On the other hand, there is also a trend towards centralisation within the state administration (Srakar and Vecco, 2021; Compendium Cultural Policies & Trends, 2019b).

The IN SITU Lab of Latvia, the Latvian Academy of Culture, ranked the national *Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022–2027* as the main cultural policy strategy and leading principle for the subordinated cultural policy of municipalities and cities (IN SITU, 2023b). The development process for the Latvian *Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022–2027* started in close cooperation with local authorities, non-governmental and private cultural institutions, industry representatives, cultural professionals and cultural consumers. An evaluation of the results achieved in the light of the former *Cultural Policy Guidelines 2014–2020* was involved as well as a profound and data-based analysis of “*the existing situation and global trends in the field.*” In March 2022, the cultural policy priorities and tasks for the

upcoming six years were launched as the *Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022–2027. “Culture State”* (Legislation of the Republic of Latvia, 2022).

The main objectives could be described as providing *“a sustainable and accessible culture for the development of Latvia”* as a nation-state and for the growth of every individual. This focus on national as well as on personal development is planned to be achieved through the implementation of five areas of activity:

- Providing high quality cultural services available to the public;
- Promoting active public participation in cultural processes;
- Strengthening the cultural education system as a guarantor for the development of Latvian talents and professional growth of cultural professionals;
- Providing the necessary preconditions for the sustainable development of cultural and creative industries; and
- Ensuring the safeguarding, conservation and sustainable use of cultural heritage. (Legislation of the Republic of Latvia, 2022, n.p.)

The Latvian cultural policy model and national culture policy strategies are based on the development and maintenance of national cultural values rooted in traditions that are understood as indigenous Latvian:

In the context of increasing globalisation and multiculturalism, it is essential to strengthen Latvia's unique cultural values, which form the core of the national identity, and to enrich the Latvian cultural space as a collection of various elements and artefacts of the existence of the Latvian people, rooted in history and appreciated today, consisting of the Latvian language, cultural heritage and environment, social memory and way of life (traditions, symbols, past events, common perceptions, celebrated days, mode of communication, nature and attitude to nature, geographical names, building traditions, sense of colour, etc. etc.), enriched over the centuries by the culture, traditions and language of Latvia's indigenous people – the Livs – and by the cultural influences of other peoples living in Latvia and the imprints of European cultural processes, and manifested in a rich and enduring diversity of regional cultural singularities. (Legislation of the Republic of Latvia, 2022, Chapter 2, n.p.)

The related *National Development Plan 2021–2027* as well as the *Sustainable Development Strategy “Latvia 2030”* describe the meaning of *culture* in terms of national development, that is, as:

- Playing a leading role in the intellectual development and personal growth of human beings, helping to develop skills for creativity;
- Promoting regional and national identity and sense of belonging;
- Fostering the development of civil society; and
- Strengthening democratic values. (Latvija 2030, 2010; Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre of the Republic of Latvia, n.d.).

The IN SITU Lab identified the **State Culture Capital Foundation** as the most important funding body and stated that the introduction of this new form of funding changed the funding system fundamentally. The State Culture Foundation allocates grants that can be applied to by NGOs, with the decision made by an independent board of experts instead of national planning and control. This new practice established a further way of implementing a funding policy based on the arm's length principle in Latvia.

11.2.2. Grounds and strategies at the territorial level

Officially, all cultural policy in Latvia is under the responsibility of the state, decided and planned in missions, strategies, frameworks and detailed action plans by the national Ministry of Culture. These papers are the guidelines for the county and city municipalities, which have to put in place the nationally fixed objectives and actions in their regionally relevant dimensions, needs and possibilities developed in their own strategy and action planning. As a relatively small country, in Latvia a two-tier territorial level does not exist in terms of administrative entities. The country is administratively divided into counties and cities or counties based on integrated cities that merge a formerly large number of small municipalities. As a heritage of the Soviet time, a widespread network of public libraries, museums, and cultural centres led by municipal employees offer a wide range of cultural programmes and courses. The amateur sector, especially based on traditional dance and choir singing, features huge festivals and competitions as well. Guided as a national task, the local groups of the national network act under the municipal umbrella. Since the 1990s, cultural NGOs began slowly to develop innovative forms of cultural and artistic ecosystems, first mainly in the capital region, but gradually spreading all over the country and contributing to cultural policy by addressing local and place-based issues, activating and bringing together local residents, giving impulses and participating in the first exchange formats with municipal policy for regional development or cultural policy, for example, in the process for the development of the Valmiera's bid to become the Latvian ECOC 2027.

In interviews and expert talks, it has been stated that, despite the general system of top-down policymaking in the hierarchically organised administration of Latvia, recently the first steps towards a wider openness for participatory formats, intersectional collaboration and taking into account regional and local-based issues can be identified visible, for example, in the new national *Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022–2027* (Interview with Group K, 2023).

11.2.3. Grounds and strategies at the regional level

Based on the analyses on territorial development that revealed the potential, challenges and needs related to cultural policy, the national *Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022–2027* mentions the linking of cultural policy strategies to regional development strategies as necessary, focusing especially on the following strategic goals of culture policy for non-urban territories:

- opening access to professional art on regional level;
- the balanced use of cultural heritage;

- equal opportunities to use digital cultural services; and
- creative initiatives based on the local cultural environment.

The strategy paper proposes to link the regional issues of the *Cultural Policy Guidelines 2021–2027* with the other strategic development plans and related national policy guidelines of other ministries to improve the national efforts and strengthen the intersectional work. Considering the fact that not only the cultural policy but also other policies are developed on a national and ministerial level, including expert knowledge and other resources, the relatedness of those planning processes and knowledge exchange can lead to more holistic approaches based on an enormous insight in connected issues. One example, referred to in the *Cultural Policy Guidelines*, is to link the cultural strategies for territorial levels to the *Regional Policy Guidelines 2021–2027* (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia, n.d.). When the *Regional Policy Guidelines* describe the approach in providing support for initiatives of local territorial communities, including education and strengthening of social and civic skills, this support could also be seen in terms of cultural education and capacity-building measures for socio-cultural activities or creative industries (OECD, 2019b).

The strategy for *Sustainable Development of Latvia until 2030* aims to create equal living and working conditions for all residents, regardless of their location. This will be achieved by promoting entrepreneurship in rural areas, developing transport and communication infrastructure, and improving public services. The *Latvian National Development Plan for 2021–2027* includes the priority ‘Culture and Sport for an active lifestyle’ and focuses on the enhancement of public participation in culture and sports activities as well as on the contribution of culture and sport to a sustainable society (Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, 2020, pp. 69–75). Overall, these strategies and plans aim to address the increasing disparities in quality of life and infrastructure between large cities, their surrounding areas and other regions in Latvia. The biggest challenge in implementing cultural policy throughout the whole territory of Latvia is related to the results of the *administrative-territorial reform*, “the impact of which on the availability of cultural offer in the regions cannot yet be assessed” (Ministru kabineta Latvia, 2022, Chapter 7).

The existing networks of public cultural organisations, such as the network of public cultural centres, public libraries, public museums, public organisations of amateur arts and other public institutions, are identified in their role of providing a significant impact on regional development, the living environment and the wellbeing of inhabitants in all regions and on local level. The national policymakers marked the vision that through administrative changes related to the developed cultural policy strategies, cultural organisations could be developed to become relevant centres of local communities, “promoting civic activity and local patriotism.” To reach those overarching objectives of the national cultural policy, the strategy paper regards as especially important to preserve and develop cultural traditions and attract culture specialists like leaders of amateur art groups, culture

centres, libraries and museums to work in the different non-urban regions. According to the national policy plan, special attention should be given to preserve the Song and Dance Celebration tradition in Latvia and promote regional culture.

At the county level, in general, the basket of services should be complemented by access to vocational arts and music education and access to vocational cultural education and museum services; at the level of the cities, there should be archive services and access to professional arts, stated as an acoustic concert hall, contemporary art museum, exhibition halls, theatre, opera, multifunctional cultural centres, and availability of cinemas, as well as to museum services and opportunities for higher education in the field of culture (Ministru kabineta Latvia, 2022, Chapter 7).

As the most relevant policy on a regional and local level, the *Valmiera County Development programme* outlines the cultural policy, actions and budget that had been stated (IN SITU, 2023b). The Culture Department of Valmiera County is responsible for:

- The development and coordination of the local government cultural policy strategy for Valmiera County based on the National Cultural Policy Guidelines;
- The creation a favourable environment for the growth of creative diversity and excellence and the sustainable development of the creative economy in Valmiera County; and
- Ensuring the diversity of cultural events and accessibility of cultural processes to the inhabitants of the Valmiera County (Valmiera Novads, n.d.-a).

These responsibilities are based on the *Law on Local Governments* (2022), which had been ranked as highly important by the local IN SITU Lab Partner, as a legislative ground for local cultural bodies and budgets (IN SITU, 2023b).

The *Valmiera City Cultural Development Strategy for 2018–2028* is a medium-term planning document developed on the basis of the *Valmiera City Sustainable Development Strategy for 2015–2030* and the former Valmiera City Development Programme. The strategy defines the vision for the development of the cultural sector, determines strategic directions and a detailed action plan for achieving these goals, and identifies the institutions supervising the implementation of the strategy and their responsibilities. In the development of the strategy, several principles are observed:

- coherence with the needs and interests of citizens;
- an inclusive development process involving industry experts and organisations from different sectors, thus covering the widest possible range of stakeholders;
- partnership with the city's cultural institutions, the private and non-governmental sectors, etc.;
- coherence with industry planning documents at different levels;

- a feasible strategy implementation model that defines the system of accountability, supervisory authority and monitoring of implementation; and
- resource planning in accordance with existing opportunities, as well as targeted attraction of additional funding, in accordance with the objectives set out in the strategy.

Additionally, the process for the development of the bid to become *ECOC 2027* was considered by the stakeholders of the Cultural Department of Valmiera County as helpful to change the view on culture in the region and to develop innovative ways of cultural policy and participative formats with local and regional stakeholders and public (Valmiera Municipality, 2022).

“So, when we created the bids, it was about this issue that we might actually change how we see the things that are “bad” as our hidden potential. [...] So, we can change our narrative on how we look at these places. [We started a] bottom-up approach [...] strategically also in cultural policy. Thinking about how we can involve local community and locals into the offering cultural offer. All the bid process was based on that. We gathered ideas together with them and then we attached in international or nationally known of professionals or curators that would take their ideas and upgrade them and bring it to the European level. There's something interesting in it, that maybe the people that are here, they just don't have the capacity for it, but they know that something needs to be done with this. [...] Now it's been a year ago. And we have continued with this approach. [...] I don't know, the offering should come from the local communities, so they would place what they need, or what they would like to have. A change in cultural terms or putting more emphasis on the region and then we are the government.”
(Interview/expert talk with Group K, 9 October 2023)

11.2.3. Grounds and strategies at the local level

As the former local municipalities are merged in regional entities of the Counties, they no longer exist as administrative units. Nevertheless, they play a role as areas of identification. Due to the system of cultural centres, nearly every village has still a place where people meet or take part in amateur arts, visiting events and other activities. Even if these venues are governmentally managed and, at first sight, follow *per se* the creative ideas of locals and the state guidelines, they have a place-based meaning for the villages and towns.

“[There] are 750 public libraries in Latvia, the huge network of cultural centres in every tiny village. And all this is the responsibility of municipalities, there is some money on national level for some of those aspects. The networks of public libraries, museums, cultural centres, they really create this basis of all activities. What happens [culturally], that happens in this [local] centres including, for example, huge amateur art activities in which take place in cultural centres all over Valmiera, all over Latvia. [...] And that's this participation where everyone can take part.” (Interview/expert talk with Group K, 9 October 2023)

In the frame of regional development, new instruments like participatory budgets are developed for fostering engagement, the ideas of locals and local initiatives. Residents of Valmiera can bring in ideas

they want to see realised and the public votes on those ideas. The interview partners reported that, with this instrument, it was recognised that the allocation of money changed, and ideas were put in place that previously had not been in the scope of the council government (Valmieras Novads, 2024).

“What we recognised [in an evaluation] is that the further you are from the city from Valmiera the more active are your people. So, they did not get to “water pump” [project proposal of an initiative in the city of Valmiera] for the second year in a row because the people who are further away from Valmiera voted for their [proper] initiatives.” (Interview/expert talk with Group K, 9 October 2023)

11.3. Structures and implementation of strategies

The structures and ways of implementing strategies in Latvia follows the culture policy principle of the architect model with only some few exceptions. The top-down processes follow clear hierarchies in decision-making, planning and implementing. The main policies are based on strategies developed at the national level. On the regional level, decisions and implementing processes have to align with the national guidelines. In recent years, slight changes towards more participatory processes, the awareness of the potential of NGOs and first steps towards strategies that include, at least in part, arm’s length principles can be identified. As a huge system of public cultural activities and programmes, organisations and locations are part of the organisational system that reaches even the villages, with cultural policy seen as an elementary element of national, regional and local importance.

11.3.1. Structures at the national level

The Saeima, as the Latvian Parliament, is the legislative state body. Its 100 elected members decide on general policy guidelines, legislation and budget of the Republic of Latvia. The government, as highest executive state-body, is represented and led by the Cabinet of Ministers and headed by the Prime Minister, appointed by the state President. Fifteen ministers are responsible for the national governmental areas of responsibility (see Figure 21).

Prime Minister	Ministry of Defense	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Ministry of Economics
Ministry of Interior	Ministry of Education and Science	Ministry of Climate and Energy	Ministry of Welfare
Ministry of Health	Ministry of Transport	Ministry of Culture	Ministry for Justice
Ministry for Environmental Protection and Regional Development	Ministry for Agriculture		

Figure 21 - Cabinet of Ministers, Latvia

Source: Authors' visualisation according to: Ministru kabinets. Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, no date. <https://www.mk.gov.lv/en>

Cultural policy in Latvia is under the responsibility of the *Ministry of Culture*. The Minister and its team organise and coordinate culture policy, social integration policy and media policy. The structure is based on the division of topic-related tasks in three departments and 14 independent divisions (Figure 22). It is responsible for all sector-related topics, planning of strategies and guidelines in the field.

The Ministry of Culture has the following areas of responsibility: Copyrights and Neighbouring Rights, Libraries, Museums, Music, Fine Art, Folk Art and non-material heritage, Theatre, Literature, Film Art, Cultural Education, Protection of Monuments, Archives, Architecture, Design, Creative Industries and Dancing Art. (Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, 2020)

The Ministry cooperates with municipalities and increasingly with non-governmental bodies such as consultative councils, creative unions, foundations, etc. The Ministry of Culture and municipalities share responsibility for cooperation programmes and financing in the cultural field in Latvia.

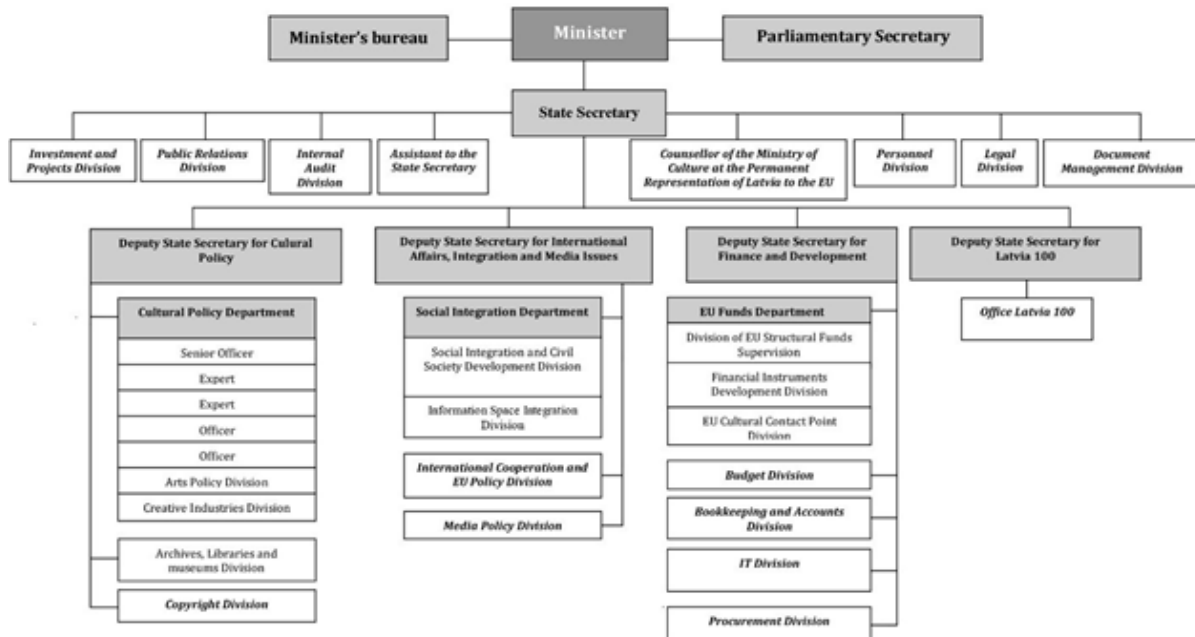


Figure 22 - Organisational structure of the Ministry of Culture, Latvia

Source: Compendium Cultural Policies & Trends (2019a)

A majority of national institutions in the field of culture, arts and cultural education are directly financed by the Ministry of Culture, and cultural projects are now funded by the new National Culture Capital Foundation.

The State Culture Capital Foundation (SCCF) has been developed as a democratic and flexible financial instrument that supports through grants all kind of CCI initiatives – from grassroots activities and artists’ projects in non-urban settings to high-culture projects or cultural education projects in the metropole area. The establishment of the State Culture Capital Foundation, which started operating as an arm's length body in 1998, “was a major milestone in Latvian cultural policy and fundamentally changed funding patterns in the cultural sector” (Compendium of Cultural Policy & Trends, 2019, n.p.). The financing of cultural projects, which had previously been the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture, was delegated to the Foundation. Applications are evaluated by boards of seven persons for eight cultural sectors³⁶, replaced every two years, nominated by governmental and non-governmental cultural organisations and the Minister of Culture. The main guidelines for the decision on allocation of the budget are in line with the guidelines of the national cultural policy and have to serve to:

³⁶ The eight cultural sectors are: Literature, Music and Dance, Theatrical arts, Film arts, Visual arts, Cultural Heritage, Traditional Culture, Design and Architecture, and Interdisciplinary.

- promote a balanced development of creativity in all the branches of art, and
- preserve the cultural heritage in the country. (Compendium of Cultural Policy & Trends, 2019)

There are different project competitions, including earmarked support for CCIs and for artistic developments in all regions of Latvia (Valsts kultūrkapitāla fonds, n.d.).

11.3.2. Structures and implementation of strategies at the territorial level

According to the Latvian constitution, Latvia is a unitary state. Vidzeme, Latgale, Kurzeme and Zemgale are still seen as identificatory regions, but without being administrative territories. Before an administrative reform process began in 2008, there were 525 local governments operating in local administrative entities. After a long process of administrative reforms, the number of administrative units was reduced to 36 municipalities with the status of counties and the task to provide all necessary functions of administration for the respective region, including cultural affairs.

Section 15 of the Law on Local Governments defines the autonomous functions of local governments including the following: "to maintain culture and facilitate the safeguarding of traditional cultural values and the development of creative folk activity (organisational and financial assistance to cultural institutions and events, support for the preservation of cultural monuments, and others. (Compendium of Cultural Policies & Trends, 2019-a, n.p.)

The IN SITU research region, Valmiera, is described as 1.3% urban area and 98.7% rural area, including Valmiera city as the County capital; four smaller cities – Rūjiena, Mazsalaca, Strenči and Seda; and 26 former municipalities (see Figure 23). The introduction to the bid-book to become Latvia's ECOC 2027 pointed out that 31 cultural institutions with a large number of citizens participating in diverse cultural and creative activities, 34 public libraries, and seven vocational art and music schools are part of the state and county-based cultural policy organisation structure in the region. The County of Valmiera is described here as the regional level, and the former municipalities as the local level.



Figure 23 - Map of Valmiera region, Latvia

Source: Valmieras Novads (n.d.-b)

11.3.3. Structures and implementation of strategies at the local level

Cultural policy in the County of Valmiera is managed by the Department of Culture (see Figure 24). The Department is responsible for the implementation of the National Culture Policy Guidelines on a regional level and for the management of the public cultural institutions and programmes of the county. Additionally, it developed, through a participatory process, the application and bid-book to become ECOC 2027. The application was not successful in terms of being voted as ECOC 2027, but the processes led to a range of new ideas and alliances that gave further impulses for a new way of cultural policymaking for the future (Interview with Group K, 9 October 2023).

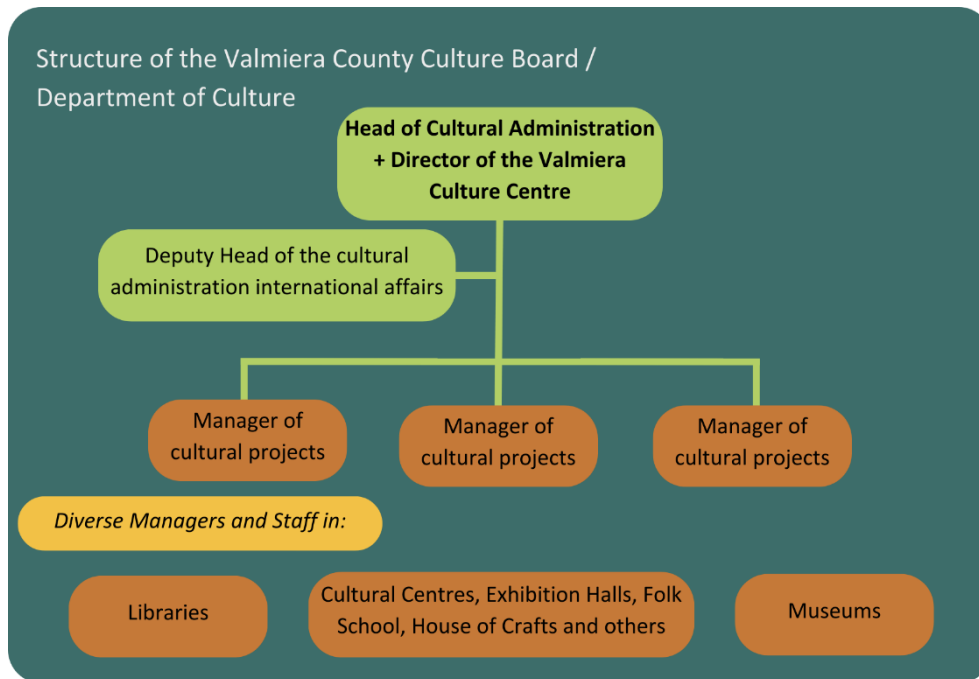


Figure 24 - Structure of the Valmiera County Culture Board / Department of Culture, Latvia

On the regional and local levels, IN SITU Lab workshop participants described the *Valmiera Co-Creation Workshop* as a significant driver of innovation related to CCIs and creative individuals. They also named the *Valmiera Cultural Project Competition* as the only funding possibility for cultural initiatives at a local level (IN SITU, 2023b).

11.3.4. Structures and implementation of strategies at the local level

Through the widespread administrative system of state-based cultural policy, public institutions and frameworks regulating cultural life in nearly all parts of the country are involved in top-down processes of cultural planning and public cultural houses, libraries and museums. Culture is a subject in education from an early age. However, interviews revealed that former approaches in top-down regulation of creativity did not necessarily lead to more togetherness, innovation and responsibility for the shaping of society. Some first steps towards a more bottom-up process in policymaking, more openness for innovative ways of cultural policy decision-making and deeper research on non-governmental initiatives and activities show potential at the local level.

From June 2021 until the launch of the bid, we have met with over thirty interest and neighbourhood initiative groups in Valmiera and across the county to find out in depth what our people like, care about and would like to see and experience in the ECoC programme. Around 500 people gathered for the talks – local and national government employees, entrepreneurs, schoolchildren, students, members of NGOs, singer-songwriters, dancers, craftspeople, brain game players, gardeners, amateur athletes, etc. (Valmiera Municipality, 2022, p. 72)

IN SITU field research to learn more about the situation in local and rural parts of Valmiera is planned for June 2024, and will contribute additional knowledge to this subject.

11.4. Lessons learned

A previous workshop and participatory CCI mapping exercise conducted within the IN SITU project in spring 2023 provided valuable insights about the cultural and creative ecosystem in the Latvian Lab area as well as the project more generally³⁷. The current report builds on and complements this work, focusing on the interrelated system of cultural policy guidelines and structures that have been recently developed in Latvia, as well as the ‘legacy’ components of the cultural system that continue to serve local communities. This includes community centres, institutions, and resources that serve as foundations and venues for cultural activities as well as cultural organisations that are both maintaining traditions and injecting energy, building capacity and organising people and events, and providing new ideas and inspirations for culture’s evolution and contributions to local challenges and opportunities.

“When we did the mapping for the IN SITU project of different festivals and activities and NGOs of Valmiera County, we thought it seems that there are no NGOs actually, the number will be very limited. But then when you look deeper, actually, you find a lot of them, which are established by local residents. You have these small villages and there are such a lot of activities. And if you as a city also go for supporting these initiatives, it can bring really results.” (Interview with Group K, 9 October 2023)

12. Cultural policy in Croatia and its non-urban territories (Šibenik-Knin County)

The non-urban area of Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia, has been examined through a multimethod research approach involving desktop and literature research as well as empirical research methods like expert talks and group discussions on the subject of cultural policy, administration, regional development and cultural practice, which were deepened and supplemented by the results of two participative workshops on cultural policy conducted during the Consortium Meetings in Finland (31 May – 1 June 2023) and Ireland (19–21 February 2024) with the IN SITU Croatian Lab Partner Kultura Nova Foundation. In addition, an interview on gender issues in the cultural and creative sector of the rural area of Šibenik-Knin provided further insights into the state of cultural policy.

³⁷ This Lab-focused research is reported in IN SITU (2023b), which is classified as a sensitive document and not publicly available. A synthesis of the findings, with additional analysis, is planned for a publication currently under development.

12.1. The research area Croatia and its Lab region Šibenik-Knin

Croatia is divided in 21 administrative units or regions (Croatian: *Zupanijas*), which are largely described as related to historic identification areas (see Figure 25). The last census-survey in August 2021 showed a total population of 3,871,833 million people as residents of the parliamentary republic of Croatia. Population density is lowest in rural areas with poor transportation links in Croatia, causing population decline. Larger cities like the capital Zagreb and coastal towns are experiencing an increase due to satellite towns and seasonal relocation of residents (Lexikografisches Institut Miroslav Krleža, n.d.).



Figure 25 – Map of administrative divisions, Croatia

Source: TUBS. Croatia, administrative divisions – de-colored.svg, 2012. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e1/Croatia%2C_administrative_divisions_-_de_-_colored.svg

Šibenik-Knin County, located in northern Dalmatia, is famous for its beautiful islands, historic sites and diverse landscapes. The county is home to the highest peak in Croatia and is surrounded by the sea and vineyards. The total area of the county is 5,670 km², with a population of 96,381 inhabitants. The

county is divided by rivers and a canal. The Adriatic coastal line in the West of the county is a touristic region, and less densely populated parts are situated in the hinterland at the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. The County Šibenik-Knin comprises 15 municipalities (općine) and five towns (gradovi), with Šibenik as the most populated one. Despite an ongoing decline of population, 42,599 people still live in this central town of the county. The other towns, Drniš (6276 inhabitants), Knin (11,633 inhabitants), Skradin (3349 inhabitants) and Vodice (8649 inhabitants), are suffering as well from depopulation and ageing. The municipality of Cviljane, the smallest entity of the County, is inhabited by only 171 residents. Demographic changes and migration have led to significant average ageing and decline of the population. In December 2023, more than 51% of all residents were 65 or more years old (Brinkhoff, 2022a).

The economy of Šibenik-Knin County is focused on trade, tourism and construction. The processing industry, especially the aluminium industry, is crucial. Economic zones have been established to boost development and employment. Tourism is key, with investments planned for the hinterland. Šibenik-Knin County in Croatia has a strategic transportation position, with connections to the coast, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zagreb and Split. The county also has good air connections through nearby airports. The region is home to two national parks, Krka and Kornati, which offer stunning natural landscapes and cultural monuments. Tourism is a crucial sector for the county's economy, with millions of annual overnight stays and investments in tourism facilities, including new accommodation capacities. The county is also investing in wineries, olive groves and traditional agricultural production such as fruits and vegetables, prosciutto, cheese and seafood. The county places a strong emphasis on environmental protection and waste management, particularly in protecting the Krka River. Overall, Šibenik-Knin County offers a diverse range of tourism opportunities, beautiful natural surroundings and a commitment to sustainable development (Šibenik-Knin County, 2024).

12.2. Grounds and strategies for Croatian cultural policy

Culture policy in Croatia is described as similar to centralised architect models in which the state acts as central organ of planning, administrating and implementing measures to initialise, foster and regulate cultural affairs by focusing on hierarchal decision-structures (Compendium Cultural Policies & Trends, 2023a).

For a long time, the national Ministry of Culture and Media in Croatia had been at the centre of cultural policymaking and had allocated the budget through centralised decisions. However, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the way from governing to governance can be identified, with strategies for and debates on decentralisation playing an important role and first steps towards more participative policymaking, partly based on OMC methods (Ministarstvo kulture i medija, 2024). The government focuses on the involvement of cultural councils as advisory bodies and independent agencies which support stakeholder organisations and initiatives in the cultural sector, therefore

practising at the same time partly a cultural policy of the arm's length principle (Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia, n.d.).

The cultural policy model of Croatia has been influenced by the chequered political history with challenging times of war, traces of which can still be felt. In the 1950s, a self-management system decentralised cultural and public domains, giving more power to the six constituent republics. The following decades emphasised cultural professionalism and creativity, reflecting the country's multi-ethnic nature and Western influences. Ideological control over culture was increasingly abandoned, leading to political liberalisation and greater autonomy for the republic. A quasi-market economy was established, replacing budget subsidies with special funds allocated by service providers and beneficiaries. However, the system proved poorly managed and contributed to the political conflicts between centralists and co-federalists. Ultimately, these conflicts led to war in 1990 and the dissolution of Yugoslavia (Compendium Cultural Policies & Trends, 2023a).

In the 1990s, Croatia's cultural policy focused on promoting national traditions to establish a sense of cohesion during a time of war (Rüb, 1999). This policy was centralised politically and administratively. Funding and planning prioritised activities of "national interest" while leaving other activities to NGOs and the emerging market. However, in 2000, there has been a shift towards a more pluralistic cultural policy under a centre-left coalition government. This approach takes into account a balanced view of tradition and recognises the national and multicultural components. Efforts have been made towards decentralisation and direct cooperation with NGOs. Despite changes in political coalitions, the overall structure of the cultural system has remained largely unchanged (Compendium Cultural Policies & Trends, 2023a).

The artistic and cultural sector in Croatia faced challenges in 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and earthquakes. The government provided financial assistance through a Crisis fund (Compendium Cultural Policies & Trends, 2023b).

The Croatian IN SITU Lab listed 11 local, regional and national active cultural and innovation policies but identified only one national study on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on CCIs as highly important. The participants of the IN SITU workshops in 2023 noted that development plans for Šibenik-Knin County and City only marginally relate to the CCI sector, while a management plan focuses on tourism development and marketing. Altogether, in this region the participants perceived "a lack of cultural policy or strategy at all levels" (IN SITU, 2023b, p. 78).

12.2.1. Grounds and strategies on the national level

"The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia guarantees in its Article 69 the freedom of scientific, cultural and artistic creativity and points out the legal duty of the state to encourage and support the development of science, culture and the arts. "The state shall protect scientific, cultural and artistic

assets as national spiritual values and [...] shall encourage and support care for physical culture and sports” (Committee on the Constitution, 2010, Art. 69).

The general objectives of the *National Cultural Policies* are based on cultural pluralism, creative autonomy, the increase and diversification of sources for financing of culture, polycentric cultural development, and encouraging cultural participation and co-operation between public and private sector (Primorac, 2023; Žuleva 2020). An *Action Plan on Culture and Media* has been launched as well, elaborated for the years 2023–2024 by the Ministry of Culture and Media. It describes the implementation of the planned strategies and a very detailed allocation of budget for the related actions (Ministarstvo kulture i medija, 2023a).

In the last twenty years, the general objectives of cultural policy slowly changed to a more decentralised, pluralistic and diversity-based approach (Primorac, 2023). These principles led to a strategy of:

- Diversification by encouraging cultural creativity and innovation,
- More inclusion of cultural minority groups, and
- Financing activities that take diverse interests more into account.

This cultural policy orientation is in line with the main European cultural policy principles such as the promotion of identity and diversity, support for creativity, participation in cultural life and respect for cultural rights (Primorac, 2023; Žuleva, 2020; Primorac et al., 2017).

According to Primorac (2023), the first *national strategies for cultural development* were created and adopted in the Parliament but were not followed-up subsequently by their implementation by the government (Ministarstvo kulture, 2011, 2013). In 2023, the Ministry of Culture and Media³⁸ released a new national culture strategy, *Nacionalni plan razvoja kulture I medija za razdoblje od*. The Ministry describes itself as responsible for various tasks related to culture, aiming to advance in the following areas:

1. Development of cultural creativity, production and distribution;
2. Preservation and sustainable use of cultural heritage;
3. Development of the system of archives, libraries and museums;
4. Improving the status of the journalistic profession, the media sector and encouraging pluralism; and
5. Effective support to the cultural and media sectors. (Ministarstvo kulture i medija, 2023b, p. 27)

³⁸ The Ministry of Culture was given a new area of responsibility as well as a new name when the government changed in 2020.

The development procedure of this actual strategy plan reveals the aim to focus on a policy concept of governance and participation of stakeholders in a decentralised way. The Ministry itself describes “the National Plan for Development of Culture and Media” as “the first time such a strategic document has been adopted after the 2003 Strategy of Cultural Development, which was never systematically implemented” (Ministarstvo kulture i medija, 2023c). It was prepared based on an analysis of the current situation (Ministarstvo kulture i medija, 2022) and a process led by employees of the Ministry of Culture and Media in continuous coordination with an Expert Working Group, appointed at the beginning of the drafting process. During the process, the “general professional public” was invited to comment and give opinions and proposals.

To involve, at least partly, the arm’s length principle and fostering the tendency to a more decentralised concept, the Ministry of Culture and Media works closely together with bodies that have been developed to support CCI stakeholders and civil society organisations.

The local IN SITU Lab Partner names the following institutions and bodies as instruments to implement a policy based on the arm’s length principle, including itself in the list for its prominence in the cultural field at the national level:

- *The Kultura Nova Foundation (KNF)* contributes to creating new frameworks for cultural policies to modernise and democratise cultural life. It actively participates in cultural policymaking processes at local, national and international levels, promoting civil society and cultural development in Croatia through financial and professional support to organisations in the arts and culture sector (Croatian Parliament, 2011);
- *Croatian Audio-Visual Centre (HAVC)* supports and stimulates the audio-visual industry with different means (HAVC, 2010);
- *National Foundation for Civil Society Development* supports non-governmental initiatives and organisations in Croatia through cooperation and network-building as well as by applicable grants to develop civil society and to strengthen the sustainability of the non-profit-sector (Nacionalna zaklada za razvoj civilnoga društva, n.d.);
- *National Croatian Lottery* provides income that is also used for charitable cultural purposes; and
- Further agencies and organisations that are managing EU funds, and informing and supporting CCIs in application processes. Since joining the EU in 2013, there has been a shift towards entrepreneurial cultural policies focusing on cultural and creative industries. Cultural institutions are encouraged to seek additional funding through project-based approaches, with EU funding seen as important, especially in the context of the pandemic and post-earthquake recovery (Primorac, 2023).

12.2.2. Grounds and strategies at the territorial level

Over the past three decades, decentralisation and participatory governance in culture have become highly topical in both academic and political debates on the global scale. The shift from “government” to “governance” is described as one of the most notable developments within contemporary social science. In both scientific and practical terms, it designates a shift to societal decision-making processes that involve a larger number of actors, not only governmental but also from the 2 private and non-profit sector. (Žuvela, 2020, pp. 2-3).

A close look to the strategy papers and action plan of the National Ministry and other documents shows the practice-based relevance of the thesis stated by Žuvela (2020). Decentralisation and the way to a more participative approach in policymaking is a key topic in Croatian cultural policy. At the same time, ongoing debates due to regional disparities in cultural development can be identified (Primorac, 2023). The participants of the two IN SITU focus group discussions in 2023, which took place in different locations in the IN SITU Lab area of the County of Šibenik-Knin, confirmed this issue, noting that there is a great divide between the coastal and the continental area of the county. They saw this division reflected by the natural landscape – the Trtar Hill, separating the region with big socio-economic challenges, depopulation and abandoned land. The coastal region on the other side was described as vibrant and dynamic, with good socio-economic conditions (IN SITU, 2023b).

Cultural policy and tourism as an economic factor are strongly related regarding the topic of culture and cultural heritage in non-urban territories. Literature on Croatia’s cultural policy in rural areas is mainly linked to tourism issues, seen as instrument to shape a sustainable tourism or to promote or to deepen a destination’s “identity” (Rakitovac et al., 2019; Álvarez-García et al., 2019; Hausmann, 2020; Katsoni and Segarra-Oña, 2019). Culture policy for CCIs in non-urban areas of Croatia addressing other subjects and non-touristic regions is hard to find. The city of Šibenik as capital of the County of Šibenik-Knin has developed a local action plan for sustainable use of cultural heritage in tourism in the framework of the SHARE project³⁹ initiated by Interreg, financed by the ERDF (University of Greenwich, 2019).

Counties in Croatia are responsible for regional tasks, including the establishment and development of educational, medical, social welfare and cultural institutions. The Law on Cultural Councils (2001, amended several times) included the responsibility to establish cultural councils at city and at county levels to decentralise decision-making processes but, despite the legal task, the role in cultural policy governance seems to be minimal. This is reflected in low public cultural expenditure of an average of

³⁹ SHARE – “Sustainable approach to cultural Heritage for the urban Areas Requalification in Europe” – “aims at exchanging experiences in cultural heritage policies in urban settings, in order to identify best practices and innovative methods to develop a sustainable and smart approach to its management and use” (SHARE | Interreg, n.d.).

4-5% annually. Regional differences in expenditure among counties exist, according to the Ministry of Culture and Media data for 2021 (Primorac, 2023). Regarding the County of Šibenik-Knin, the local Lab partner and 2023 focus groups did not mention any local or regional policy strategy or funding institution. Documents could not be found through desk research. A lack of data on regional and local level can be clearly stated.

12.3. Structures and implementation of strategies

In Croatia the structures and implementation of strategies are related to the transition from the culture policy principle of the architect model to a more governance-based arm's length principle and the striving for decentralisation. All the main policies laid down in the few strategy papers are based on planning and strategies developed at the national level. From the beginning of the twenty-first century, state-related foundations and agencies were founded to act closer to the cultural and creative sector and its needs, supporting the non-governmental initiatives and organisations in the development of enabling structures. With 0.7%, the Croatian state reaches an over-average level of expenditures on “cultural services”, compared to the average of 0.5% by governments of all European Member States, but still far away from the highest ranking of 1.1% reached by Iceland and Hungary (Eurostat, 2024).

12.3.1. Structures at the national level

The constitution of Croatia, as highest legislative ground, defines the governmental bodies as executive power of the State. It is headed by the Prime Minister and comprises 15 sector-related ministries (see Figure 26). The Ministry of Culture and Media is one of them.

The Act on the Organisation and Scope of Activities of State Administration Bodies (NN 85/20) states in its Article 12 that the Ministry of Culture and Media performs administrative and other tasks in the field of culture and cultural heritage and points out the details of this responsibilities (Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia, n.d.). The mission topics and tasks are assigned to seven Directorates supported by staff members, a Secretary General is in charge of the overarching tasks, the cabinet of the minister heads the divisions of the ministry (see Figure 27).

Prime Minister's Office	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Ministry of Finance	Ministry of Defence	Ministry of Internal Affairs
Ministry of Justice and Administration	Ministry of Tourism and Sports	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development	Ministry of Croatian Veterans	Ministry for Science and Education
Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds	Ministry of Agriculture	Ministry of Sea, Transport and Infrastructure	Ministry of Physical Planning, Constructing and State Property	Ministry of Culture and Media
Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy				

Figure 26 - Government of Croatia

Source: Authors' visualisation according to: Republic of Croatia, Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, "Internal organisation of the Ministry," no date. <https://mpu.gov.hr/about-the-ministry/internal-organisation-of-the-ministry/21309>



Figure 27 - Divisions of the Ministry of Culture, Croatia

Source: Authors' visualisation according to: Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia, "Contact us," no date. <https://min-kulture.gov.hr/contact-us/140>

The recently launched National Plan for the Development of Cultural and Media and the related Action Plan describe – besides the missions and strategies – the planning and budgeting of the implementation of measurements related to the strategies. This planning builds the guidelines for the work of the Directorates (Ministarstvo kulture i medija, 2023a, 2023c). Cultural policy for non-urban territories is not explicitly mentioned in the plans as its own field of strategy with related measurements.

Important stakeholders for a more decentralised policy and implementation of the arm's length principle are the foundations and agencies, like the IN SITU Lab partner *Kultura Nova Foundation*, the *National Foundation for Civil Society Development* and others (described previously). As they are much closer to the CCI stakeholders and their place-related cultural and creative ecosystems, they might focus more on the place-based needs and challenges of those actors who are based in the non-urban, rural and remote areas of the Croatian hinterland.

12.3.2. Structures and implementation of strategies at the territorial level

Art. 133 of the Croatian Constitution guarantees citizens the right to regional and local self-government, exercised through local and/or regional representative bodies composed by elected members, as well as the right to directly participate in the administration of local affairs.

In this context, municipalities and towns as well as counties are regional self-governments (Art 134). A wide range of affairs related to local needs and interests shall be administered on local level, including culture. Units of regional self-government have duties concerning affairs of regional interest such as the development of the network of cultural institutions (Art. 135). Taxes and other revenues are entitled to the local or regional self-government. The state has to provide financial assistance to weaker units to fulfil their tasks.

A task usually fulfilled by cities and municipalities at the local level is the financing of programmes in local culture community centres as venues for all sorts of cultural activities and events, often the only place where cultural activities take place. Villages or smaller cities more often do not own a cultural community centre, but self-organised venues or other buildings like schools or church rooms may offer the possibility to use it as a cultural venue (participant of the IN SITU Lab Croatia focus group, 2023). In recent years, more NGO activities have arisen, some of them active in transforming culture community centres to new formats, based on innovative ideas towards place-based needs. EU funding might play a role in local municipalities, but a greater proportion of money is raised successfully in the capital region. To be far away from discourses and networks of CCIs, being involved part-time, as freelancer or volunteer in arts and culture work, most of the time without any team, earning money with additional jobs, spending time on long commuting distances – all this makes it difficult to spend the time and focus needed in writing applications and fulfilling administrative needs without knowing if there will be the slightest chance of return.

12.4. Lessons learned

In the preparing of the national Culture Policy Review as ground of the new Culture Policy Strategy a lot of different opinions, experiences and ideas had been collected through an open process of commenting, various authors committed to the final planning. In this Review, a lot of authors have written about new, hybrid forms of governance in culture, and the National Development Plan will answer the question of which instruments to ensure further cultural development. In the end, directly and indirectly, most authors pointed out the issue of innovation and the need for greater investment in culture, both at the National and local and regional levels. Budget increases and access to diverse sources of funding remain the task of all those involved in the design and implementation of cultural policies (Ministarstvo Kulture i Medija, 2022, p. 12).

The development process towards the National Culture Strategy may be significant for the needs of CCIs. In non-urban areas of Croatia, cultural planning and development processes seem to be rare, but needed – not only for implementing planned measurements but also to bring stakeholders of the cultural and creative sector, administrations and political decision-makers together to learn about the potentials of art and culture and find ways to deal with obstacles and to realise ideas beyond the urban realm.

Upcoming years will show if and how the strategies will be implemented and if the process of participation and decentralisation will lead to improvement of place-based challenges and more awareness to the needs and potentials of CCIs in non-urban areas – not only but also for culture which is not related to the rural tourism industry.

13. Cultural policy in Portugal and its non-urban territories (the Azores archipelago)

The archipelago of the Azores, as one of the two autonomous regions of the Republic of Portugal, was examined through a multimethod research approach involving desktop and literature research as well as empirical research methods like observation, focus group discussions and expert talks to stakeholders of cultural policy during the IN SITU Kick-off Meeting in Ponta Delgada, Sao Miguel⁴⁰ and the first field research on this Azorean island. The research was deepened and supplemented by the results of two participative workshops on cultural policy during the IN SITU Consortium Meetings in Finland (31 May – 1 June 2023) and Ireland (19–21 February 2024) and by digital means in an exchange with the Azorean IN SITU Lab researchers of the University of the Azores. In addition, an expert talk on gender issues in the cultural and creative sector of the Azores provided further insights and

⁴⁰ Ponta Delgada, capital city of the autonomous region of the Azores, is located on the largest and most densely populated island of the archipelago, São Miguel.

background information. Findings from other IN SITU work streams also enriched this research⁴¹. Further field research will take place at the end of August 2024 on the island of Terceira.

13.1. The IN SITU Lab research area, the Azores archipelago, Portugal

Portugal is characterised by a significant asymmetry in the population distribution/density and economic activity as well as in social and cultural dynamics. This means very diverse landscapes, differences in regional development, sustainability, and quality of life, mainly between urban and rural areas. (Rego et al., 2016, p. 2)

Almost 50% of the population of Portugal lives in only two metropolitan areas, the area including the capital Lisbon, with slightly more than 3 million residents, and the metropole area of Porto, a harbour city in the North of Portugal with about 1,330,000 inhabitants (2023). Of the total 10 million residents of Portugal, 33% live in rural areas, which cover 89,089 km² or 81% of the whole country. Depopulation and increased ageing are challenging most of the rural regions in Portugal (Macrotrends LLC, 2024; The World Bank Group, 2024).

The formerly uninhabited archipelago of the Azores had been “detected” by Portuguese mariners around 1420 and colonised by first settlements following the exploration. In 1976, as a result of the Carnation Revolution of 1974, the Azores and the archipelago of Madeira gained the status of *Autonomous Regions of Portugal* (Região Autónoma dos Açores, in the case of the Azores archipelago).

The Azores consists of nine islands located in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, 1400 km away from the coast of the Portuguese mainland, 1500 km northwest of Morocco and about 1930 km from the outermost island Flores to Newfoundland, Canada, as the shortest distance to the North American continent. The maritime surface of the Azores is 954,496 km², which makes it one of the largest Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) in the European Union (Georg, n.d.). The archipelago, spanning about 650 km across all the islands, is situated in three groups: the Eastern group comprises the islands of Santa Maria and São Miguel; the central group includes the islands of Terceira, Pico, Faial, São Jorge and Graciosa; and the Western group contains the small islands of Flores and Corvo (see Figure 28).

This ultra-peripheral European region is characterised by its volcanos, stunning nature and coastlines, and is also known for its cultural events and festivals, which take place on all the islands, and its cultural heritage – like the historic town of Angra do Héroismo, Terceira, and the vineyards of Pico, both listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The nine islands are quite different in character and size. Agriculture, tourism and related services are the main sources of income on the islands. The Azores

⁴¹ In particular, this research was informed by previous IN SITU research findings in reports D2.1, “Drivers of innovation of CCIs located in non-urban areas” (publicly available on the IN SITU website) and D3.1, “Local mapping processes and findings” (sensitive, not publicly available).

has a total population (2021) of 236,413 inhabitants. All the islands are inhabited, ranging from 133,288 people living on the island São Miguel and 53,234 on Terceira, to 384 on the smallest of the islands, Corvo (SREA, 2022). The islands are interconnected with the mainland and with each other only by planes and partly by ferries between some of the islands. There are basic schools on every island, secondary schools and campuses of the University of the Azores (founded in 1976) are situated on São Miguel, Terceira and Faial islands. The early school drop rate of 21.6% (2023) – despite an improvement of 5.1% compared to 2022 – has been for many years far above the European average (9.6% in 2022) and significantly above the EU member state with the second highest average (Romania with 15%) (Eurostat, 2023a; Shabi, 2024).

Demographic changes, especially the high emigration rates, including impulse-givers, experts and young adults, and the related increase in the percentage of aged people cause ongoing challenges for the remote archipelago. By 2019, the Azores Archipelago had a GDP per capita of €18,400 and is therefore included in the group of socioeconomically less-developed EU regions (Medeiros, 2022).

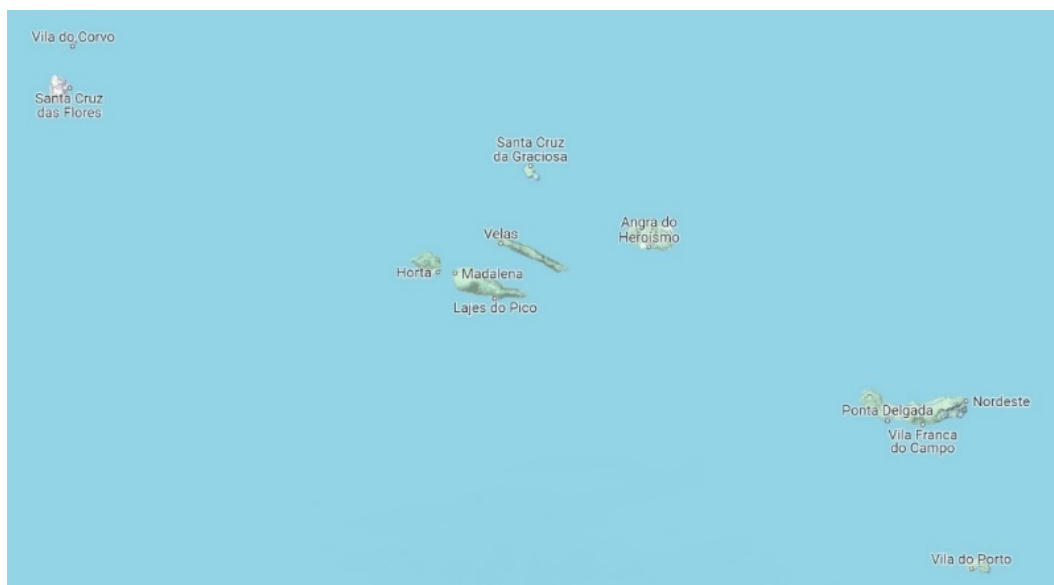


Figure 28 - Map of the Azores, Portugal

Source: Google LLC. Screenshot of the Azores, Portugal from Google Maps [April 19, 2024]. <https://www.google.de/maps/@38.4634454,-28.0002023,7.5z/data=!5m1!1e4?entry=ttu>

13.2. Grounds and strategies for Portuguese cultural policy

Portugal is a parliamentary republic. With the *Carnation Revolution (Revolução dos Cravos)* of 25 April 1974, the 30 years of the Salazar/Caetano dictatorship ended. After many years of Portuguese resistance and wars against the struggle for decolonisation in the Portuguese African colonies, the colonies in Africa gained finally their independence and Portugal returned to a democratic

governmental system. The constitution of 1976 marked this return and, finally, a period of much-needed major social, economic, administrative and political changes could be started in the impoverished South European country. An independent Ministry of Culture at the national level was developed in 1981. From that time, Portugal opened more and more towards other European countries and finally joined the European Union, at that time still called the “European Community.”

The country experienced a late but very intense process of modernisation, resulting in structural transformations to the economy, openness to the outside world, education, gender relations, exposure to cultural industries, and the secularisation of behaviours and centrality of the new middle classes. (Silva et al., 2013, p. 2)

Since those remarkable and overarching changes from a long-time dictatorship state to a left-wing democratic public policy were affecting all regions and municipalities in Portugal, both two levels of public policy implementation became relevant: the national, under state government responsibility, and the local, under the responsibility of municipalities. The importance of municipalities in cultural public policies grew, from budgeting to managing culture and arts support to the development of their own cultural policy strategies and integrating culture in the context of an intersectional approach and the involvement of cultural policies in regional development. The national government of the mid-1980s saw the need to implement cultural facilities throughout the country and established partnerships between national and local authorities for the construction and management of cultural venues, libraries, archives and museums. Decentralisation was correspondingly one of the first and grounding strategies of cultural policy in Portugal’s post-dictatorship era (Silva et al., 2013, p. 4).

13.2.1. Grounds and strategies at the national level

The revolution of 1974 ended in the development of the Portuguese Republic. With this beginning of the democratic area, the new constitution enshrined the state’s duty to implement, develop and strengthen the democratisation of culture as an overarching principle. The term *cultural democracy* was set and linked to the idea of a participatory democracy (Art. 2): “The Portuguese Republic is a democratic State [...] its aim is to achieve economic, social, and cultural democracy and to push participatory democracy further” (Portuguese Assembly, 2005, Art. 2). In Article 73,1 the text of the Constitution states that “everyone has the right to education and culture” (Art. 73, 1) and, further, the article refers to the need for a broad decentralised and actor-based approach to enable accessibility and creativity by everyone, based on cooperation of the state with diverse stakeholders in the field.

Another chapter in the Constitution with several articles points out the basic guidelines of a national cultural policy. A detailed description of alliances between the state and cultural stakeholders identifies how the state “shall promote the democratisation of culture by encouraging and guaranteeing access by all citizens to the fruits of culture and cultural creativity” (Art. 73, 3):

In cooperation with the media, cultural associations and foundations, cultural and recreational groups, cultural heritage associations, residents' organisations and other cultural agents, the state shall promote the democratisation of culture by encouraging and ensuring access by all citizens to cultural enjoyment and creation. (Art. 73, 3)

Even the right to cultural enjoyment and creativity is addressed in the article 78 of the Constitution, combined with the outlined “duty [of everyone] to preserve, protect and extend the cultural heritage” (Art. 78, 1), as well as

the duty of the state, in co-operation with all cultural agencies to encourage and ensure access to cultural activity for all citizens, to support initiatives to stimulate the [...] expression of creativity [...], to promote the protection and increased respect for the cultural heritage, [...] to develop cultural relations [...] to ensure the [...] Portuguese culture abroad, and to coordinate the policies for culture with other policies. (Art. 78, 1)

Despite this grounding article in the Constitution of Portugal, it was not quite obvious in the first years after the founding of the democratic state, how and who should be responsible for the implementation of this legal act. Not before 1995 was the first national Ministry of Culture after the revolution established, with autonomous departments related to strategies and sectors: books and reading, heritage, creative work in the arts, decentralisation, and internationalisation.

About ten years later, the powerful strategy of decentralisation which marked the first vision-driven era of a cultural policy in Portugal's new democracy started to decline. In 2006, a reorganisation by the Ministry of Culture implemented a rationalisation of resources, reduced the number of departments and gave up the sectoral policies. The economic and financial crisis 2009/2010 set the final end to the successful era of the Portuguese model of cultural decentralisation and the “culture-for-all” strategies. After 2011, the Government even downsized the Ministry of Culture to a Secretary of State (Gomes et al., 2011). The 20th Constitutional Government restored and extended the functions of the defunct ministry in 2015 after the changing of the government.

Despite the first steps, the share of government expenditure on cultural services⁴² is only 0.3% of GDP per capital which, in comparison to the other EU Member States is, together with Romania, at the second lowest position in the ranking – only Ireland and Greece spend less for their cultural services (Eurostat, 2024).

⁴² *Cultural services* refer to all expenditures in the cultural sector that do not belong to the categories of sports, broadcasting, religion and leisure activities. Combined with these statistical groups, Portugal ranks very low at 0.9, in the 7th last position and 0.2 points below the EU average (Eurostat, 2024).

[The] situation of many artists and also many cultural institutions in Portugal are still precarious. And so, by Portuguese standards, a bitter dispute has been raging for many years over what percentage of the state budget should be allocated to culture. While some speak of transversal budgets for culture in the various ministries and combine culture and public broadcasting in terms of budgets, others insist on the goal of investing one percent of the state budget only in culture. However, it is not only the amount, but also the distribution of the funds that is the subject of discussion. (Sporrer, 2020, n.p.)

One more concrete step towards an improved situation for culture and CCIs in Portugal is seen by the local IN SITU Lab Partner in the *Statute for Cultural Professionals*, a legal regime that – for the first time in the Portuguese history – regulates on a legal base the concerns of cultural professionals related to:

- registration of cultural professionals,
- employment and service provision regime, and
- social protection scheme.

Cultural professionals are now entitled to protection in case of involuntary suspension of professional activity in situations of illness, parenthood, disability, old age and death according to the Decree-Law (no. 105/2021 of 29 November) which came into force on 1 January 2022 (IGAC, n.d.).

13.2.2. Grounds and strategies at the territorial level

Over the course of 35 years, before the economic crisis in 2009/2010 led to a fundamental decline of expenditure, structures and programmes of cultural policy, there had been a shift towards regional and local policies in the realm of culture, particularly in municipalities and regions. Local (and regional) cultural policies were recognised in national policies, leading to significant improvements in public facilities, cultural programs and events. Empirical research highlights the growing importance of culture as a local policy issue and the increasing involvement of municipalities in public cultural policies during this time. In the Portuguese municipalities, a consistent pattern of local action had been observed, irrespective of the different political orientations of elected parties. However, there were some discernible differences based on political discourse: right-wing municipalities tended to focus more on culture as a local identity, while centre-left municipalities prioritised cultural expressions and investment in public cultural facilities. Despite these variations, there had been a political consensus on the overall objectives of local cultural policies, which included the preservation and promotion of local heritage, the development of local cultural and artistic offerings, and the formation of cultural audiences. This model employed strategies that involved both direct and indirect intervention by public authorities, forging partnerships with local associations and schools, and adhering to national and European policy guidelines. The availability of financial resources played a vital role in these efforts. Studies (see Silva et al., 2013; Azevedo, 2007; Babo, 2010) showed that the approach proved to be functional, providing political legitimacy for local elected representatives and generating tangible advancements in the cultural life of cities, towns and regions, with the policy of

decentralisation even transcending ideological and political differences among local councils, uniting them under a common cause. As Silva et al. (2013) concluded, the decentralisation policy enjoyed broad support from the political and social spheres and remains a standard for authorities to fulfil in many municipalities (see Silva et al., 2013, p. 20; Gomes et al., 2006).

In recent years, the policy mix in Portugal aims to promote balanced territorial development and reduce inequalities. The main components of this mix are the institutional framework and cohesion policy priorities and investments (OECD, 2023a, p. 8). The goal is to promote growth in all regions, as outlined in the *Portugal 2030 Strategy* (Portugal 2030, 2023), which is not directly aiming at culture, but more generally on recovering the economy, protecting jobs and achieving convergence with the European Union. Territorial cohesion is seen as a crucial aspect in countering territorial inequalities, as stated in the integrated strategy for the valorisation of inland territories. This strategy focuses on attracting and retaining population, promoting private investment and job creation, fostering knowledge transfer and innovation from academia to the socio-economic fabric, and ensuring the provision of general services. Overall, the aim is to achieve greater resilience and social and territorial cohesion in Portugal. The strategy acts as an umbrella for diverse sub-strategies which are related to different territories and are based on different mission-lines. **Açores 2030** is the regional strategy programme for the archipelago, including and considering at least the potential of culture and CCI actors in their relatedness to social cohesion, tourism and heritage (Portugal 2030 Program Agreement, 2021).

7.6.2.2. Grounds and strategies at the regional level

Looking back to the past centuries, the history of the Azores has largely coincided with that of the Portugal mainland, but the remoteness and necessity of a self-sustaining agricultural economy of the settlements might have prepared the ground for its very own forms of togetherness, shaped by cultural expressions and activities which differed from those on the Portuguese mainland. These developments as well as the distance from the decisions made by a government and its representatives that had no connection to the archipelago, might have fostered a self-understanding of the right to an independent government (Ruel, 2020). After the Carnation Revolution put an end to the long dictatorship of Salazar in 1974, a “Frente de Libertação dos Açores” (the Front of the Liberation of the Azores) was founded. It sought the independence of the archipelago, which finally was declared an autonomous region in 1976.

The Portuguese Constitution instituted a new system of local self-government. [...] In the case of Azores and Madeira, instead of administrative regions, the Constitution considered, for the first time, a form of regional political autonomy, establishing an autonomous region in each of the two archipelagos. (Silva and Buček, 2016, p. 10)

The *Political and Administrative Statute of the Autonomous Region of the Azores* proclaims in its preamble that “autonomy expresses Azorean identity, the free exercise of self-government and the

promotion of the wellbeing of its people” (Government of the Portuguese Republic, 2009, p. 1). Article 63 of the Statute of the Azores lays the legal ground for the cultural policy of the region by giving the Legislative Assembly legal power to legislate on matters of culture and media. Furthermore, culture is mentioned primarily in connection with cultural heritage or with cultural relationships with Azorean emigrant communities (LAW 2/2009, Art. 63).

“*The Autonomous Regions* have their own political and administrative statutes and their own legislative autonomy” (Art. 228). They benefit from extensive legislative powers and define their own policy, except for the field of foreign policy and defence and internal security, which come under the competences of central authorities (LSE and CASE, 2019).

Until today the Department of Culture (Direção Regional da Cultura) of the Autonomous Region of the Azores bases its work mainly on cultural heritage and local tradition and describes its “*culture policy strategy for the archipelago* as [a] *continuous strategy of qualification of cultural activity and heritage as unavoidable factors for the enhancement of Azorean society*” (Government of the Azores, n.d.-d, n.p.). A consolidation of the network of equipment for cultural practice is described as one of the main planned actions. Other planning is more related to construction, renovation and maintenance works for museums and other cultural venues on different islands, as well as a more general mentioning of the aim to “*form new audiences*” and foster the “*interaction of cultural initiatives with Education, Tourism and the Environment*” without further description (Government of the Azores, n.d.-d, n.p.).

There is neither any other mentioning of strategies or planning, nor information about the process related to the development of the bid-book to become ECOC 2027.

A single document on the planning process for the regional development programme under Portugal 2030 can be identified on the regional government’s website. In contradiction to the description of the territorial programme under the title *Açores 2030*, culture is not described as a related field of policy of action. The only hint on the contribution of CCIs or any cultural issue can be identified in Article 10 of the regional regulatory decree that points out that – among others – cultural stakeholders should be part of a monitoring team (Government of the Azores, 2023a, Art. 10, 2).

Nevertheless, *Açores 2030* could be identified as a social cohesion and regional development program, which focuses on social cohesion by developing partnerships between local authorities’ artistic structures and the education system, with the aim of the autonomous region “to strengthen the potential of tourism and culture as strategic sectors for the ARA⁴³ by expanding and reinforcing existing cultural structures and facilities, as well as investing in better accessibility” (Portugal 2030

⁴³ ARA is the abbreviation of *Autonomous Region of the Azores*, or RAA for *Região Autónoma da Açores*.

Program Agreement, 2021, pp. 42-43). The strategy is related to the European Commission’s main European vision of a “more social and inclusive Europe” through the application of the European Pillar of Social Rights (European Commission, DG EMPL, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). A closer look to the programme and the described planning of action reveals once more the idea of focusing on heritage-related issues and the creation of new museums to “increase diversification of culturally based tourist activities and attractions.” Innovation in culture is addressed only in the idea of developing “an interactive virtual museum for the islands” (Portugal 2030 Program Agreement, 2021, p. 167).

The IN SITU Lab Partner additionally described, as an innovative and regionally important strategy for social impact, the CREATOUR project, focusing on innovation, social investment, capacity building, partnerships and social impact. *CREATOUR* (“Creative Tourism Destination Development in Small Cities and Rural Areas”) was an incubator as well as a demonstration-of-practice and multidisciplinary research initiative, supporting collaborative research processes (2016–2020). The CREATOUR project aimed to connect the cultural and creative sector with the tourism sector through the development of an integrated research and application approach to catalyse creative tourism in small cities and rural areas throughout Portugal. The project involved 40 pilots scattered throughout the whole territory of continental Portugal. CREATOUR aimed to build the capacity of cultural/creative and other local agents to develop, implement and refine an array of attractive creative tourism experiences and aimed to have a direct applicability for regional sectorial strategies and public policies. This project was pursued in an open international context, continuously engaging with creative tourism researchers and initiatives globally and advised by an international Advisory Council (CREATOUR, 2017). As an “extension” of this work, the CREATOUR model was adapted to the Azores region through the CREATOUR Azores project (2019–2022), which was funded by FEDER (Fundo Europeu de Desenvolvimento Regional – European Fund of Regional Development) through the operational program Azores 2020 and by regional funds through the Regional Directorate of Science and Technology.

13.2.3. Grounds and strategies at the local level

Participants of the IN SITU workshops saw no highly relevant, municipally or parish-led policy strategies at local level but stated that sector-related planning takes place regarding municipal museums, cultural centres or other venues. Despite the lack of strategic planning at the municipal level, the networks of CCI actors in the Azores are important actors of cultural policy and regional development:

The development and growth of the CCI sector is important for Ponta Delgada and the region more widely. However, the relationship between the cultural sector and regional government is strained due to funding issues and many creative actors use mainland networks to locate funding directly from the national government. CCIs are increasingly politically active and advocate for legislative and policy changes regarding the creative and cultural sector. (IN SITU, 2023b, pp. 14-15)

One of the most innovative and cohesion-based planning processes, initiated by a network of Azorean CCIs, had been the process towards the bid-book of *Ponta Delgada* becoming *European Capital of Culture 2027*.

The Ponta Delgada – Azores 2027 bid [...] for European Capital of Culture was born from a civic movement. [...] 800 people from the Cultural and Creative Sectors and civic society signed a public manifesto in support of a regional bid with a cultural project that propelled a social and economic transformation. (Ponta Delgada – Azores 2027, n.d.-a, n.p.)

Starting around a group of CCI stakeholders of Ponta Delgada, a wide range of ideas, visions and programmes could be elaborated and brought creative stakeholders of all the islands together. The Government of the Autonomous Region of the Azores as well as the Municipality of Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, finally followed the ideas and showed responsibility for the application process. Even if Ponta Delgada was not elected as ECOC 2027, the process initiated new networks, methods and ideas which lead to innovative approaches and was honoured by the appointment of Ponta Delgada as the *Portuguese Capital of Culture 2026* by the Minister of Culture of Portugal (Ponta Delgada – Azores 2027, n.d.-b). It also contributed to an announced cultural strategy to 2030 of the municipal council of Ponta Delgada, with a focus on networking across sectors, municipalities, and islands up to international outreach and mutual exchange (Ponta Delgada Municipal Council, 2021).

The network of CCIs is politically active and focusing strongly on mutual exchange and new ways of arts and culture for innovation in social cohesion, sustainability, and new formats of regional development. It consists of a wide range of diverse stakeholders in the field, among them many professional artists who returned to the islands after studying or working on the mainland or abroad. In an open discussion of cultural and creative agents in the IN SITU Lab Azores, organised in conjunction with the IN SITU Kick-Off Meeting in October 2022, they expressed their deep appreciation for the engagement of the cultural and creative scene on the Azores but, at the same time, stated clearly the discontent with local and regional cultural policies.

“Cultural professionals in the Azores outraged by a 27% cut in the sector’s budget”⁴⁴ – so the title of an article, published shortly after the IN SITU Kick-off meeting in the Azores (Comunidade Cultura e Arte, 2022). CCIs were calling for the cultural budget for 2023 to be revised by increasing it by €2 million in view of inflation, disinvestment by the regional government and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic period. The anger at the government was strong because of its torpedoing of the application for the ECOC title that emerged from citizen movements. Shortenings the goals of regional development through culture, based on cooperation and alliances, could no longer be implemented.

⁴⁴ The article’s title in Portuguese is “Profissionais da cultura dos Açores indignados com corte de 27% no orçamento para o sector.”

Given that the entire planning and projects were created through the joint work and commitment of artists and other creative stakeholders, the funding cut endangered the whole process. One of the CCI stakeholders of the IN SITU Lab Azores stated that the planned cuts run counter to the national strategy aimed at ending the systematic underinvestment in the cultural sector, which has hindered its professionalisation and capacity, as well as its linkage with other sectors such as tourism or education. Some of these cuts reach values of more than 50%, other sector-related budgets have even been eliminated (Comunidade Cultura e Arte, 2022).

At least, the Ponta Delgada ECOC 2027 strategy was integrated in the municipal *Ponta Delgada 2030 Cultural Strategy*, which guided and shared resources and conclusions with the application (Câmara Municipal de Ponta Delgada, 2021, 2022). As the guiding document for the municipality's cultural policy, it is described quite vaguely by the following objectives:

- the use of opportunities for the sustainable and integrated development of the municipality of Ponta Delgada, bearing in mind the 2021–2027 community programming cycle;
- the definition of a strategy based on a restricted portfolio of structuring projects, bearing in mind the distinctive factors and specialisation of Ponta Delgada;
- the definition of an integrated territorial approach, reflecting the territorial development strategy to be pursued and the territorial investments to be made; and
- the mobilisation and involvement of key actors at local level in the process of designing and operationalising the development strategy to be pursued (Câmara Municipal de Ponta Delgada, 2021).

The overarching objective of the cultural policy described is to see “culture and sport as fundamental components and guidelines for the tourism development of the Municipality” (Câmara Municipal de Ponta Delgada, 2016b) which expresses its “pride in preserving its cultural identity and traditions, while at the same time seeking to showcase new local talents”. Finally, the website points out that the municipality is concerned with ‘bringing culture’ throughout its territory, described as “decentralisation of the Municipality’s cultural policy, taking expositions and cultural events to its 24 parishes” (Câmara Municipal de Ponta Delgada, 2016a).

13.3. Structures and implementation of strategies

Portugal is described as an asymmetrical regionalised State. With three levels of governance: central, regional – as it concerns the autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira (*Regiões Autónomas*) – and local. The local tier is divided into municipalities (*municípios* or *concelhos*) and parishes (*freguesias*) on a sub-level (LSE and CASE, 2019).

Cultural policy is seen as stately task and has mainly been based on a centralised model with “peripheral services administered directly by the State” (Regulatory Decree 34/2007, dated 29 March

2007). The Azores and Madeira as autonomous regions are excluded from this regulation but have taken over the hierarchical administrative system for their own governmental organisation and decision-making structure. In recent years, slight changes in cultural policy and its administration could be observed with some retreats, that is, less interference and – interconnected to this fact – less investment, or vice versa. This tendency is seen also in the gradual reducing of the organisational structures not only of the national Ministry of Culture (Compendium of Cultural Policies & Trends, 2011) but also, parallel to that, in organisational changes in the Autonomous Region of the Azores. Thus, the Regional Directorate for Cultural Affairs (DRAC) announced in 2020:

The harmonised management of human, material and logistical resources should aim to optimise resources through the convergence of productivity regulation processes, without dissociating itself from the fact that cultural production and enjoyment, as forms of preserving collective identity and creativity, foster the balanced development of societies, as well as implying an articulated and extensive planning of museum and library activities. On the other hand, it is justified that the activities of inspecting the state of conservation of the region's heritage, for reasons of methodological rigour, should be concentrated in a structure with analytical and rapid intervention capabilities. The Centre for the Study, Conservation and Restoration of the Region's Heritage is therefore abolished. [...] Cultural Centres will also close down [...] the Angra do Heroísmo Classified Zone Office will cease to exist. (Government of the Azores, 2020, n.p.)

13.3.1. Structures and implementation of strategies at the national level

Portugal's last elections took place on 10 March 2024 after Prime Minister Costa resigned due to a corruption allegation affair in his government. The new government was appointed on 2 April 2024 under the new Prime Minister Luis Montenegro. The newly elected government is lacking a stable Parliamentary majority and a coalition between the leading party and its competitors is missing. Consequently, the upcoming period is anticipated to be more than challenging, especially in the light of a strengthened extreme-right (The Brussels Times with Belga, 2024; RTP Notícias, 2024). The following months will reveal what this situation will mean for cultural policy, missions, strategies, planning and the implementation of measurements as well as for the structure of the Ministry involved.

So far, the new national Government has been appointed by the Prime Minister with only light changings to the previous governmental composition (see Figure 29).

Ministry for Presidency (incl. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs)	Ministry of State and for Foreign Affairs	Ministry of State and for Finances	Ministry for Territorial Cohesion
Ministry for National Defence	Ministry for Home Affairs	Ministry for Justice	Ministry for Education, Science and Innovation
Ministry for Health	Ministry for Infrastructure and Housing	Ministry for Economy	Ministry for Labour, Solidarity and Social Security
Ministry for Environment and Energy	Ministry for Youth and Modernisation	Ministry for Agriculture and Fisheries	Ministry for Culture

Figure 29 - Ministries of the XXIII. National Government of the Portuguese Republic, 2024

Source: Authors’ visualisation according to: Portugal Homes (2024)

The Ministry of Culture as a national body is described as responsible for:

the global and coordinated policy in the area of culture and related areas, namely in the safeguarding and enhancement of cultural heritage, in the encouragement of artistic creation and cultural dissemination, in the qualification of the cultural fabric and, in coordination with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the internationalization of Portuguese culture and language. as well as in the area of social communication. (Government of the Portuguese Republic, 2023, n.p.)

As the allocation of grants in the Azores is more difficult for the artists and CCI stakeholders working there, they report applying for funding from a wide mix of grant-giving institutions. The IN SITU Lab Azores described the **National Arts Plan (Plano Nacional das Artes, PNA)** as a one of the most relevant cultural policy instruments, addressing all citizens, but in particular children and young people (Plano Nacional das Artes, n.d.). The PNA promotes the transformation of society and is described as a “mobilising power of educational arts and heritage in the lives of citizens: for everyone and with everyone” (IN SITU, 2024b, p. 337).

As another instrument of financing innovation of CCIs, the Lab Partner highlighted the government initiative *Portugal Social Innovation*. This initiative aims to promote social innovation and stimulate the social investment market in Portugal. The funds of Portugal Social Innovation are channelled to

the market through four financing instruments dedicated to funding projects that offer alternative and innovative solutions to solve social problems. The instruments are dedicated to capacity building for social investment, building partnerships for impact, development of social impact bonds and a social innovation fund. Portugal Social Innovation mobilises around €150 million from the European Social Fund, as part of the Portugal 2020 Partnership Agreement. Private, public and social sector organisations can apply (IN SITU, 2024b, p. 338; Portugal Social Inovação Mission Unit, n.d.).

13.3.2. Structures and implementation of strategies at the territorial level

A close look at the structures and the implementation of strategies leads to a three-tier level of territorial cultural policy. The territory of the Autonomous Region of the Azores is divided into municipalities on all of the nine islands. Throughout Portugal, municipal entities are comprised of civic parishes (*freguesias*), most of the time based on former or still existing parochial parishes. Municipalities and parishes of the Azores differ widely in size and population density, socio-economic and place-based factors.

The *Autonomous Region of the Azores* is divided into 19 municipalities (*municípios/concelhos*), each of them, except the small community of Corvo, comprising several parishes (*freguesias*) as the smallest administrative entities. The islands differ in size, population, and number of administrative units. In total, the nine Azores islands have 308 municipalities and 3091 civil parishes. The smallest parish, *Mosteiro* (on the island of Flores) is inhabited by only 19 persons⁴⁵ while the largest is *Ponta Delgada - São Pedro*, a parish that is a part of the Azorean capital Ponta Delgada (on the island of São Miguel), with 7495 inhabitants (Brinkhoff, 2022b).

Municipalities/concelhos in Portugal generally manage cultural spaces such as culture centres, libraries and municipal museums. The municipal assembly, made up of presidents of the related parishes and elected members, is responsible for decision-making and overseeing the executive's activities. The municipal council, comprised of members elected by direct suffrage, serves as the executive body of the municipality and is responsible for planning, implementing municipal services and public works. The mayor, elected for a four-year term, is chosen from the top candidate on the executive council's list and chairs the council. The competences of the Portuguese municipalities generally include health, environment, culture, management of municipal assets, public works, urban/territorial planning, conservation and restoration of heritage and cultural spaces, as well as supporting cultural projects and activities of municipal interest (LSE and CASE, 2019).

⁴⁵ The Parish of Mosteiro with 19 inhabitants is part of the Municipality of Lajes de Flores, which combines seven parishes, all in all 1408 persons. Lajes de Flores is one of two municipalities of the island of Flores (Brinkhoff, 2022b).

Parishes/freguesias are historically seen as the first organisational units of rural communities in early medieval Europe. In rural and remote territories, those small units are more often still comparable to units of identity and are characterised, at least partly until today, by informal networks and decision-making structures, unwritten cultural knowledge and agreements that have developed throughout time. In most cases, but not necessarily, the civil parishes derived from the parochial parishes (Brinkhoff, 2022b; Kegler, 2020; Tavares and Teles, 2018; Tavares and Rodriguez, 2015; Oliveira et al., 1985).

Parishes, as small entities, are often historically grown spaces of identification for the inhabitants and those related to the place-based small community. Despite their small size, parishes as well as municipalities or the autonomous region have a size-related hierarchical administration structure. Even Mosteiro, the smallest parish of the Azores, offers a contact number to its administration and one hour of opening time on Thursday evenings on the official website (Câmara Municipal de Lajes das Flores, n.d.). Parishes have the right to establish their proper general rules of administration in the given legal framework, are responsible for parish heritage, including conservation and restoration, and for promoting, implementing and supporting sportive and cultural community projects, celebrations and other cultural activities. Collaboration among parishes or between parishes and the related municipal administrative level are possible (LSE and CASE, 2019).

13.3.3. Structures and implementation of strategies at the regional level

The *Autonomous Regions* have the right to have their own legislation as well as a regional government as executive organ and the related administration. “The regional government (Governo Regional) of the Azores is made up of a Regional Cabinet, comprising a President (Presidente do Governo Regional) and sector-related Regional Secretaries (Secretários Regionais). The legislative assembly (Assembleia Legislativa) is composed of directly elected members” (LSE and CASE, 2019).

Figure 30 presents how the XIV Regional Government of the Azores is divided into Sectors and Regional Secretaries.

Presidency of the Regional Government	Vice-President of the Regional Government	Regional Secretariat for Finance, Planning and Public Administration	Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Affairs and Communities
Regional Secretariat for Health and Social Security	Regional Secretariat for Agriculture and Food	Regional Secretariat for the Sea and Fisheries	Regional Secretariat for Tourism, Mobility and Infrastructure
Regional Secretariat for Youth, Housing and Employment	Regional Secretariat for the Environment and Climate Action	Regional Secretariat for Education, Culture and Sport	

Figure 30 - Sectors and Regional Secretaries of the XIV Regional Government of the Azores, 2024

Source: Authors’ visualisation according to the Government of the Azores, “XIV Regional Government of the Azores,” no date. (<https://portal.azores.gov.pt/en/web/xiv-gra>)

The *Regional Secretaries* are comparable to Ministers on a national level. The Secretaries of the regional autonomous government are assisted by administrative teams.

For the implementations of political decisions on culture, the **Regional Directorates** (Direções Regionais) are in charge as executive bodies. The *Regional Directorate for Cultural Affairs (DRAC)* bases its work on the following missions:

- renewal and revitalisation of the region,
- promotion and revitalisation of the creative and cultural activity of the Azorean people, and
- preservation and appreciation of material and immaterial heritage (Government of the Azores, n.d.-c).

The Regional Directorate heads a wide range of public culture venues like museums, public libraries, and archives; the regional cultural fund and others; and is in charge for cultural affairs on all of the nine islands. The main objective is seen in the “cultural prominence, renewal and dynamism of the region” (Government of the Azores, n.d.-d).

To fulfil the variety of tasks on and with all the nine islands, the Regional Directorate heads several departments and sub-divisions. The *Regional Directorate for Culture* comprises a *Directorate of Heritage Services* heading the *Department of Movable and Immaterial Heritage and Archaeology*, a *Directorate of External Services and Cultural Action*, responsible for the Azores Knowledge Centre, the *Regional Inspectorate of Cultural Activities*, the Regional Cultural Fund, and is responsible for three

Regional Archives and Public Libraries (on three of the nine islands) and ten museums (allocated on all nine islands) (Government of the Azores, n.d.-c).

The administrative organisation of the Directorates has been developed to a much leaner structure as the result of a recently undertaken lean-management process. The structures are still following a strongly hierarchical line but focus more on the regulation of core tasks than before, reducing a huge administrative structure of several departments and sub-services, centres and divisions in the structure above⁴⁶.

In addition to the ongoing administrative work, the DRAC coordinates and supports the *Regional Orchestra project*. Every two years since 2015, an Azorean Project Orchestra will be generated, opened to musicians of the islands to join under the conducting of a professional director from outside, engaged by the DRAC (Government of the Azores n.d.-b).

A *Regional Cultural Fund* is described, but no information is given on applicable grants, conditions, procedure, grants awarded or budgets nor backgrounds for granting (Cultura Governo dos Açores, n.d.). The Azorean researchers, participating in the IN SITU Consortium Meeting in Galway and its workshop on policy for the IN SITU partners, described the possibility of applying for “small” grants at DRAC and the Regional Directorate of Tourism (DRT) but criticised the traditional top-down decision-making process and the lack of transparency of the governmental administration (see Figure 31).

⁴⁶ The website showing the former organisation chart had been closed during the process of writing this report, and links to the former organization chart are no longer available. www.culturacores.azores.gov.pt/drc/organograma.aspx

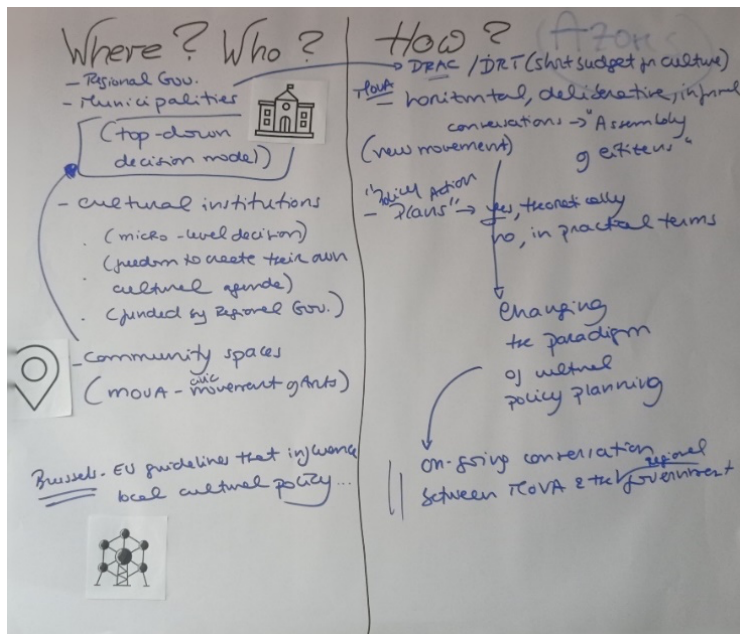


Figure 31 - The “Where, Who & How” on Azorean Cultural Policy, workshop result (February 2024)

Beyond the DRAC and the DRT, the latter concerning heritage and cultural activities related to tourism, other directorates could be related to the cultural and creative sector. The *Regional Secretariat for Youth, Professional Qualification and Employment* is, among other tasks, responsible for the implementation of regional policies in the area of regional handcrafts. It runs the Crafts and Design Centre of the Azores focusing on research and certification, training, support for artisans and promotion of the crafts and products (Government of the Azores, n.d.-a). Artisans can apply for grants in the framework of an Incentive Program for the Development of Handicrafts provided in the Regional Legislation Decree (RLD 34/2012/A) (Government of the Azores, n.d.-e).

Incentives vary between a minimum of 200.00 euros and a maximum of 20,000 euros, non-refundable, up to 50% of the expenditure eligible in the case of applications from the islands of S. Miguel and Terceira and up to 60% in the rest of the islands of the archipelago (Santa Maria, Graciosa, São Jorge, Pico, Faial, Flores and Corvo) (The Government of the Azores, n.d.-e).

The IN SITU workshop in Galway informed about the ongoing activities of networks of CCI stakeholders that are politically active, develop and enable various projects on basis of bottom-up structures and new ways of mutual support. CCI stakeholders and citizens of all Azorean islands recently founded a new network, MOVA (Movimento pela Arte e Cultura nos Açores), to react to the lack of strongly needed cultural policy changes and transparent granting systems. The new legal framework for supporting cultural activities in the Azores is being criticised by the Azorean arts and culture movement, MOVA. They believe that the new regulation fails to address the changes and needs of the cultural sector in the region. MOVA argues that the new framework lacks effective changes and does

not meet the expectations of the cultural sector. They highlight that the administrative procedures are bureaucratic and not flexible enough, leading to delays and disruptions for applicants and the services responsible for managing the process. MOVA also points out the confusion between support modalities and levels of support in the new framework, calling for clearer guidelines regarding eligibility criteria and evaluation procedures. Furthermore, they express concerns about transparency in the evaluation of projects and the discrepancy between what is required in the application form and what is assessed. Overall, MOVA believes that the new regulation does not represent an update or improvement in collaborating and working with the cultural sector in the Azores. They point out that “the new Legal Regime to Support Cultural Activities (RJAAC) does not introduce ‘an effective change’ that is strongly needed corresponding to basic needs of the cultural sector” (Gouveia, 2023, n.p.).

Besides the hierarchical decision-making and administrative governmental structure, at least some traces of a more participatory approach can be identified, but there is no clear hint that these initial points of basic-democratic openness will lead to substantial changing of the principles of cultural policy or to policy and administration in general. This statement is based on observing the process of the ECOC application and the differences between the engagement and participative processes of the CCI sector, on one side, and the announcement of reductions and a rejective attitude of the government, on the other side; the statements in the press release by Comunidade Cultura e Arte (2022); discussions in interviews and focus group talks; and the lack of public relations work and information by the government itself to implement the strategies developed as part of the ECOC bid book, which should also take place beyond recognition as ECOC 2027. Even if the bid-book results are described as strategies of the municipality of Ponta Delgada, they are not mentioned in the regional cultural policy plans, strategies and announcements, although the plan foresees an intense networking of the cultural sector of all islands.

The *Azores Participatory Budget*, at least, is a positive example for more openness and democratic participation, initiated by the regional government. It allows citizens aged 14 and over to submit ideas and project proposals for funding. Information events and face-to-face consulting have been held across the nine islands to inform residents about the procedure, help to sharpen the first ideas and provide information on how to submit them. In 2022, a budget of €1,200,000 was made available for this initiative. Ideas can be submitted for various departments, including Agriculture, Environment, Culture, Science, Education, Social Inclusion, Youth, Sea and Fisheries, and Tourism, for individual islands or for the entire autonomous region. The projects to be funded are chosen by the voting of the residents (Government of the Azores, 2023b).

13.3.4. Structures and implementation of strategies at the local level

As municipalities and parishes at the local level differ widely in size and population, socio-economic conditions as well as place-based potentials and challenges differ, even if the political decision-making

structure and administrative framing might be theoretically comparable. The IN SITU Lab Partner did not identify examples of local implementation of cultural strategies, but an exemplary look on two examples might help to get an impression on the reality of local cultural policy in the rural region of the Azores, in the ultra-periphery of Europe.

Ponta Delgada, as capital of the Autonomous Region with 67,229 inhabitants on an area of 233 km², is the most populated municipality of the Azores. Situated on the largest of the nine islands, São Miguel, **Ponta Delgada** comprises 24 parishes, hosts the administrative centre of the Autonomous Region, the municipal government and three of the 24 parish governments. With its small but international airport, it is the main arriving and leaving point for travellers from and to the Azores. All forms of schools as well as the main campus of the University of the Azores are situated in the city, and the tourism sector, some industry and the main harbour offer employment possibilities.

The municipal government runs a department for culture and sports and is responsible for some cultural houses, a library and some museums.

CCIs play an active part in the central city of the main island. Private galleries, a co-working space as a bottom-up initiative by the CCI network of VAGA – espaço de arte e conhecimento (Space of Art and Knowledge), socio-cultural projects, handicraft activities and initiatives focusing on music and immaterial traditions can be identified, partly involved in touristic offerings. As revealed in this report and stated during the IN SITU workshops and expert talks, the non-public cultural and creative sector is well related in networks, and the cultural actors emphatically express their criticism of what they see as an inadequate, bureaucratized and ineffective cultural policy while, at the same time, developing new common paths from a bottom-up perspective.

Corvo, the smallest island, is inhabited by only 384 persons (April 2021) with a shrinking tendency. Only 6.2 km in length and 3 km wide, it is situated in the outermost west of the archipelago. Due to its remoteness and the small number of residents it is, at the same time, the only parish that has also a municipal status. A small airport for planes connecting the islands and a ferry connection to the island of Flores connects Corvo to the other islands. Agriculture and some tourism shape the islands economy (Brinkhoff, 2022b) but, despite the small community, the municipality is led by an elected president, a vice-president and three councillors and form the municipal government. The website describes the areas of activities, including the sector of culture. An **Ecomuseum** had been developed during recent decades, a good example for the innovative power of creative individuals with networking and impulse-giving competence and perseverance. With the idea of planning a museum in Corvo initiated in 1977, it took until 2020 to be integrated into the regular External Services of the Regional Directorate of Culture and, by this measure, to be supported by the necessary means. Finally, a steady small team can be paid regularly after a long time of huge amounts of volunteer work,

applying for grants, promoting the idea and involving inhabitants by participative means and personal contact (Cabral, 2022; Ecomuseu do Corvo, 2024).

13.4. Lessons learned

Cultural policy by public bodies in the non-urban territories of the Azores is structured as a top-down model and based more on regulations than on enablement strategies. Bottom-up processes or alliances bringing together public and private stakeholders are rare. The local IN SITU Lab researchers and CCI stakeholders have reported enormous difficulties and the lack of a cultural policy which is meant to empower and support a cultural and creative ecosystem and its CCIs (Interviews with Group L, 2022 and 2023). “*There is no cultural policy!*”— this sentence followed all interviews and focus group talks with stakeholders in the Azores when asked to describe the cultural policy of the Azores.

Nevertheless, cultural policy action also takes place beyond administrative formats and public strategic planning. Networks, initiatives and institutions like VAGA/Anda&Fala, MOVE, the contemporary arts centre Arquipelago, the Azores ECOC 2027 bid, and an array of individual artists and other creatives are actively shaping innovative ways, in interdisciplinary settings, to promote vibrant art and culture on the islands and beyond, despite all challenges. The immaterial heritage and traditions, which on the Azores are, for example, characterised by religious festivals that are fostered and kept alive by parish communities and even by emigrant Azorean communities, at first sight does not align with innovative ways of shaping future-based societies. However, these collective actions are rooted in the self-organisational power of community-culture: activating a great number of people to participate voluntarily in cultural activities, shaping intergenerational togetherness based on traditional narratives and participative action, cultural education through intergenerational learning opportunities in organisational and creative processes, rhythmising the life of these communities through yearly celebrations, fostering civic engagement – all important components in shaping local societies and strengthening the power of democratic bottom-up and self-organised volunteer engagement for resilient and vital villages – without the need for public top-down regulation or guidance, and minimal (if any) state intervention or investment (Schneider et al., 2017; Kegler, 2020).

Even more than this: the vibrant networks of artists and creatives, many of them with impulses and experiences from a life between the arts scenes of the mainland and international metropolises – with the Azores as their *place to be* – bring a huge bundle of innovative power and new ideas together in their networks. Most of them are situated on the main island of São Miguel, but examples show that the distances don’t have to be a hindering ground for their cultural and cultural policy activities. In comparison to the variety of innovative activities, strategies and ideas of the creative organisations and networks, the system of public cultural policy seems to belong to another era of time. First steps towards the struggle of working together for the future and resilience of the Azores can be identified, despite the expressed anger and frustration with the systemic challenges.

As a study on the Portuguese public administration revealed, there are significant “weaknesses in motivation and in establishing a meritocratic system” (Nishimura et al., 2020). The main conclusions the study obtained⁴⁷ showed a bureaucratic public administration with a need for change and innovation, to respond to current demands and to provide quality and flexible services. The results demonstrate an organisational culture of rules and hierarchies, internally focused and with the structure in control (Marreiros et al., 2023).

The results of the study allow us to state that the Portuguese PA [Public Administration] presents high levels of bureaucracy (78% of the respondents considered the PA to be quite or very bureaucratic). ... In fact, despite the movements to bring public management closer to private management, advocated by the NPM [New Public Management] in recent decades, the Portuguese PA [Public Administration] still seems to be structured very much on Weberian concepts of rationality and control. (Nishimura et al., 2020, p. 18)

This investigation has contributed to reinforcing this study’s findings, observing that the hierarchical and bureaucratic public administration severely lacks innovation and creativity to cope with the need of citizens (Tavares, 2019). Additionally, it has to be taken into consideration that this widespread plight is even more challenging in smaller systems with top-down decision-making structures. Those hierarchical structures are reinforced depending on the competences, presence and local acceptance of the decision-maker and the motivation and competences of the administering persons. If those competences are lacking, for example, due to a shortage of skilled labour in rural or remote areas that suffer from labour migration, ageing and brain-drain, the situation can get even worse (IN SITU, 2023b).

14. Cultural policy at different levels in the EU: Conclusions and outlook

Europe’s non-urban, rural and remote areas with their smaller social communities are disproportionately affected by the effects of demographic change, migration, climate change, globalisation, changes in agriculture and other ongoing transformation processes. A total of 90% of Europe’s surface area is considered non-urban (75.8% as rural) (Eurostat, 2023b), with more than 60% (25%) of the population living there (Eurostat, 2023c). In those regions, election results show a frightening increase in disenchantment with politics throughout Europe. Studies revealed that this attitude rejecting democracy has to be considered in the face of an increasing feeling of powerlessness, inability to act and being left behind in the light of the fundamental changes that are

⁴⁷ The conclusions were obtained through an empirical analysis on organisational culture in public administration of Portugal conducted by the ISMAT - Instituto Superior Manuel Teixeira Gomes, Portimão (Marreiros, Romana, and Lopes, 2023).

making the inequality of living conditions in non-urban territories ever more apparent. The winners of this despair are those extreme right parties with anti-democratic self-conception. First research results show the potential of CCIs in non-urban areas as drivers for social innovation in transforming societies by:

- giving impulses and bringing people together to participate in creative processes;
- offering playful frameworks, processes and occasions to shape togetherness, (re-)vitalise communities, strengthen democratic values and foster societal resilience;
- experimenting with innovative formats, regional narratives and participative methods of networking, self-organisation, mobility, communication, diversity, heritage and tourism, regional identity, sustainability and other challenges of non-urban territories;
- experimenting on the question of “who are we in times of transformation, how do we want to live together in our region in future”; and
- participative processes based on democratic values to shape togetherness in diversity that play a crucial role in the processes of social transformation of the cultural and creative ecosystems and the related role of cultural policy for transforming non-urban territories seem to be widely unseen until now.

The exemplary analysis of culture at the national and territorial levels revealed the huge diversity of concepts, backgrounds, strategies and their implementations, the lack of comparable information and data and – in most cases – a missing awareness of the role of CCIs and other stakeholders of cultural and creative ecosystems for needed innovation in the different non-urban territories.

“Cultural policy? Oh, no we don’t have any cultural policy here!” (Interviews with Groups A, B, H and L, 2022, 2023 and 2024). This relatively typical answer to our question on local and regional cultural policy in the IN SITU Lab areas pointed out quite obviously a wide-spread phenomena in Europe’s non-urban territories. Even if a more detailed look at place-based cultural policy revealed some contradiction to this polemic expression, it can be generally stated that, for non-urban territories of several EU member states, national cultural policy lacks a focus on non-urban issues. Another more general finding can be identified through a close look at local policies. Place-based needs and local potentials of CCI stakeholders stay relatively often unseen and lack adequate enablement structures that foster the innovation capacity and involvement in the shaping of local and regional societal transformations to social cohesion and enhancing sustainability, vitality, and resilience of local and regional communities. Political and administrative entities and granting systems, if existing, consider CCI stakeholders rarely as partners in alliances for the common goals but see them more as funding recipients or providers for cultural services in tourism, heritage protection, education and image building.

Differences between the researched national and territorial levels challenge a comparative review. However, we observe that *it makes a difference*:

- if the territorial aspect describes one or more administrative levels with differing administrative systems, sizes, population density, settlement and decision-making structures, related to differing place- and community-based issues;
- what kind of non-urban territory is meant – there is not “one” non-urban area, but a big variety of rural, remote, and peri-urban areas, with different potentials and challenges due to landscape and location as well as to the socio-economic conditions of the inhabitants;
- If cultural policy in more centralized top-down structures focuses on huge administrative entities, mainly focuses on the central city or on the touristic sites, or if bottom-up processes of small entities are taken into account and fostered by place-based regional coordinators;
- If national strategies are developed centrally, binding for regional and local cultural policy but not taking into account the place-based possibilities and challenges of implementing the proposed measurements, and
- who is deciding about what and about whom, bringing what kind of experiences and knowledge; what discourses, concepts and historical backgrounds; what methods and understanding of participation, democracy, and European, national, regional and local values; and what narratives of the role of culture and creativity, of diversity and inclusion, of gender equality and more – all are influences on processes, socialisation and self-understanding of related stakeholders and decision-makers and are relevant.

A look at the structures and programmatic orientation of cultural policy at the EU-level as well as on wide parts of national, regional and local level show clearly that the role of art and culture in shaping society in and for non-urban areas is until now only marginally part of a political focus. The innovation potential of the cultural and creative field for non-urban territories stays widely unseen or is only generally remarked. Several reasons can be identified to explain this severe lack of political attention to this relevant policy field:

- the “edges of the field” and the field itself are not clearly to define;
- the effects and meaning of culture and creativity are not fully and easily measurable;
- diversity, fluidity and ongoing transformation, based on place-based needs and possibilities, related not only to knowledge and skills, but also to personalities – these factors make the policy field difficult to grasp;
- the related terms *culture*, *arts*, *creativity*, *non-urban* or *rural and remote* are often more emotionally loaded and sometimes strongly linked to social concepts (Bourdieu, 1979);
- the CCIs related to non-urban territories are only partially represented by network initiatives respectively only alongside other fields, so a participatory exchange on potentials, challenges

and needs of CCIs in non-urban territories is one of several topics and until now not as prominent as others; and

- the stakeholders in the field are challenged in their political engagement for more awareness of their potentials and situation by a lack of capacity and suitable enablement and networking structures, working usually as freelancers, volunteers or part-time employees and in mixed and fluid forms of those working conditions. Evolvement in cultural policy can be difficult to manage, even more difficult by challenges posed by the location: Those who live in remote rural areas need time to travel long distances, are not necessarily involved in the ongoing discourses and advocacy possibilities of the metropolises and politics. Language barriers can be a problem. Becoming involved in European, national or regional and local cultural policy as well as the needed networking and exchange on views and demands rarely fit into this already challenging daily routine.

Administration and decision-making for a field like this seems to be a challenging enterprise on local and on regional level. Supporting Member States with unclear and diverse concepts, differing structures and methods and partly lacking awareness of needs and potentials of CCIs as drivers of innovation in non-urban territories is a difficult task for the EU.

To solve these multiple challenges, research and data are needed as well as concrete advocacy and regional networks with enabling programmes near to the needs of local artists, cultural workers and mediators, and other activities in the cultural and creative sectors of non-urban areas. Furthermore, a European Cultural Policy is needed that takes into consideration the challenges of those who still lack the possibilities to be heard and seen in their potentials and needs as well as the diversity of the cultural landscapes of the different non-urban areas, their frameworks and their possible impacts on innovation for transforming societies.

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Annex A: Abbreviations

Table 2 - Abbreviations used in this report

Abbreviation	Full name
AGRI	Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
CAC	Cultural Affairs Committee
CAE	Culture Action Europe
CBSS	Council of the Baltic Sea States
CRC	Cultural Relations Committee
CCFG	Cultural Creators Friendship Group
CF	Cohesion Fund
CREATOUR	Creative Tourism Destination Development in Small Cities and Rural Areas
CULT	Committee on Culture and Education
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
DG	Directorate-General (of the European Commission)
DG AGRI	Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
DG COMM	Directorate-General for Communication
DG Connect	Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Abbreviation	Full name
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
DG RTD	Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
DRAC	Regional Directorate for Cultural Affairs (of the Autonomous Region of the Azores)
EACEA	Education, Youth, and Culture executive agency
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
ECOC	European Capitals of Culture
EIT	European Institute of Innovation and Technology
EMPL	Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
ENCC	European Network of Cultural Centres
ENRD	European Network for Rural Development
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF+	European Social Fund+
EU	European Union
EYCS	Section of the Council of the EU related to the policy fields of Education, Youth, Culture and Sport
FEMM	Committee on Women`s Rights and Gender Equality
FMW	Federation of Municipalities in West Iceland
GRD	Galway Rural Development

Abbreviation	Full name
HAVC	Croatian Audio-Visual Centre
IETM	International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts
JTF	Just Transition Fund
JRC	Joint Research Centre (of the European Commission)
KNF	Kultura Nova Foundation
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
ND	Northern Dimension Policy
NDP	National Development Plan
NDPC	Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture
NEB	New European Bauhaus
NPF	National Planning Framework
NýVest	West Iceland's Innovation Network
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMC	Open method of coordination
PG	Programme for Government
RDPs	Rural Development Programmes
RLP	Roscommon LEADER Partnership

Abbreviation	Full name
REGI	Committee on Regional Development
RPSO	Rural Pact Support Office
RRDF	Rural Regeneration and Development Fund
RÚV	Icelandic National Broadcasting Service
THE	Trans Europe Halles
VoC	Voices of Culture
WRD	West-Iceland Regional Development

Annex B: Interview guidelines for expert interviews, expert talks, and focus group talks

Objectives, Strategy, Planning, Implementation

- What are the main objectives/strategies of your department/organisation/ministry/municipality... in Cultural Policy?
- What are the main objectives/strategies in [Country]?
- What are the main objectives/strategies in [the IN SITU research area/regional/local]?
- How do you/your organisation/[national/regional/local] cultural policy try to implement the strategies and reach the objectives?
- Can you give us some examples?

Structure, Networks and Cooperation

- What kind of structure/organisational forms/decision-making is existing (formal/informal)?
- Is Cultural Policy a task of one special department, an expert team, a single person, part of other tasks...? What kind of expertise does the people in charge of Cultural Policy have?
- Is there a budget for Cultural issues? What is paid by it?
- In which form do you work with the municipalities/other organisations/national/regional partners/... concerning Cultural Policy?
- Do you cooperate with LEADER groups in questions of Cultural Policy for rural development? If yes, in which ways? If no, why not?
- Can you give us some examples?

Vision, Challenges and Needs

- If one day in future really all your dreams and plans for Cultural Policy and rural development would come true... what will have been realized, what will have changed?
- What is needed to reach this situation?
- What are the main challenges and obstacles?

Annex C: IN SITU-related interviewees and participants

Table 3 - IN SITU-related interviewees and participants

Name	Organisation / Function	Topic / Expertise
Erna Kaaber	University of Bifröst (BIFROST), IN SITU Lab Iceland	Cultural Policy Iceland
Njörður Sigurjónsson	University of Bifröst (BIFROST), IN SITU Lab Iceland	Cultural Policy Iceland
Martina Fraioli	European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC), IN SITU Partner, WP3 Co-lead	Cultural Policy EU-level, non-urban
Piotr Michałowski	European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC), IN SITU Partner, WP3 Co-lead	Cultural Policy EU-level, non-urban
André Torre	National Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment (INRAE), IN SITU Partner, WP5 Co-Lead	Innovation / non-urban
Dea Vidović	Kultura Nova Foundation (KNF), IN SITU Lab Croatia	Cultural Policy & Gender Croatia
Tamara Zamelli	Kultura Nova, Croatia Foundation (KNF), IN SITU Lab Croatia	Cultural Policy & Gender Croatia
Laura Brutane	Latvian Academy of Culture (LKA), IN SITU Lab Latvia	Gender issues Latvia
Daniela Soares	University of the Azores (UAc), IN SITU Lab Portugal	Cultural Policy Azores, Gender
Mavíldia Maria Chaves Medeiros Teves	University of the Azores (UAc), IN SITU Lab Portugal	Gender issues Azores, Portugal
Mark Rainey	University of Galway (UG), IN SITU Lab Ireland, WP3 Co-lead	Cultural Policy, CCIs in non-urban areas, IN SITU Labs, Ireland
Patrick Collins	University of Galway (UG), IN SITU Lab Ireland, WP3 Co-lead	Cultural Policy, CCIs in non-urban areas, IN SITU Labs, Ireland
Maunu Häyrynen	University of Turku (UTU), IN SITU Lab Finland	Cultural Policy Finland, Regional CCIs
Oleksandra Nenko	University of Turku (UTU), IN SITU Lab Finland	Cultural Policy Finland, Regional CCIs

Name	Organisation / Function	Topic / Expertise
Sylvia Amann	IN SITU International Advisory Board (IAB) Member	Cultural Policy / non-urban / EU-level
Sigursteinn Sigurðsson	Regional Coordinator, West Iceland	Cultural Policy, Iceland, CCIs Vesturland
Gesine Tuitjer	Thünen Institut, researcher	Gender, Cultural Policy non-urban

Annex D: Anonymised interviewees and participants in focus group talks

Table 4 - Anonymised interviewees and participants of focus group talks

Group	No. of people	IN SITU Lab area	Field of expertise
Group A	2	Finland (Rauma & Eurajoki)	Working / Volunteering in the CCIs
Group B	11	Finland (Rauma & Eurajoki)	Working in Management, Administration or Cultural Policy field
Group C	3	Iceland (West Iceland)	Working / Volunteering in the CCIs
Group D	2	Iceland (West Iceland)	Working in Management, Administration, Cultural Coordination, or Cultural Policy field
Group E	3	Ireland	Working / Volunteering in the CCIs
Group F	3	Ireland	Audience / Participant of local, cultural activities
Group G	1	Ireland	Working in Management, Administration or Cultural Policy field
Group H	1	Croatia	Working / Volunteering in the CCIs
Group I	1	Croatia	Working in Management, Administration or Cultural Policy field
Group K	2	Latvia	Working in Management, Administration or Cultural Policy field
Group L	1	Portugal	Working / Volunteering in the CCIs
Group M	2	Portugal	Working in Management, Administration or Cultural Policy field