IN SITU
place-based **innovation** of **cultural and creative** industries in **non-urban** areas

(GA Project 101061747)

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# IN SITU CCI Index Development

**Work package WP3** – Place-based planning: Assessing needs, monitoring, supporting and benchmarking of CCIs

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## Executive Summary

This report, *IN SITU CCI Index Development,* presents the **IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index** as a deliberately pragmatic way of making **movement** in cultural and creative ecosystems visible across six peripheral regions—the IN SITU Labs (Western coastal periphery, Ireland; Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland; West Region, Iceland; Valmiera county, Latvia; Azores archipelago, mid-Atlantic Ocean, Portugal; and Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia)—between **2021 (baseline)** and **2024 (endline)**. The intention is not to produce another static "who has the most culture" league table, nor to flatten distinct places into a single proxy. Instead, the index is designed to surface *direction and momentum*—how ecosystems are adapting, consolidating, reorienting or thinning from where they already are—while keeping the results interpretable alongside the Lab narratives and local context.

Methodologically, the index combines **three complementary registers of change**, each built as a baseline-to-endline change measure and then standardised for cross-region comparison. First, the **CCI Change Index** captures structural and economic change in the creative ecosystem through a harmonised inventory of enterprises and associated employment, classified into **Creative, Cultural, and Craft** sub-domains. Second, the **Cultural Celebration Change Index** captures public-facing cultural activity and enabling infrastructure—**spaces, organisations, events and international festivals**—reported by the IN SITU Labs through a shared template and then standardised so differences in baseline size do not dominate differences in momentum. Third, the **Cultural Vibe Change Index** captures change in mediated visibility through global digital platforms and media systems (i.e., how culture is surfaced, circulated and amplified), treated explicitly as change over time rather than a restatement of who is largest. Each pillar is expressed on a **0–100 scale within the six-region cohort** (i.e., cohort-relative), and the **Top Line Index of Change** is computed as an **equal-weight average** of the three pillar scores (one-third each).

Table 1 presents an overview of the index values for each of the six IN SITU Lab areas. Reading the table as intended (***signals*** rather than verdicts), the results show distinct trajectories rather than a single hierarchy. The **Icelandic West Region** records the strongest overall change signal (Top Line 85.2), with consistently high scores across the economic/structural layer, public-facing celebration and mediated vibe. **Šibenik-Knin County** sits at the cohort ceiling on CCI and celebration (both 100), but with a more moderate vibe score (38.7), producing a Top Line of 79.6—a profile consistent with strong sectoral and programme momentum but less movement in platform/media visibility over the same window. **Valmiera County** presents a sharply different configuration: very high vibe momentum (94.9) alongside a celebration-change floor (0), yielding a mid-range Top Line (49.4) and signalling a decoupling between mediated visibility and expansion of the on-the-ground celebration layer. The **Western coastal periphery of Ireland** shows a mixed and incremental profile (Top Line 45.9) rather than dominance on any single pillar, while **Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago** sits lower across all three change registers (Top Line 33.6), consistent with steadier,

smaller-scale movement. The **Azores archipelago** appears as the cohort low overall (Top Line 14.1), driven by a floor result on the CCI change metric alongside limited momentum on the other two pillars.

*Table 1 - IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index*

| Region | CCI Change Index | Cultural Celebration Change Index | Cultural Vibe Change Index | Top Line Index of Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Western coastal periphery, Ireland | 55.5 | 51.6 | 30.6 | 45.9 |
| Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland | 45.8 | 33.6 | 21.5 | 33.6 |
| West Region, Iceland | 87.5 | 93.0 | 75.2 | 85.2 |
| Valmiera County, Latvia | 53.3 | 0.0 | 94.9 | 49.4 |
| Azores archipelago, mid-Atlantic Ocean, Portugal | 0.0 | 19.4 | 22.7 | 14.1 |
| Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia | 100.0 | 100.0 | 38.7 | 79.6 |

Two interpretive cautions are important for how this should be read in this report. First, because each pillar is standardised within a six-region cohort, the scores represent relative momentum inside this sample, not an absolute measure of "how cultural" a place is in general. Second, the three pillars do not claim to measure the same thing: they are deliberately non-substitutable lenses (economic structure, cultural celebration, and mediated visibility), which is precisely why the Top Line can be decomposed into contrasting regional profiles rather than treated as a single story. The value of the framework is therefore diagnostic: it helps identify *what kind of change is occurring* (and where it is not), and it creates a transparent, repeatable structure for triangulating quantitative signals with the grounded accounts coming from each Lab. A third interpretive point is that net change is a directional signal, but it does not directly evidence origination or the generation of novelty: similar net movements can be produced through very different patterns of births, closures and pivots. For that reason, Chapter 9 of this report, "Reflections on Change," provides a short qualitative companion to the index, drawing on Lab inventories and wider IN SITU materials to characterise change types and

to surface where churn, consolidation or reconfiguration sits beneath the headline scores. This is intended to support interpretation rather than revise the index: the quantitative results stand as reported, but are read against lived dynamics and the partial visibility of cultural activity across sources.

The **IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index** is available in an interactive format at: https://sparkling-buttercream-ece4fd.netlify.app

## 1. Introduction

This report sits alongside other IN SITU outputs as a deliberately pragmatic piece of work: it is an attempt to make visible, in a comparable way, how cultural and creative ecosystems in peripheral regions move over time. The point is not to produce another static table of "who has the most culture," nor to collapse distinct places into a single proxy. If anything, the IN SITU approach starts from the opposite premise: cultural life in peripheral regions is often dense and consequential, but it is less readily captured by the infrastructures, markets and datasets through which metropolitan cultural economies become visible and countable. Therefore, what is attempted here is different—carefully, transparently, and in a way that invites interpretation rather than pretending to settle it. That is the purpose of the **IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index**.

The index is anchored on a simple logic: what matters analytically is the shape and direction of movement of cultural ecosystems over time. This is why the report repeatedly leans away from per-capita intensity or absolute counts as the headline story. Those measures are not "wrong," but they can flatten the territorial catchments, institutional arrangements and social logics through which cultural systems operate in non-core regions. In the IN SITU frame, the more interesting question is: how are these ecosystems adapting, consolidating, reorienting or thinning from where they already are?

To get at that question, the report combines three distinct—but deliberately complementary—registers of change. The **CCI Change Index** captures the structural and economic side of the creative ecosystem through a harmonised inventory of enterprises and associated employment, classified into Creative, Cultural and Craft sub-domains (with the decomposition shown transparently as scaled contributions rather than bounded sub-indices). The **Cultural Celebration Change Index** captures what might be called the "public-facing" cultural layer—spaces, organisations, events, festivals—reported by the Labs through a shared template, then standardised so that differences in baseline scale do not overwhelm differences in momentum. The **Cultural Vibe Change Index** adds a third layer that is often felt but rarely measured: the extent to which a region's culture is surfaced, circulated and amplified through global digital platforms and media systems, treated explicitly as baseline-to-endline change rather than a restatement of who is largest. Across the six IN SITU Labs (Western coastal periphery, Ireland; Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland; West Region, Iceland; Valmiera county, Latvia; Azores archipelago, mid-Atlantic Ocean, Portugal; and Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia), what this index is trying to hold together is a familiar practical problem: what looks like 'strength' in enterprise counts does not always look like strength in cultural life, and what travels well online is not always what sustains a place locally.

When these three layers are brought together, the headline table does something useful: it shows that peripheral regions are not simply "ahead" or "behind," but moving along different trajectories. In the current results, the Icelandic West Region records the strongest overall change signal (Top Line

85.2), with high scores across CCI (87.5), celebration (93) and vibe (75.2). Šibenik-Knin County sits at the cohort ceiling on both CCI and celebration (100/100), but with a more moderate vibe score (38.7), producing a Top Line of 79.6. Valmiera County offers a different configuration again: very high vibe momentum (94.9) alongside a celebration-change floor (0), yielding a Top Line of 49.4. Rauma–Eurajoki in Finland tracks a steadier, lower-intensity pathway (Top Line 33.6), with modest change across all three pillars (CCI 45.8; celebration 33.6; vibe 21.5), suggesting incremental ecosystem movement rather than a single dominant driver. The profile of the Western coastal periphery in Ireland, (for the purposes of this report, more explicitly focusing on County Galway) is more mixed and incremental (Top Line 45.9), and the Azores archipelago appears as the cohort low overall (Top Line 14.1). These act as prompts for interpretation, intended to sit beside the Lab narratives, not replace them.

To complement the index, this report includes a short qualitative reflections section (Chapter 9) that speaks directly to "change type" across the six regions. Its purpose is to surface, where evidence allows, the births, closures and pivots that sit underneath net movement in the tables, and to make explicit where measured trends may be shaped by uneven inventories or partial visibility of cultural activity. Read alongside the quantitative results, these reflections are intended to sharpen interpretation rather than revise the index: the scores stand as reported, but are placed in dialogue with lived dynamics and Lab knowledge to clarify what kind of change is actually occurring between 2021 and 2024.

Appendix A presents a summary of each metric used in the sub-indices, the operational definition, the primary data source, the temporal window and key reproducibility notes. Appendix B presents a table of the NACE coding groups for CCIs used in this research.

The **IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index** is available in an interactive format at: https://sparkling-buttercream-ece4fd.netlify.app (see Figure 1).

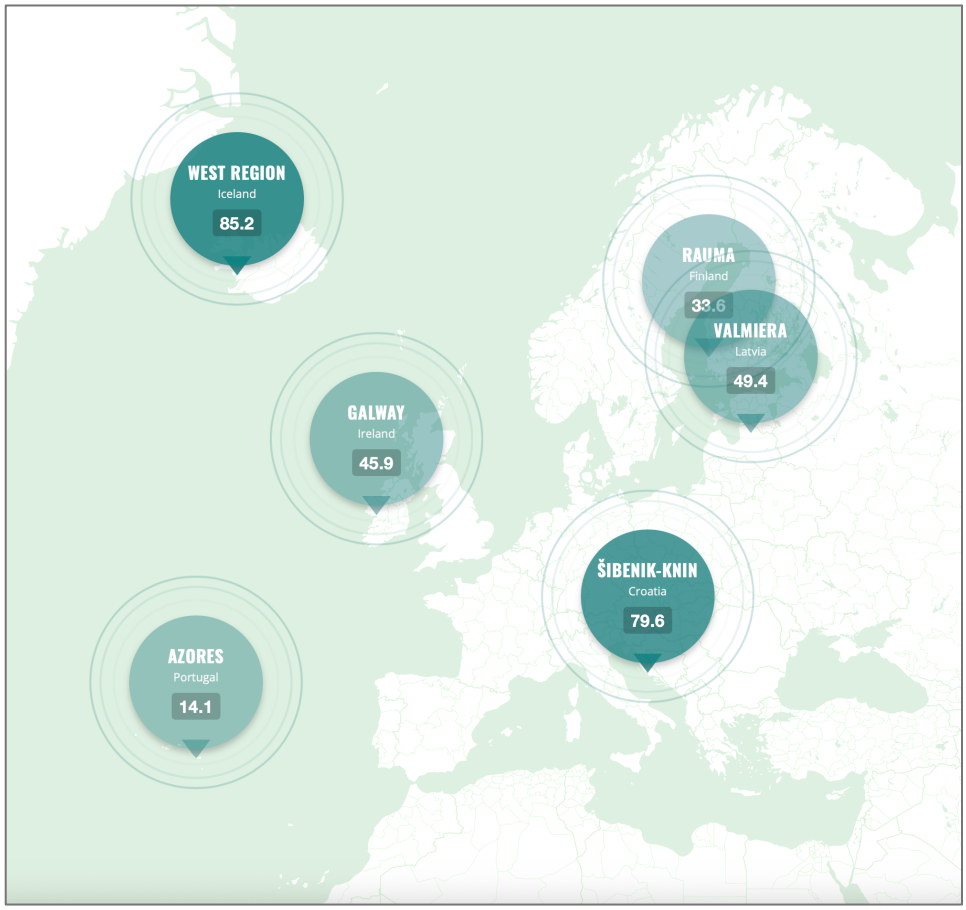


*Figure 1 - Mapping of IN SITU Labs' Top Line Index of Change*

## 2. Creative and cultural ecosystems in non-urban regions

Across Europe's non-urban regions, culture and creativity are no longer understood as marginal activities waiting to be activated by metropolitan spillovers. A growing body of research points instead to a quieter but more profound shift: the recognition that peripheral regions are not passive backwaters, but active sites of creativity, innovation and cultural life in their own right (Grillitsch & Sotarauta, 2025). This reorientation requires us to step away from capital-centric and city-first ways of thinking, and to approach the periphery not as a deficit space, but as an ordinary—and often experimental—terrain of cultural production (Sattler, 2025).

This shift matters because much of how creativity has been measured, benchmarked and valued has been shaped by urban assumptions. The dominant metrics of creative performance—scale, density, growth, export capacity—are calibrated to metropolitan environments. When applied uncritically to non-urban regions, they risk misreading what is happening on the ground, or worse, overlooking it entirely. IN SITU begins from a different premise: that culture and creativity do exist at the edges of

Europe, but they exist differently—more socially embedded, more place-bound, and more entangled with everyday life.

**Creativity as place-based practice**

In peripheral contexts, creative activity is rarely detached from place. It is shaped by landscape, by memory, by social relations and by the practical realities of living and working outside large urban markets. Cultural makers draw on what might otherwise be seen as constraints—distance, small populations, limited infrastructure—and rework them into sources of inspiration and distinctiveness. Local traditions, natural environments and shared histories become productive resources, shaping not only the content of creative work, but also how it is made and shared (Collins & Murtagh, 2024).

This embeddedness means that creativity in non-urban regions tends to operate as a system, rather than as a set of isolated firms or individual entrepreneurs. Informal networks, trust-based collaboration and dense social ties often do the work that formal institutions perform in cities. Social capital—familiarity, reciprocity, mutual support—becomes the connective tissue of the creative ecosystem. In these contexts, culture is not simply located in place; it is made with place, through practices that are relational, collective and deeply situated.

**Alternative economic logics**

Peripheral creative economies also tend to follow economic logics that diverge from dominant urban models. Many culture makers prioritise creative integrity, lifestyle sustainability and community contribution over growth or scalability (Collins & Murtagh, 2024; Eder, 2019). Rather than seeing themselves as entrepreneurs in the conventional sense, they often understand their work as a vocation or a form of stewardship—something to be sustained rather than expanded indefinitely.

This does not mean that economic activity is absent, but that it is configured differently. Multi-skilling, portfolio careers and hybrid livelihoods are common, with creative work intersecting with education, tourism, agriculture or community development. Informal cooperation frequently substitutes for market competition and peers—sometimes even competitors—collaborate out of necessity and shared commitment (Grillitsch & Sotarauta, 2025). These practices point to creative economies that are adaptive, resilient and values-driven, but not easily captured by conventional indicators of success.

**Agency, opportunity and peripheral innovation**

While place matters, peripheral creative economies are not determined by context alone. A consistent insight across recent research is the importance of agency: the role of individuals, small groups and intermediaries in recognising and acting on locally specific opportunities (Grillitsch & Sotarauta, 2025). Opportunity structures differ across peripheral regions—shaped by industrial legacies, institutional thickness and cultural attitudes—but within these structures, actor initiative can redirect trajectories.

In many cases, it is the vision of a single organiser, artist or cultural broker that catalyses new activity, mobilises resources or builds networks where none previously existed. These moments of agency can produce what MacKinnon et al. (2019) describe as "mindful deviations": small but consequential shifts that reorient local development paths. Peripheral creativity, then, emerges from the interplay between enabling conditions and human initiative—a dynamic that resists simple generalisation.

**The ordinary periphery**

This perspective aligns closely with what Sattler (2025) terms "the ordinary periphery approach." Rather than treating peripheral regions as exceptions or laggards, this lens views them as ordinary spaces where distinctive forms of innovation unfold. It challenges long-standing biases in innovation research that privilege productivity, scale and metropolitan concentration, and instead foregrounds social embeddedness, collective well-being and everyday practice.

Seen this way, a rural craft cooperative, a community-run festival or a network of independent creatives may be just as significant—socially and culturally—as an urban tech cluster. Drawing on the *diverse economies* tradition (Gibson-Graham, 2008), this approach recognises multiple ways of "doing economy," including cooperation, mutual aid and care-oriented production. Peripheral regions become sites where alternative futures are tested—futures that prioritise continuity, inclusion and belonging alongside economic viability.

**Culture, community and ecosystem services**

In many non-urban regions, cultural activity functions as a form of social innovation. Festivals, workshops and creative programmes often serve as platforms for community engagement, intergenerational exchange and local empowerment, rather than as vehicles for profit maximisation. These practices generate what are increasingly described as cultural ecosystem services: non-material benefits such as identity, inspiration and sense of place (Anders-Morawska, 2017; Crociata et al., 2024).

In peripheral contexts, these services are inseparable from landscape and environment. Culture and nature co-produce value, reinforcing emotional and symbolic ties between people and place. Creativity remains materially and affectively grounded—less commodified, more relational—offering a sharp contrast to urban cultural economies where value is often abstracted from context (Evans, 2017; MacKay et al., 2021).

**Why this matters for measurement**

Taken together, these insights demand a different approach to how creativity is identified, understood and measured beyond the city. If peripheral creative economies are relational, socially embedded and

system-based, then metrics focused solely on scale, density or per-capita intensity will miss much of what gives them meaning and momentum.

The IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index responds to this challenge by starting from where regions are, rather than from what they lack. It recognises that creative ecosystems begin from very different structural baselines, and that what matters most is not how closely they resemble urban models, but how they evolve over time. By focusing on change, rather than static comparison, the index seeks to make visible the diverse ways in which culture and creativity take shape at Europe's edges—and to provide a framework for understanding peripheral regions on their own terms.

## 3. A snapshot of the IN SITU creative ecosystem

Before turning to questions of growth, momentum and trajectory, it is important to establish where each IN SITU region begins. Figure 2 provides a simple but revealing snapshot of the absolute scale of creative and cultural ecosystems across the six case study regions. It captures three core elements of cultural life: the number of creative, cultural and craft enterprises (CCIs); the density of supporting cultural organisations and infrastructure; and the scale of festivals and events that animate public cultural life. Taken together, these indicators offer a grounded sense of the structural conditions within which cultural and creative change unfolds.

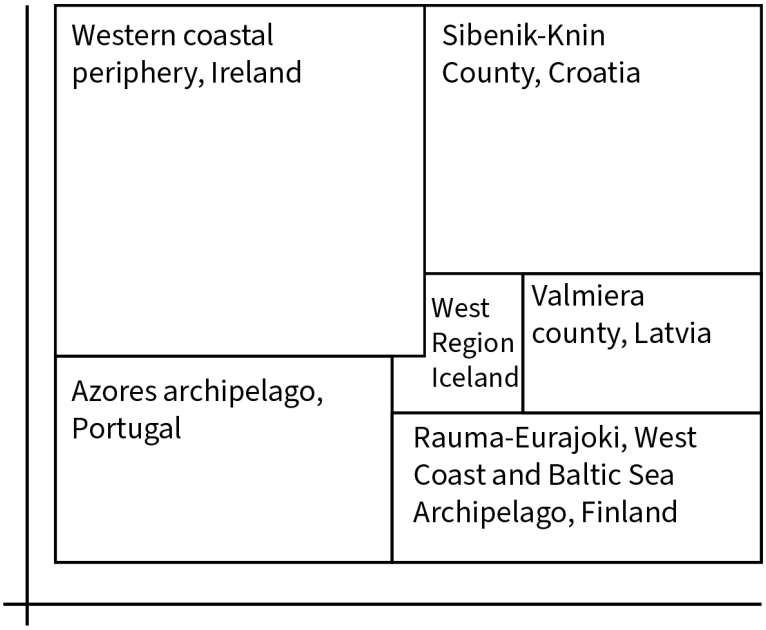


*Figure 2 - Relative ecosystems size of the IN SITU regions, 2021 baseline*

What the figure makes immediately clear is that the regions under study do not begin from a common baseline. Their ecosystems vary substantially in size, institutional thickness and public-facing cultural activity. These differences are not analytical noise to be corrected through per-capita normalisation; they are a defining feature of peripheral cultural economies. Recognising these uneven starting points is essential if we are to understand change not as convergence towards an urban norm, but as context-specific transformation.

**Western coastal periphery, Ireland: A mature and institutionally dense ecosystem**

In the Western coastal periphery of Ireland, the analysis focused on County Galway, which sees the area entering the period with the largest overall ecosystem across all three dimensions. With approximately 1,500 creative and cultural enterprises, a substantial organisational infrastructure and a dense calendar of festivals and events, Galway represents a relatively mature creative system by non-urban standards. Its high visibility score reflects decades of cultural investment, international branding and strong connections between culture, tourism and higher education. This starting point matters: for a system of this scale and maturity, change is more likely to take the form of consolidation, reorientation or qualitative development than rapid expansion in numbers. Any assessment of Galway's trajectory must therefore be read against a high and historically accumulated baseline.

**Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland: Moderate scale, balanced profile**

Rauma–Eurajoki occupies an intermediate position across all dimensions. Its CCI base, organisational infrastructure and festival landscape are moderate in scale, suggesting a relatively balanced but unspectacular ecosystem. There is no single dominant pillar, nor an obvious structural deficit. This kind of baseline often produces incremental rather than dramatic change, where shifts are cumulative and path-dependent rather than transformative. Understanding change here requires attention to subtle reconfigurations rather than headline growth.

**West Region, Iceland: Small scale, strong scaffolding**

The West Region in Iceland presents a markedly smaller ecosystem in absolute terms, with around 130 CCIs and a comparatively modest festival and event landscape. However, the region displays a relatively dense organisational infrastructure given its size, suggesting the presence of strong institutional and intermediary support within a small system. The low "vibe" score indicates limited mediated visibility, but this should not be conflated with weak cultural life. Rather, it points to a creative ecosystem that is locally embedded and institutionally supported, yet less outward-facing. Change in this context is likely to be sensitive, uneven and potentially volatile, as even small shifts can have noticeable effects on the system as a whole.

**Valmiera County: Thin structure, emergent visibility**

Valmiera County's baseline is defined by modest absolute numbers across CCIs and festivals, and a notably thin organisational infrastructure. This points to a creative ecosystem that is lightly institutionalised, with fewer formal organisations anchoring cultural activity. At the same time, the presence of a moderate visibility score suggests that recent efforts around branding, heritage and cultural programming are beginning to project Valmiera beyond its immediate locality. For such a system, change may not initially appear through growth in enterprise counts, but through increasing coherence, visibility and the gradual addition of support structures.

**Azores archipelago: Scale without density**

The Azores begin with a relatively large number of CCIs, reflecting a dispersed but active creative and cultural base across the archipelago. However, this scale is not matched by a commensurate density of festivals, events or supporting organisations. The ecosystem appears stretched: many enterprises operating across a fragmented territory, with fewer shared platforms for coordination, visibility and collective cultural life. The relatively high visibility score suggests that external imaginaries—often tourism-driven—play a significant role in shaping how Azorean culture is seen, even if internal infrastructural depth is more limited. Change here must be understood in relation to this imbalance between scale, cohesion and institutional support.

**Šibenik-Knin County: Large industrial base, uneven public culture**

Šibenik-Knin County enters the period with one of the largest CCI bases in the study, comparable in scale to Galway. It also has a substantial organisational infrastructure, though its festival and event landscape is less extensive relative to its industrial base. This configuration suggests a system where creative production capacity is relatively strong, but where public-facing cultural celebration is more selective or unevenly distributed. The high visibility score reflects Šibenik's strong cultural heritage profile and international recognition. Change in this context is likely to be driven by the expansion or diversification of creative industries, rather than by foundational ecosystem building.

*Box 1 - Change matters*

**Why change matters more than scale**

This snapshot underlines why the IN SITU analysis focuses on change and relative change, rather than per-capita intensity or static comparison. Per-capita measures would flatten these differences into a single ratio, obscuring the fact that creative ecosystems in peripheral regions serve different territorial catchments, operate through different social logics and fulfil different cultural functions. More importantly, they would shift attention away from the central question: how are these ecosystems evolving from where they already are?

By anchoring the analysis in a clearly defined 2021 baseline, the IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index treats each region's trajectory as a movement from its own starting point. Change is not read as success or failure against a metropolitan benchmark, but as evidence of adaptation, consolidation or reorientation within distinct cultural systems. In doing so, the index adds depth to our understanding of creativity in less urban places, revealing not just where culture exists, but how it moves, responds and transforms over time.

## 4. Diverse trajectories

Let's look at the Top Line Index of Change to get an overall feel for change.

*Table 2 - IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index*

Note: The Min–Max scoring sees 100 as the highest performing, 0 as the lowest. See the text following that 0 is not read as nothing, just the lowest change amongst the regions.

| Region | CCI Change Index | Cultural Celebration Change Index | Cultural Vibe Change Index | Top Line Index of Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Western coastal periphery, Ireland | 55.5 | 51.6 | 30.6 | 45.9 |
| Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland | 45.8 | 33.6 | 21.5 | 33.6 |
| West Region, Iceland | 87.5 | 93.0 | 75.2 | 85.2 |
| Valmiera county, Latvia | 53.3 | 0.0 | 94.9 | 49.4 |
| Azores archipelago, mid-Atlantic Ocean, Portugal | 0.0 | 19.4 | 22.7 | 14.1 |
| Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia | 100.0 | 100.0 | 38.7 | 79.6 |

**Western coastal periphery, Ireland – Structural strength, but limited dynamism**

In the Western coastal periphery of Ireland, Galway exemplifies a mature creative city whose cultural sector benefits from strong structural foundations yet has seen only modest recent growth. As a long-established cultural hub in Ireland's West, Galway entered the 2020s with substantial assets: a thriving arts scene, well-known festivals (e.g., Galway International Arts Festival, Film Fleadh) and a high concentration of creative talent. Indeed, in the Western Region of Ireland, County Galway accounts for the largest share (about 22%) of creative sector employment, reflecting decades of cultural development. This structural strength is also evident in the city's international recognitions—Galway is a UNESCO City of Film and was designated the European Capital of Culture for 2020, affirming its robust cultural infrastructure and reputation. However, this very maturity means the baseline was high, and dynamic growth has been harder to achieve recently.

The much-anticipated Galway 2020 Capital of Culture programme, which was meant to spur new cultural projects and community energy, was unfortunately derailed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Only a month after the 2020 festivities began, lockdowns hit and the ambitious cultural programme had to

be radically restructured, with many events moved online or cut back. While Galway's cultural institutions and artists demonstrated resilience—many projects persisted virtually and local artists collaborated with international peers despite the constraints—the opportunity for a burst of growth was largely lost to public health restrictions. Consequently, Galway's creative sector did not experience the expansion that might have occurred under normal circumstances; instead, it essentially maintained its pre-existing strength.

In the pandemic's wake, local reports emphasise that Galway's creatives "continue to flourish" and remain vital to the economy, but they have been operating in an environment of uncertainty and static resources. In summary, Galway today boasts an enviable cultural infrastructure and legacy—a structurally solid creative ecosystem—but it has not been as dynamically growing as some less developed regions, chiefly because it is in a consolidation phase and was hampered by external shocks. Its current task is to convert structural assets into renewed momentum, perhaps by capitalising on its established networks once conditions allow for full-scale cultural programming again.

**Rauma–Eurajoki (Finland) – Stability, incremental programme growth, and weak external momentum**

Rauma–Eurajoki registers as a lower-intensity trajectory in the headline change results, with a Top Line score of 33.6. Its profile is characterised by modest movement across all three pillars rather than a breakout in any single domain: CCI change (45.8) is higher than celebration (33.6) and vibe (21.5), while the overall pattern remains relatively subdued within the six-region cohort.

On the CCI layer, the story is essentially one of stability. The region's entity and employment counts are almost flat across the baseline-to-endline window, indicating limited churn and limited growth in the measured CCI inventory. In practical terms, this reads less as collapse than as a system that is holding steady—likely reflecting a context where the creative economy remains secondary to other regional economic anchors, and where new entry and scaling dynamics are comparatively muted in the period captured by the inventory.

The celebration layer points in the same direction: small increases in programme activity sit alongside slight contractions in enabling stock. Events and festivals tick upward, while cultural spaces and organisations edge down, producing a composite celebration-change score that remains in the lower-middle of the cohort. The net effect is a picture of incremental cultural activity without a corresponding expansion of venues or organisational capacity—suggesting a region that can sustain and modestly extend programming, but without the kind of institutional thickening that would typically underpin stronger momentum.

Finally, the vibe layer is the weakest of the three signals for Rauma–Eurajoki, consistent with limited movement in mediated visibility relative to peers. Read alongside the other pillars, this implies that whatever change is occurring is primarily internal and incremental rather than externally amplified

through platforms and media. In the IN SITU frame, this is still an analytically useful result: it distinguishes a "steady system" trajectory from both the high-growth pathways (Bifröst, Šibenik-Knin) and the contractionary profile (Azores), and it sharpens the interpretive question for the Lab narrative—namely, whether the region's stability reflects resilience and continuity, or whether it signals a need for renewed mechanisms of entry, experimentation and outward-facing cultural projection.

**West Region, Iceland – Balanced development across pillars**

In the West Iceland region, the creative sector's trajectory has been notably balanced across multiple pillars of development. Rather than excelling in only one aspect, the region has made steady, parallel progress in its creative industries, cultural infrastructure and policy support. Recent data for Iceland as a whole reflects this broad-based growth: all categories of cultural and creative industries saw increases, with significant gains in sectors like design/architecture (+10.3%) and cultural heritage (+11.3%). Overall, the number of enterprises in Iceland's creative sector jumped by 8.8% from 2022 to 2023, with growth in virtually every field (performing arts alone saw a 23% rise in businesses). This suggests that no single pillar dominates—both traditional arts and newer creative tech ventures are expanding.

Complementing the industry growth, Icelandic authorities have invested in creative infrastructure and support. For example, the government has enhanced incentives for film and television production, raising the rebate for shooting in Iceland to 35%, which helped attract the largest-ever foreign investment in Icelandic culture (HBO's True Detective series, budget ~ISK 9 billion – around 60 million euros). Major cultural infrastructure projects are underway as well, such as establishing a permanent campus for the Iceland University of the Arts and plans for a new creative industry district in Reykjavík—investments that strengthen the backbone of the creative ecosystem. In West Iceland specifically, local institutions like Bifröst University have contributed by building skills and networks (for instance, hosting workshops for creatives on branding, digital marketing and funding in the region).

All these efforts indicate a holistic approach: economic output from creative businesses is rising, while education, infrastructure and policy frameworks are simultaneously being enhanced. This balanced advancement across pillars has put the Icelandic creative sector (even in non-urban areas) on a resilient growth path, with creative work becoming an increasingly key part of the economy and a focus on long-term innovation capacity.

**Valmiera County, Latvia – Visibility-driven cultural change**

Valmiera's creative sector story is one of raising visibility and cultural profile, rather than a boom in new industries. Historically a small regional city, Valmiera has worked to put itself on the cultural map through events, marketing and heritage tourism. It hosts lively annual festivals—from the Valmiera

City Festival and Simjūds Fair to the Summer Theatre Festival—which showcase local culture and draw visitors. These events, alongside initiatives like Valmiera's manor network, have greatly increased the region's visibility. The manor network project unites historic manors and castles in Valmiera County to create new cultural tourism experiences, directly aiming to boost national and international recognition of Valmiera as a destination. By developing a coordinated cultural offer and publicity around its heritage sites, the county is promoting its image far beyond its borders. Early results show that this focus on visibility is paying off in awareness and tourism interest. Indeed, local stakeholders identified the "lack of recognition of Valmiera County as a cultural tourism destination" (Focus Group Notes[1]) as a key issue and responded by branding and networking their unique heritage assets. Now, regular cultural programming at these sites and targeted tourism campaigns (e.g., featuring Valmiera at international travel fairs) are putting Valmiera on the radar.

In essence, Valmiera's recent improvements in its creative vitality have been visibility-driven—achieved through cultural events, heritage networking and marketing that increase its profile—rather than through an immediate expansion of its creative industry base. This heightened visibility not only attracts visitors but also builds local pride and community engagement, setting the stage for future growth in the creative sector.

**Azores archipelago, Portugal – System-wide contraction and challenges**

The Azores present a stark contrast to the cases above: this remote Atlantic archipelago's creative and cultural sector has experienced a system-wide contraction in recent years. Several factors have converged to shrink the creative economy here, most notably the region's heavy reliance on tourism and the severe impact of the COVID-19 crisis. The Azores' economy, more than most, depends on visitors drawn to its natural and cultural offerings; thus, when the pandemic struck, the effect was devastating. In 2020, tourist overnight stays in the Azores collapsed—the main island São Miguel saw a 71.5% drop in overnight visitors, part of an estimated €400 million loss in tourism revenue within a year. This abrupt loss of visitors reverberated through all cultural and creative activities: museums and venues closed, festivals were cancelled and many creative businesses saw their customer base evaporate. Unlike larger regions, the Azores had little domestic market to fall back on, and its inherent geographic isolation (as an EU outermost region) only compounded the challenges. Even before

[1] This analysis is supplemented by qualitative material compiled by each IN SITU Lab, including short regional dossiers (context notes on cultural infrastructure, institutions and recent developments) and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders that were conducted as part of IN SITU Deliverable 3.5. These sources have been used to interpret and triangulate the index patterns, providing explanatory texture on local trajectories that cannot be inferred from quantitative indicators alone.

COVID-19, insular characteristics made it difficult to grow local CCIs—there are high transport costs, limited audiences and brain drain to mainland hubs. The pandemic exacerbated these structural issues of isolation, leading to business closures and job losses in cultural sectors. For example, many small arts and crafts enterprises or creative tourism initiatives within the CREATOUR Azores project, which aimed to develop an integrated approach and research agenda for creative tourism in small cities and rural areas in the Azores, had to suspend operations during lockdowns, struggling to survive in the absence of visitors. Moreover, any planned cultural investments were deprioritised as emergency economic concerns took centre stage.

The result is a contraction across the board: our data show no net growth in the number of creative enterprises or employment in Azores between 2019 and 2024 (stagnant counts in inventories and even declines in activity)—essentially a systemic stagnation or shrinkage. Local leaders and researchers are now grappling with how to reinvigorate the Azorean creative sector. Strategies include reinventing tourism with more sustainable, year-round cultural experiences and seeking digital avenues to overcome physical remoteness. However, the road to recovery is steep.

In summary, the Azores' creative economy downturn can be attributed to an external shock (COVID-19) hitting a highly tourism-dependent, peripheral system, leading to a broad contraction in cultural production, consumption and investment. Reversing this trend will likely require systemic solutions that reduce the islands' vulnerability—improving connectivity, diversifying the cultural offerings and bolstering local capacity so that the next shock doesn't unravel the entire creative ecosystem.

**Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia – Industry-led creative growth**

Šibenik-Knin's creative economy has been on an upward swing driven largely by entrepreneurial and industry initiatives. The city of Šibenik established "The Triangle innovation hub" (Centre of Technologies and Entrepreneurship) to foster local startups and creative entrepreneurs, illustrating how a small regional city can nurture innovation with a long-term vision. This focus on creative business development has already yielded tangible results—for instance, even during the pandemic downturn, Šibenik-Knin County saw its creative digital sector boost exports by 17.8%, thanks to growth in computer programming and gaming industries. In other words, new creative firms and tech-oriented enterprises are leading the growth.

At the same time, the city of Šibenik has cleverly leveraged its cultural heritage as economic infrastructure: the once-abandoned St. Michael's and Barone fortresses were revitalised into cultural venues, now drawing about 500,000 visitors annually, which in turn stimulates the local economy and supports creative jobs. This dual strategy—growing creative industries while capitalising on cultural assets—underpins the county's industry-led growth.

Researchers note that Šibenik-Knin is an "emerging creative economy" intertwining CCIs with tourism and regional development, and that both creative business output and public cultural investment

significantly contribute to the county's economic growth. In short, Šibenik-Knin County's recent gains stem from a strengthening creative industry base (e.g., tech startups, design firms) supported by strategic cultural investments, making its progress very much industry-led and entrepreneurial in character.

**Cross-Lab insights**

These case studies from the IN SITU Labs underscore that *how* a cultural and creative sector changes greatly depends on its local context and development stage. Šibenik-Knin County demonstrates that investing in creative industries and innovation (alongside smart use of heritage) drives tangible economic growth in an emerging creative economy. Valmiera County's experience shows that even without an immediate industry boom, enhancing cultural visibility and attractiveness can change a region's trajectory, building a platform for future economic benefits. In Iceland's West Region, a holistic and balanced strengthening of all pillars—from enterprise growth to infrastructure and policy support—has yielded steady progress across the creative sector, illustrating a sustainable model for creative economy development. Rauma–Eurajoki in Finland highlights a steadier pathway, where modest programme-led gains are offset by weaker external momentum—suggesting that stability can be an asset, but renewed entry and outward-facing projection are needed to generate stronger dynamism. Meanwhile, in the Western coastal periphery of Ireland, Galway's story is a caution that strong foundations don't automatically translate into continued growth: external disruptions and a plateauing of new initiatives can result in a period of low dynamism despite high capacity. Lastly, the Azores highlight the vulnerabilities of isolated regions—when one pillar (tourism) collapses, the whole creative sector can contract without diversification or resilience measures.

From academic studies and local reports, we see that factors such as industry structure, cultural policy, community engagement and external economic forces all play roles. The IN SITU project's on-site research in these regions further affirms these findings, revealing how place-based innovation can either flourish or struggle given the local mix of "pillars" (economic, social, infrastructural) at play. By grounding our narrative in these concrete examples and sources, we gain an authentic understanding of why each region's creative sector is evolving as it is—be it growth, change, balance, stagnation or contraction—and what might be needed to foster the next stage of development for each.

# 5. The IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index: A composite measure of regional cultural vitality beyond the city

## 5.1. Index overview

The IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index is a single summary score designed to capture the overall cultural vitality of a region by combining three key pillars of culture. These pillars—Cultural and

Creative Industries (CCI), Cultural Celebration, and Cultural Vibe—each represent a distinct facet of the cultural ecosystem. By aggregating them into one composite index, policymakers and researchers can quickly gauge a region's cultural health and pace of change at a glance, much like how the EU's Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor condenses 29 indicators into an overall "Cultural and Creative City" score for urban centres (see Alberti et al., 2023; Montalto et al., 2017). The IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index provides a comparable headline measure for regions (including non-urban and peripheral areas) that have often been left out of such composite assessments. This high-level index is a practical tool to identify strengths and weaknesses, benchmark regions against peers and track progress over time in a rigorous yet accessible way.

Culture is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, encompassing economic, social and experiential aspects. No single indicator (such as cultural employment or number of festivals) can alone capture the richness of a region's cultural life. We therefore construct a composite index from three pillars to ensure comprehensiveness. The pillars were selected based on both scholarly frameworks and practical relevance: they mirror elements found in established models like the European Union's Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (which groups measures under Cultural Vibrancy, Creative Economy, etc.) while tailoring to the realities of non-urban regions. Specifically, the IN SITU pillars cover:

- **Creative, Cultural and Craft Industries (CCI)** – the economic dimension (jobs, enterprises, NACE categories – as per Appendix B);
- **Cultural Celebration** – the social and infrastructural dimension (community events, festivals); and
- **Cultural Vibe** – the contextual, perceptual and digital dimension (the overall cultural atmosphere or vibrancy of place, including external perceptions).

These three components were chosen to reflect what we consider the core pillars of cultural development in any non-urban region. Each pillar captures unique information that the others do not, minimising overlap. Together, they provide a holistic view: for example, a region might have a modest CCI sector but a very strong tradition of cultural festivals and a vibrant community life—the combined index ensures such a place's cultural vitality is recognised rather than overlooked by purely economic measures. Alternative configurations were considered (such as adding an "enabling environment" pillar for infrastructure or combining celebration and vibe into one category), but these were discarded to maintain conceptual clarity and parsimony. We aimed for a model that is simple enough to be transparent yet broad enough to encompass key aspects of culture in non-urban regions. By structuring the index around three pillars, it also aligns with common policy frameworks that emphasise creative economy, cultural participation and vibrancy as distinct policy domains, making the index intuitive for stakeholders.

A note of caution, net change is a directional signal, but it does not directly evidence origination or the generation of novelty: identical net shifts can be produced through very different patterns of births, closures and pivots. A region can "hold steady" in net terms while experiencing high churn, just as another can record modest net growth through a small number of durable additions. For that reason, this report treats the index as an organising frame rather than a complete account. A qualitative reflections section (Chapter 9) explicitly speaks to change type (where the available evidence permits), distinguishing births, deaths and reconfigurations so that the headline scores can be read against lived dynamics, measurement limits and the uneven visibility of cultural activity across data sources.

## 5.2. Equal weighting of pillars: Justification and alternatives

Each of the three pillars is weighted equally in the composite index—one-third each. We opted for equal weighting to reflect an *a priori* judgment that all pillars are equally important to overall cultural vitality. In the absence of clear evidence or consensus to favour one dimension over others, giving each pillar the same weight is a widely adopted practice in composite indicator construction. Equal weights implicitly recognise equal status for all components, which is especially appropriate in a policy context where economic, social and ambient cultural factors are all valued in the non-urban context. This choice was also driven by transparency and simplicity: policy audiences can easily understand that each pillar contributes one-third of the final score, as opposed to a more complex weighting scheme.

We carefully considered and ultimately ruled out several alternative weighting approaches:

- **Expert-driven weights:** Some indices use expert opinion to emphasise certain dimensions. For example, the EU's Cultural and Creative Cities Index assigns 40% each to Cultural Vibrancy and Creative Economy and only 20% to Enabling Environment, based on expert consultations. We debated a similar approach (for instance, assigning extra weight to the CCI pillar to highlight economic impact). However, given our focus on non-urban regions, we decided this could unjustifiably privilege urban-centric outcomes (like industry size) over community cultural life. Moreover, assembling a broad expert consensus on weights across very different regions proved difficult—a common challenge noted in the literature, since weighting is inherently a value judgment. Rather than embed potentially subjective biases, we kept the index neutral by weighting all pillars equally.

- **Statistical weights** (data-driven): Another alternative was to derive weights from the data itself (e.g., using Principal Components Analysis [PCA] or other techniques to let the variance in the data determine weights). While methods like PCA can maximise the variance explained by the composite, they have drawbacks. They tend to give more weight to indicators (or pillars) with higher variability across regions, which may not coincide with true importance. In

our case, a purely data-driven weighting might inadvertently overemphasise one pillar if its values happened to spread out more among regions, thus "double counting" that aspect of culture. Additionally, with a relatively small set of pilot regions, such statistical methods are less stable and harder to interpret for policymakers. We concluded that an equal weighting scheme is more transparent and robust for our purposes, ensuring that each pillar has a balanced influence on the final score by design.

Overall, equal weighting aligns with best practices for composite indices when there is no strong rationale for differential weights. It sends a normative message: economic creative activity, cultural participation and the cultural milieu all matter equally in assessing a region's cultural well-being. This normative balance is important for peripheral regions whose cultural success may rely as much on community vibrancy or heritage as on formal creative industries.

### 5.3. Normalisation and scoring methodology (0 does not mean 0)

To combine diverse metrics into a single index, we needed to put all pillar scores on a common scale. The IN SITU Cultural Ecosystem Change index uses min–max normalisation to rescale each pillar's score to a standard range before aggregation. In practice, for each pillar we identified the minimum and maximum values observed across the regions, and transformed the raw scores onto a 0 to 100 scale. Under this widely used min–max approach, the highest-performing region in a pillar gets a 100, the worst gets a 0, and others are proportionately calculated in between. We use min–max here because IN SITU is working with a small, defined six-region cohort and needs a scaling that is legible across very different baseline sizes while keeping the headline table interpretable. For example, if Region A has the highest cultural participation rate and Region B the lowest, after min–max scaling their Cultural Celebration pillar scores would be 100 and 0 respectively, with others mapped accordingly. This makes the three pillar indices directly comparable despite originally being measured in different units.

We selected min–max normalisation over alternatives (like z-scores or ranking methods) for several reasons. First, min–max is easy to interpret: a score of 80 on a pillar means that region is four-fifths of the way between the lowest and highest performers, giving policymakers an immediate sense of positioning. Z-scores (standardisation) would centre on an abstract mean of 0 and can produce negative values, which are less intuitive for non-technical audiences. Moreover, z-scores give more weight to outliers (an extremely high value on one pillar could skew the mean and standard deviation), whereas min–max simply brackets the data by the actual observed minima and maxima. We also considered a percentile-rank normalisation (to reduce sensitivity to outliers), but given our manageable sample size and goal of preserving actual performance gaps, min–max was deemed more appropriate. It is worth noting that min–max scaling does make the index sample-dependent—scores are relative to the range of the specific regions included. This is acceptable for our use-case of comparing a defined cohort of regions (e.g., the IN SITU Lab regions), and is consistent with practices

in composite indices like the European Commission's Digital Economy and Society Index (EC, 2024) or its Regional Competitiveness Index (EC, 2022), which also normalise indicators to a 0–100 range for each reporting cycle.

After normalising each pillar to 0–100, the composite IN SITU Cultural Ecosystem Change Index score is calculated as the simple average of the three pillar scores (each pillar contributing one-third). Arithmetic mean aggregation assumes no compensatory behaviour beyond the equal weights—a high score in one pillar cannot fully offset a very low score in another, but it will raise the overall index proportionally. In the final step, we present the composite index on a 0–100 scale as well. In practice, because each pillar was already scaled 0–100, the composite's minimum and maximum might naturally fall within that range; if not, a second min–max normalisation on the composite can be applied to yield a neat 0–100 scale for the headline index. The end result is that each region gets a single score (and rank) between 0 and 100, where 100 represents the top-performing region overall in our sample and 0 the lowest.

### 5.4. Comparators and methodological context

The design of the IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index builds upon lessons from other academic and policy initiatives. As noted, the EU's Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (CCCM) provided inspiration in demonstrating the value of a composite cultural index for comparing locales. Our approach diverges by focusing on non-urban and peripheral regions rather than major cities, and by treating all components equally (where CCCM used expert-determined unequal weights). Reflecting a deliberate methodological choice to emphasise the often-underappreciated cultural assets of smaller regions. Equal weighting in particular is consistent with many well-known indices beyond the cultural field—for instance, the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index moved to an equal-weighting of its 12 pillars in recent updates, explicitly to avoid arbitrary prioritisation and to simplify interpretation (World Economic Forum, 2019). Likewise, the EU Regional Competitiveness Index employs equal weights at sub-index levels to ensure each aspect (infrastructure, health, education, etc.) contributes evenly. These examples underscore that our methodological choices are grounded in widely accepted practices: normalise, then aggregate with transparent weights.

It is important to mention that not all frameworks choose to produce a single composite index. UNESCO's Culture for Development Indicators, for example, use a dashboard of separate dimensions rather than a unified score due to the breadth of concepts covered and concerns about oversimplification (UNESCO, 2014). Our mandate in IN SITU is to create an indicator that helps make complex processes simple and that can spark policy attention and summarise performance. By reporting the three-pillar scores alongside the composite score, we ensure that users can dig deeper into specific domains while still benefiting from a concise overall indicator. Therefore, the combined index acts as the header with the pillars as the supporting story details.

## 5.5. Interpretation and implications for peripheral regions

All methodological choices have implications for how the index should be interpreted, especially in non-urban and peripheral EU contexts. First, because we assign equal importance to Cultural and Creative Industries, Celebration and Vibe, to excel in the overall index regions must demonstrate balanced strength across economic, social and ambient cultural domains. A peripheral region that scores extremely high in, say, community cultural celebration but very low in creative industry employment will end up with a middling composite score. This can signal to policymakers that true cultural vitality requires multi-faceted development. Conversely, a region that is fairly good across all three pillars may outrank one that is outstanding in one dimension but poor in others. For regional leaders, this is a reminder to avoid tunnel vision (for example, focusing only on boosting cultural tourism without also nurturing local creative businesses, or vice versa).

Second, using min–max scaling within a group of non-urban regions means the index is relative to the peer context. Peripheral regions often have smaller absolute values in certain indicators (fewer museums, smaller creative economies) compared to large cities. Our index compares regions against the best and worst in their cohort. A score of 100 indicates the top performer among these regions, not an absolute ideal. This relativism has pros and cons: it fairly highlights the top regional performer even if their absolute level might be modest next to a metropolis. On the other hand, if one region in the sample has a uniquely high value (an outlier) in a pillar, it sets the 100-point benchmark and can make others appear very low.

Finally, the choice of pillars itself carries implications in a peripheral context. By including Cultural Celebration and Vibe alongside Cultural and Creative Industries, the index validates forms of cultural expression especially prominent in rural or remote areas. It means that a region known for its rich traditions, festivals and community creativity can gain a strong position in the rankings, even if it lacks the big cultural industries or infrastructure of a city. This has an empowering effect: it recognises and quantifies the cultural vibrancy of peripheral regions on their own terms. At the same time, equal weighting ensures that having an active community life does not completely outweigh having no creative employment—a balance that encourages holistic improvement. Regions that score low on the composite index likely need to address multiple areas: perhaps invest in cultural and creative industry development and support more cultural events, depending on their pillar breakdown. The index thus serves as both a benchmarking instrument and a guide to policy priorities.

In summary, the IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index provides a rigorous yet user-friendly means of comparing cultural vitality across diverse regions. By carefully choosing three complementary pillars, normalising data to make them comparable and aggregating with equal weights, we constructed an index that is grounded in best practices for composite indicators and tailored to the nuances of non-urban contexts. The methodology ensures that no single aspect of culture dominates the narrative, allowing peripheral European regions to shine in their unique ways while also revealing where they can learn from each other. With this headline index, policymakers can readily grasp where

their region stands and initiate informed dialogues on how to foster culture-led development moving forward.

For a deeper understanding of the nature of change, the remainder of this report will delve further into the metrics that combine to make the IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index.

# 6. Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) Change Index

## 6.1. Preliminary considerations

To shed light on how CCIs perform in peripheral European regions, a comparative analysis was conducted across the six IN SITU Lab regions using data from an inventory of CCI entities (businesses, organisations) and their employment in a baseline year (around 2021) and a follow-up year (2024) so that the index measured changes in the scale and dynamism of the cultural/creative sector in each region. The CCIs in each region were categorised into three broad domains—creative industries, cultural industries and craft/traditional industries—to capture the different facets of creativity (for example, contemporary creative services vs. heritage crafts). We are grateful to our Lab partners for collecting the data and returning it via a uniform datasheet for all regions.

For a balanced comparison, a composite index was constructed to rank each region's CCI performance. This index incorporated two key dimensions: the current scale of CCIs (as of 2024, in terms of number of entities and jobs) and the growth trajectory since the baseline. Each domain (creative, culture, craft) was scored by combining its 2024 size and its growth (with equal 50% weights). The domain scores were then averaged and normalised on a 0–100 scale across the six regions to produce a final CCI index score for each region. A high score thus indicates a region with a relatively large and/or fast-growing CCI sector, whereas a low score reflects weaker or shrinking CCIs. This method ensures that both absolute performance (how developed the sector is) and relative progress (how much it has expanded or contracted) are taken into account. Notably, this focus on non-urban regions and dynamic change offers a unique perspective—in contrast to existing indices like the EU's Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor, which benchmarks larger cities (generally those above 50,000 inhabitants) on static cultural vibrancy metrics. By applying a tailored index to smaller and peripheral regions, the analysis fills an important gap in understanding how culture and creativity play out beyond the big cities.

## 6.2. Comparative results: Regional CCI performance

The six regions exhibited highly varied CCI outcomes between the baseline (2021) and 2024, ranging from remarkable growth to significant decline. Table 3 summaries the performance of each region,

including changes in the number of CCI entities and CCI employment, as well as the resulting index scores.

*Table 3 - Creative, Cultural and Craft metrics in the IN SITU Lab regions*

| Region | 2021 Entities | 2024 Entities | Change in Entities | Change in Entities (%) | 2021 Employment | 2024 Employment | Change in Employment | Change in Employment (%) | Entity Index | Employment Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Western coastal periphery, Ireland | 1333 | 1597 | 264 | 19 | 4464 | 4652 | 188 | 4.2 | 30.94 | 47.45 |
| Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland | 513 | 512 | -1 | -0.2 | 3025 | 3020 | -5 | -0.2 | 16.72 | 12.81 |
| West Region, Iceland | 127 | 194 | 67 | 52.8 | 2135 | 2520 | 385 | 18 | 38.51 | 39.16 |
| Valmiera County, Latvia | 352 | 396 | 44 | 12.5 | 5155 | 5150 | -5 | -0.1 | 34.14 | 51.23 |
| Azores archipelago, mid-Atlantic Ocean, Portugal | 714 | 1076 | 362 | 50.7 | 4740 | 6700 | 1960 | 41.4 | 100 | 100 |
| Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia | 486 | 324 | -162 | -33.3 | 11440 | 6270 | -5170 | -45.2 | 0 | 0 |

**Western coastal periphery, Ireland – *Moderately strong performance***

In the Western coastal periphery, Galway city and county also recorded modest growth. The number of CCI entities increased from 1,333 to 1,597 (+19.0%), and creative employment ticked up from 4,464 to 4,652 jobs (+4.2%). On the composite CCI score (computed as the mean of the Entity Index and Employment Index), Galway scores close to Valmiera County and Iceland's West Region. This steady growth, coming after Galway's stint as a European Capital of Culture in 2020, suggests a relatively mature CCI ecosystem that is expanding incrementally. The craft and creative sectors were notable

contributors to Galway's index, consistent with the region's known strengths in arts, crafts and a vibrant festival scene.

**Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland – *Stagnant performance***

This Finnish coastal region (comprising the small city of Rauma and the rural Eurajoki area) experienced essentially no growth in its CCI sector. The number of entities remained almost flat (513 in 2021 to 512 in 2024, –0.2% change) and creative employment was virtually unchanged (about 3,025 to 3,020, –0.2% change). With an index score of only ~15, Rauma–Eurajoki ranked fifth out of six. This stagnation suggests a weak or static creative ecosystem, possibly overshadowed by the region's traditional industries (Rauma is known for manufacturing and maritime industries). The creative sector here may be struggling to grow, reflecting challenges common in peripheral industrial areas.

**West Region, Iceland – *Emerging growth***

The Icelandic Lab region, a largely rural area, had a small CCI base but saw significant relative growth. CCI entities increased from 127 to 194 (+52.8%), the highest percentage growth of all regions, and CCI employment grew from 2,135 to 2,520 (+18.0%). This yielded an index score (~39) on par with Galway's. The high growth rate from a low baseline indicates emerging creative entrepreneurship even in this sparsely populated area. The data suggest that while the absolute size of the creative sector remains modest in West Iceland's rural context, there has been a notable proliferation of new creative initiatives (e.g., small start-ups or individual enterprises). The cultural domain (including heritage and arts activities) contributed strongly here, perhaps boosted by local education institutions and community projects.

**Valmiera County, Latvia – *Moderately strong performance***

Valmiera (a regional city and its county) showed solid if not spectacular growth. CCI entity counts rose from 352 to 396 (+12.5%), while employment in CCIs held roughly steady (around 5,150 jobs in both years). With an index score around 42 (second highest), Valmiera County's creative sector appears to have maintained its scale with modest growth. Notably, this region performed well in the crafts and traditional arts domain, reflecting the significance of local artisan businesses and cultural heritage activities in driving its creative economy.

**Azores archipelago, mid-Atlantic Ocean, Portugal – *Lowest performer***

The Azores—an archipelago and one of the EU's outermost regions—saw a significant contraction in its CCI sector over the period. The number of cultural/creative entities fell from 486 to 324 (–33.3%) and CCI employment plummeted from roughly 11,440 jobs to 6,270 (–45.2%). This steep decline resulted in the Azores scoring the lowest on the index (0). In stark contrast to Šibenik-Knin's boom, the Azores' creative economy appears to have suffered major setbacks. The data indicate substantial

contraction between the baseline year and 2024, particularly in what had been a large institutional cultural sector. The Azores' baseline was distinguished by a high number of jobs, likely due to public cultural institutions or broader definitions of cultural employment, but many of these jobs seem to have been lost or reclassified by 2024. The region's creative business count also dropped, pointing to closures or relocations of firms. Overall, the Azorean CCI sector in 2024 was markedly smaller than a few years prior—an outlier trend among the cases studied.

**Šibenik-Knin County (Croatia) – *Top performer***

Šibenik-Knin county's CCI sector expanded dramatically. The number of creative/cultural entities grew from 714 to 1,076 between 2021 and 2024, a +50.7% increase, while CCI employment surged from about 4,740 to 6,700 jobs (+41.4%). This outstanding growth gave this area the highest index score (100) among the regions. In other words, Šibenik-Knin County leads the ranking, driven by rapid expansion across all domains of culture, creative business and crafts. Such growth suggests a flourishing creative ecosystem in this mid-sized coastal city, where the growth has been more rapid than in the broader county area.

## 6.3. Creative, cultural and craft industries sub-indexes

It is evident from these results that peripheral regions are not homogeneous in their cultural and creative trajectories. Some, like the city of Šibenik, can outperform even larger regions by rapidly building their creative industries, while others face decline. The index range (from 0 to 100) highlights a wide gap between the best- and worst-performing cases, with the remaining regions clustering in the middle. Šibenik-Knin's index being more than double the next region's score underscores how exceptional its growth was. Conversely, the Azores' decline flags unique challenges that caused it to significantly underperform its peers. The intermediate cases (Valmiera County, Galway in the Western coastal region, and Iceland's West Region) all achieved moderate success, growing their creative sectors to a degree and holding ground in employment, whereas Rauma–Eurajoki essentially treaded water. This diversity underlines that context matters: each region's circumstances and strategies influenced its CCI outcomes.

Note that Table 3 reports the underlying entity/employment changes, while Table 4 presents a decomposition of the separate sub-categories within the CCI Change Index (a normalised, weighted change score), which are used to develop the headline composite.

*Table 4 - Creative, Cultural and Craft Change Index*

| Region | Creative Industries Index | Cultural Industries Index | Craft Industries Index | CCI Change Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Western coastal periphery, Ireland | 54.00654 | 60.61373 | 51.87973 | 55.5 |
| Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland | 48.02686 | 51.29442 | 38.07872 | 45.8 |
| West Region, Iceland | 109.9876 | 109.9876 | 42.52479 | 87.5 |
| Valmiera County, Latvia | 61.71669 | 39.3384 | 58.84491 | 53.3 |
| Azores archipelago, mid-Atlantic Ocean, Portugal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia | 82.82371 | 92.68097 | 124.4953 | 100 |

Table 4 reports the decomposition of the CCI Change Index into its three constituent sub-domains—Creative industries, Cultural industries and Craft industries—constructed so that the sub-indices aggregate *exactly* to the published composite score for each region. The starting point is the underlying CCI inventory for each region in 2021 and 2024, classified by NACE into the three sub-domains. For each sub-domain, we calculate a change metric (capturing 2021 → 2024 movement in enterprise presence and associated employment, following the CCI index specification), and then normalise change across regions using a 0–100 min–max procedure so that results are comparable across regions with different absolute scales. The overall CCI Change Index is then computed as a weighted average of the three sub-domain change scores (i.e., Creative, Cultural, Craft) using the agreed CCI weighting scheme. The three left-hand columns in Table 4 are an expanded representation of those sub-domain components, scaled to preserve full additivity: the values are expressed on a contribution scale that allows the weighted combination to reproduce the composite CCI score exactly for every region. This is why some sub-domain values exceed 100: they are not standalone "index scores" bounded at 100, but scaled component contributions within the decomposition framework. Azores appears as 0 across all columns because it is the minimum performer on the underlying change metric within the regional cohort, and therefore sits at the floor of the min–max normalisation for the composite and its components.

# 7. Cultural Celebration Index

## 7.1. Preliminary considerations

In developing the Cultural Celebration Index, the data presented below was reported by the IN SITU Labs in each region. In an effort to secure uniformity, each region was provided with a blank template. To accomplish this, we used a standardised templated form to collect data from each of our regional partners. This approach is founded on the well-established principle in social research that standardisation ensures that each respondent is presented with the same stimuli, reducing variability in responses that might be attributable to differences in the way questions are posed (Babbie, 2010). In this instance, the 'stimulus' was the templated form which was designed to capture essential information about the performance in each region.

The form solicited information in a consistent format across all regions, ensuring that the data collected would be comparable. As suggested by Fink (2003), this method allows the research to focus on true differences and similarities in responses, rather than differences introduced by the data collection process itself. This is particularly pertinent in the context of our research, as the comparability of data across different regions is central to our analysis.

In the spirit of thoroughness, it's also essential to acknowledge that the interpretation of the data collected would inherently involve some level of subjective judgment, as is the case with most social science research (Maxwell, 2012). Therefore, our analysis of the data aimed to be as objective and consistent as possible, while still acknowledging the subjective elements involved in interpreting cultural and creative phenomena.

## 7.2. Comparative results: Regional performance

Table 5 presents an overview of the changes in the components used to calculate the Cultural Celebration Index in scores in each of the six IN SITU Lab areas, followed by brief analyses of these findings. Later on, Table 6 provides the change scores in each category and the overall change score.

*Table 5 - Cultural Celebration metrics in the IN SITU Lab regions*

| Region | Cultural Spaces 2021 | Cultural Spaces 2024 | Cultural Organisations 2021 | Cultural Organisations 2024 | Events & Festivals 2021 | Events & Festivals 2024 | International Festivals 2021 | International Festivals 2024 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Western coastal periphery, Ireland | 80 | 64 | 197 | 160 | 160 | 242 | 30 | 56 |
| Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland | 56 | 60 | 39 | 41 | 20 | 36 | 2 | 3 |
| West Region, Iceland | 79 | 76 | 140 | 134 | 35 | 40 | 6 | 7 |
| Valmiera County, Latvia | 16 | 14 | 7 | 7 | 36 | 30 | 3 | 3 |
| Azores archipelago, mid-Atlantic Ocean, Portugal | 234 | 234 | 102 | 102 | 66 | 60 | 10 | 10 |
| Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia | 68 | 87 | 212 | 242 | 59 | 86 | 19 | 22 |

**Western coastal periphery, Ireland**

In the Western coastal periphery of Ireland, Galway County's mid–upper change score is best explained as a two-speed trajectory. It shows major growth in activity and internationalisation: Events & Festivals 160 → 242 (+82) and International Festivals 30 → 56 (+26). At the same time, it contracts on the enabling stock indicators: Cultural Spaces 80 → 64 (−16) and Cultural Organisations 197 → 160 (−37). This combination supports a narrative of an increasingly active celebration landscape, but one that is not uniformly reinforced by growth in spaces and organisations.

In 2024, Galway is the highest on International Festivals (56) and the second-highest on Events & Festivals (242) (behind Šibenik), while sitting mid-range on organisations (160) and spaces (64) relative to the cohort.

**Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland**

Rauma–Eurajoki shows incremental improvement in programme, offset by slight decline in enabling stock: Cultural Spaces 79 → 76 (−3), Cultural Organisations 140 → 134 (−6), Events & Festivals 35 → 40 (+5) and International Festivals 6 → 7 (+1). The absolute picture is one of steady, small-scale growth in activity, without a parallel expansion of spaces or organisational base.

In 2024, Rauma–Eurajoki sits in the lower-middle of the cohort on all four absolute components—never the top performer, but also not the minimum on any category (with international festivals at 7, above Iceland West Region's 3 and Valmiera County's 3).

**West Region, Iceland**

The change score for Iceland's West Region is driven by upward movement across all components from a relatively small baseline: Cultural Spaces 56 → 60 (+4), Cultural Organisations 39 → 41 (+2), Events & Festivals 20 → 36 (+16) and International Festivals 2 → 3 (+1). In absolute terms, the counts remain small, but the pattern is consistently positive, especially on events, which helps explain the strong change score.

In 2024, West Iceland remains low on absolute volumes—the lowest on International Festivals (3) and also the lowest on Cultural Organisations (41)—so its strength is best understood as momentum, not scale.

**Valmiera County**

Valmiera County's score corresponds to a profile of stagnation with some decline: Cultural Spaces 16 → 14 (−2), Cultural Organisations 7 → 7 (no change), Events & Festivals 36 → 30 (−6) and International Festivals 3 → 3 (no change). With a small absolute system and no expansion across the four components, it plausibly anchors the weakest celebration-change outcome.

Cohort positioning: In 2024, Valmiera County is the lowest region on Cultural Spaces (14), tied for lowest on Cultural Organisations (7), and tied for lowest on International Festivals (3) (with Bifröst). Even where it is not the absolute minimum (events 30), it remains at the bottom end of the distribution.

**Azores archipelago, mid-Atlantic Ocean, Portugal**

Azores is characterised by high absolute infrastructure stability but limited momentum: Cultural Spaces 234 → 234 (no change), Cultural Organisations 102 → 102 (no change), International Festivals 10 → 10 (no change), and Events & Festivals 66 → 60 (−6). This profile suggests a region that remains well-resourced in space terms but does not show comparable uplift in activity or internationalisation over the period.

In both 2021 and 2024, Azores is the clear outlier on Cultural Spaces (234)—by far the highest in the cohort—yet in 2024 it is mid-to-lower on the other components (organisations 102; events 60; festivals 10), which helps explain why a high scale in one domain does not translate into a high change.

**Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia**

Šibenik-Knin's top change score aligns with clear absolute growth across all four components: Cultural Spaces 68 → 87 (+19), Cultural Organisations 212 → 242 (+30), Events & Festivals 59 → 86 (+27) and International Festivals 19 → 22 (+3). The critical point is breadth: it expands both the platform (spaces and organisations) and the programme (events), which provides a straightforward explanation for why it leads the cohort on celebration change.

In 2024, Šibenik-Knin is the highest region on Cultural Organisations (242) and also the highest on Events & Festivals (86), placing it at the top of the cohort on two of the four absolute components.

## 7.3. Indexing Cultural Celebration

The Cultural Celebration Index is a composite score designed to capture how actively each region celebrates culture, based on four components: Cultural Spaces, Cultural Organisations, Cultural Festivals and Events (Local, regional, national) and international Festivals. Each component was standardised across the six regions before applying weights and combining them, so that differences in units and baseline scale did not dominate the composite.

For the Cultural Celebration Change Index (Table 6), "celebration momentum" is operationalised between 2021 and 2024 using a two-stage standardisation procedure that keeps the components interpretable while ensuring a fully comparable composite score.

- Step 1—Compute component change (2021 → 2024): For each region and each component (Cultural Spaces, Cultural Organisations, Cultural Events, International Festivals), we compute the absolute change between 2021 and 2024.
- Step 2—Standardise component change to 0–100: For reporting and diagnostic transparency, each component's change values are min–max normalised across the six regions so that the lowest observed change maps to 0 and the highest maps to 100, with other regions scaled linearly in between. These appear in Table 6 as the four component change scores (0–100).
- Step 3—Weight components to form an intermediate composite: We then compute an intermediate weighted celebration-change score as a weighted sum of the four component change scores, using the agreed weights: Cultural Spaces (30%), International Festivals (30%), Cultural Organisations (20%), and Cultural Events (20%). This produces a single summary value per region that reflects the relative balance of celebration momentum across the four domains.

- Step 4—Rescale the composite to 0–100: Finally, the intermediate weighted celebration-change scores are min–max rescaled across the six regions to produce the published Cultural Celebration Change Index (rescaled 0–100) in Table 6. This final rescaling anchors the strongest-performing region at 100 and the weakest at 0 for the composite, improving interpretability for the headline comparisons.

**How to read Table 6:** The four component columns are directly comparable within each component (each is scaled 0–100). The composite column is a rescaled weighted summary of those components; because it undergoes a final cohort-level rescaling, it should not be read as a simple "weighted sum" of the visible component scores, even though it is a linear transformation of that intermediate weighted sum.

The composite is (1) a weighted sum of component change scores and then (2) min–max rescaled across the cohort for interpretability.

*Table 6 - Cultural Celebration Index*

| Region | Spaces Change (0–100) | Orgs Change (0–100) | Events Change (0–100) | Festival Change (0–100) | Cultural Celebration Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Western coastal periphery, Ireland | 0 | 0 | 79.18298 | 100 | 51.56593 |
| Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland | 39.24967 | 48.24635 | 41.29867 | 21.92403 | 33.5937 |
| West Region, Iceland | 62.13886 | 75.49578 | 100 | 47.23347 | 92.99713 |
| Valmiera County, Latvia | 20.48356 | 61.08776 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Azores archipelago, mid-Atlantic Ocean, Portugal | 47.49959 | 61.08776 | 11.18109 | 0 | 19.40908 |
| Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia | 100 | 100 | 73.78918 | 22.947 | 100 |

Note: Component change scores (0–100) are first standardised independently by component; the composite index is calculated as a weighted sum of these component scores and then rescaled (min–max) across regions to produce the final 0–100 composite.

# 8. Cultural Vibe Index

The Cultural Vibe sub-index is designed to capture a region's externally legible cultural presence—the extent to which culture in (and about) a place is recorded, surfaced, circulated and amplified through major digital platforms and global media systems. It is intentionally distinct from the Cultural Celebration Index (which captures local celebration capacity and activity) and the CCI index (which captures cultural–creative economic structure and change). Instead, "vibe" operationalises the idea that cultural value is increasingly mediated through platform visibility and external attention, and that these dynamics can shift quickly over time even where underlying cultural assets change slowly. It is important to note (further cautions below) that changes in the index may reflect platform logics, algorithmic shifts, media cycles or singular events, rather than only underlying changes in cultural activity, and the Cultural Vibe Index is best interpreted in relation to the Cultural Celebration and CCI indices, rather than as a standalone measure.

## 8.1. Design principle: Globally consistent, cross-linguistic, machine-queryable sources

To ensure comparability across the six IN SITU regions, the Cultural Vibe framework relies on globally available data infrastructures rather than locally specific event calendars or language-dependent sources. The selected indicators are (1) widely used across countries, (2) accessible via consistent queries/API methods and (3) able to capture both "stock" (codified presence) and "flow" (attention/coverage) dimensions of cultural visibility.

**1) Digital knowledge and memory**

This layer captures how far a place is encoded into global knowledge infrastructures and how much attention that encoding receives.

- Wikidata cultural entities represent the structured cultural footprint of the region: codified cultural assets, notable figures, institutions, heritage and related entities that are machine-readable and reusable across platforms. This functions as a "cultural memory" indicator—what is stable and formally recorded.
- Wikipedia pageviews capture public attention to that codified footprint—a behavioural signal reflecting information-seeking and broader interest. Unlike Wikidata entity counts, pageviews are dynamic and responsive to events, media coverage or shifting curiosity.

Together, these metrics distinguish between a region's recorded cultural presence and the demand-side attention directed at it.

**2) Cultural production visibility**

This layer captures the region's visibility through cultural outputs and creative dissemination—a proxy for how culture travels and is encountered beyond the region itself.

- IMDb titles provide an indicator of screen-culture visibility: the extent to which the region appears as a location, setting or production site within a widely used global catalogue of film/television metadata.
- YouTube uploads (region query term) capture ongoing, user-generated and semi-professional content production associated with the region. This is an important "creator economy" signal: it reflects the intensity with which the region is being represented, documented, narrated or promoted through video.
- MusicBrainz artists represent an anchored, music-specific cultural footprint: an internationally used music metadata infrastructure that signals the extent of documented music production/identity associated with the region.

This layer therefore blends relatively slow-moving catalogues (IMDb/MusicBrainz) with a more rapid-flow production signal (YouTube uploads).

**3) Mediated attention and external gaze**

This layer captures to what extent the region is present in news ecosystems and platform-mediated discovery, reflecting broader public narratives and external recognition.

- GDELT media hits (all sources) track the volume of global media references to the region across the monitored news universe, providing a measure of general mediated attention.
- GDELT international press hits narrow this to a more explicitly "external gaze" register (international outlets), offering a proxy for whether the region's cultural presence travels beyond domestic or routine mentions.
- Google Places cultural POIs reflect the region's representation within a major global discovery platform for cultural amenities and experiences (museums, galleries, theatres, cultural centres, etc.). This functions as an infrastructural "platform footprint" measure: what is visible and discoverable via everyday digital mapping and search.

Together, these indicators capture attention in mediated narratives (GDELT) and discoverability through platform infrastructure (Google Places).

## 8.2. How the sub-index is constructed in the current framework

For each region, each indicator is recorded as an absolute count for 2021 and 2024 (as provided in the six regional indicator files). Because these indicators are typically heavy-tailed (large differences in

scale between regions), a log10 transform is used in the workbooks to compress scale and improve comparability of change signals where values are strictly positive. Where an indicator is zero, log-transformed values are undefined; those cases are retained transparently in the raw series and handled explicitly in the change computation (rather than being silently dropped).

Consistent with your wider index logic, the Cultural Vibe Index is treated as baseline-to-endline change, that is: 2021 is the reference point, and the sub-index captures how each region's vibe-related indicators shift by 2024. This is important conceptually: the objective is not to restate "who is largest," but to represent momentum and shifting cultural visibility in the period of study.

Standardisation (0–100) on change values across regions preserves proportional differences and ensures that disparate units (pageviews, titles, uploads, media hits, POIs) can be combined within a single composite.

Indicator-level weights are not assumed or improvised: they are explicitly specified in the regional vibe indicator files, summing to 1.0. These weights are applied to the normalised indicator scores and summed to produce a single Cultural Vibe score (and, where required, a Cultural Vibe change score) for each region. This preserves methodological consistency and ensures the composite reflects the intended balance between indicators (for example, the current specification places relatively more emphasis on platform discoverability and mediated attention than on any single catalogue metric).

### 8.3. Interpretive cautions and what the framework is (and is not) claiming

1. Vibe is a mediated construct: it captures platform and media visibility, not an exhaustive account of lived cultural experience.
2. Some indicators are structurally stable: "stock" measures (e.g., knowledge graph entities, POI inventories) may change slowly; "flow" measures (pageviews, media hits, uploads) are typically where most movement occurs.
3. Change scores are comparative: when change is min–max scaled across six regions, results reflect relative momentum within the cohort.
4. As already mentioned, changes in the index may by subject to platform logics, algorithmic shifts, media cycles or singular events, rather than only underlying changes in cultural activity.

### 8.4. Indexing Vibe: Comparative results / Regional performance

This section sets out the Cultural Vibe Index in comparative terms across the six IN SITU Lab regions, moving beyond raw counts to cohort-relative performance. Bringing together 2021 and 2024 levels with 2021–2024 change, it identifies which regions are gaining visibility and digital presence—and which are flatlining or receding—independent of starting size.

*Table 7 - Cultural Vibe metrics in IN SITU Lab regions*

| Region | Cultural POIs (Google Places) (2021) | Cultural POIs (Google Places) (2024) | GDELT media hits (all sources) (2021) | GDELT media hits (all sources) (2024) | IMDb titles (2021) | IMDb titles (2024) | International press hits (GDELT filtered) (2021) | International press hits (GDELT filtered) (2024) | MusicBrainz artists (2021) | MusicBrainz artists (2024) | Wikidata cultural entities (2021) | Wikidata cultural entities (2024) | Wikipedia pageviews (2021) | Wikipedia pageviews (2024) | YouTube uploads (2021) | YouTube uploads (2024) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Western coastal periphery, Ireland | 688 | 688 | 7719 | 10,929 | 24 | 13 | 63 | 24 | 127 | 127 | 93 | 93 | 293,058 | 328,901 | 429,384 | 139,095 |
| Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland | 511 | 511 | 202 | 294 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 46 | 46 | 15 | 15 | 5442 | 5055 | 9226 | 1611 |
| West Region, Iceland | 459 | 459 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 19 | 56 | 2293 | 22,599 |
| Valmiera County, Latvia | 247 | 247 | 118 | 228 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 15 | 2 | 2 | 1152 | 2850 | 32 | 1234 |
| Azores archipelago, mid-Atlantic Ocean, Portugal | 476 | 476 | 4409 | 4071 | 12 | 25 | 36 | 3 | 41 | 41 | 711 | 711 | 1,078,981 | 1,332,175 | 58,918 | 43,965 |
| Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia | 775 | 775 | 1067 | 1266 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 20 | 20 | 75 | 75 | 13,608 | 14,127 | 17,842 | 7756 |

**Western coastal periphery, Ireland**

In the Western coastal periphery of Ireland, Galway has a large and multi-channel footprint in absolute terms. On the digital attention side, Wikipedia pageviews rose from 293,058 (2021) to 328,901 (2024). On production visibility, Galway remains the biggest YouTube volume in the cohort despite a major decline: 429,384 → 139,095. IMDb titles fall 24 → 13, while MusicBrainz artists remain 127 → 127. On mediated attention, Galway's GDELT all-sources hits increase 7,719 → 10,929, while international press hits drop 63 → 24; cultural POIs hold at 688 → 688.

In 2024, Galway is highest on YouTube uploads (139,095), MusicBrainz artists (127), GDELT all-sources hits (10,929) and international press hits (24).

**Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland**

Rauma–Eurajoki shows relatively small absolute volumes and a consistent downward movement in several time-varying indicators. Wikidata entities are stable 15 → 15 while Wikipedia pageviews decline 5,442 → 5,055. Production visibility also contracts: IMDb titles 3 → 0, YouTube uploads 9,226 → 1,611, with MusicBrainz artists steady at 46 → 46. In mediated attention, GDELT all-sources hits increase 202 → 294, while international press hits drop 7 → 3; cultural POIs are unchanged 511 → 511.

Cohort positioning (2024): Rauma–Eurajoki is low-to-mid on most absolute measures; its GDELT total (294) is well above Valmiera (228) but far below Galway (10,929).

**West Region, Iceland**

The West Region of Iceland is distinctive: extremely low Wikipedia volumes and zero GDELT all-sources hits in both years, alongside a large increase in YouTube uploads. Wikidata entities hold 3 → 3 and Wikipedia pageviews rise 19 → 56 (still very small in absolute terms). For production visibility, IMDb titles remain 0 → 0, YouTube uploads surge 2,293 → 22,599 and MusicBrainz artists are 0 → 0. For mediated attention, GDELT all-sources hits are 0 → 0, international press hits fall 29 → 12 and cultural POIs remain 459 → 459.

Cohort positioning (2024): the West Region of Iceland is the lowest on Wikipedia pageviews (56) and tied-lowest on MusicBrainz artists (0); it is also 0 on GDELT all-sources in both years, while still reaching a substantial YouTube volume (22,599) compared with Valmiera (1,234) and Rauma (1,611).

**Valmiera County, Latvia**

Valmiera County has low baseline volumes on most indicators, but several of the time-varying metrics rise from small starting points. Wikidata entities are stable 2 → 2, while Wikipedia pageviews increase 1,152 → 2,850. On production visibility, IMDb moves 0 → 1, YouTube uploads jump 32 → 1,234 and

MusicBrainz artists remain 15 → 15. On mediated attention, GDELT all-sources hits increase 118 → 228, while international press is 0 → 0; cultural POIs stay 247 → 247.

Cohort positioning (2024): Valmiera County is the lowest on Wikidata entities (2), YouTube uploads (1,234) and cultural POIs (247), while showing noticeable growth in pageviews and YouTube relative to its own baseline.

**Azores archipelago, mid-Atlantic Ocean, Portugal**

Azores is the clear scale outlier on "knowledge/attention" measures. Wikidata cultural entities are 711 → 711 (highest in the cohort) and Wikipedia pageviews rise from 1,078,981 → 1,332,175 (also highest). On production visibility, IMDb titles increase 12 → 25 (highest in 2024), while YouTube uploads decline 58,918 → 43,965; MusicBrainz artists are stable at 41 → 41. On mediated attention, GDELT all-sources hits dip 4,409 → 4,071, and international press hits fall sharply 36 → 3; cultural POIs remain 476 → 476.

In 2024, Azores is highest on Wikidata entities (711), Wikipedia pageviews (1,332,175), and IMDb titles (25), but sits far lower on international press (3) and below Galway on GDELT volume (4,071 vs. 10,929).

**Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia**

Šibenik-Knin County presents as infrastructure-rich and moderately visible, with mixed movement on media signals. Wikidata entities are stable 75 → 75 and Wikipedia pageviews increase slightly 13,608 → 14,127. On production visibility, IMDb titles fall 1 → 0, YouTube uploads decline 17,842 → 7,756 and MusicBrainz artists remain 20 → 20. On mediated attention, GDELT all-sources hits increase 1,067 → 1,266, while international press hits drop 1 → 0; cultural POIs hold 775 → 775.

In 2024, Šibenik-Knin County has the highest level of cultural POIs (775) and is joint-lowest on IMDb titles (0) and international press hits (0).

**Cross-region reading**

- Scale leaders differ by channel: Azores dominates knowledge/attention (Wikidata, pageviews) and IMDb in 2024, while Galway dominates social production and media attention (YouTube, GDELT, international press).
- The biggest movements are concentrated in a few indicators: Wikipedia pageviews, YouTube uploads, GDELT hits and international press—because the other three indicators are static across the years in this extract.
- International press generally contracts: every region falls (or stays at zero) between 2021 and 2024, with large absolute drops for Galway (63 → 24) and Azores (36 → 3).

*Table 8 - Cultural Vibe Index*

| Region | Digital Knowledge and Memory Index | Cultural Production and Visibility Index | External Gaze index | Cultural Vibe Change Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Western coastal periphery, Ireland | 16.38158 | 15.36166 | 60.15434 | 30.63253 |
| Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland | 0 | 0 | 64.58432 | 21.52811 |
| West Region, Iceland | 100 | 77.74442 | 47.93705 | 75.22716 |
| Valmiera County, Latvia | 84.83623 | 100 | 100 | 94.94541 |
| Azores archipelago, mid-Atlantic Ocean, Portugal | 24.64443 | 43.6248 | 0 | 22.75641 |
| Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia | 9.630257 | 26.82754 | 79.63906 | 38.69895 |

## 9. Reflections on change

The IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index is built around net movement between 2021 and 2024: it asks how regional cultural ecosystems are adapting, consolidating, reorienting or thinning over time. This gives the report a clear and comparable “shape and direction” signal across the six Lab regions, and it supports the central conclusion that the cohort is best read as divergent pathways rather than a single continuum.

However, net change can also hide something that matters analytically: the generation of novelty. Two places can end the period at the same net position while having arrived there through very different dynamics—for example, one region adding 10 new festivals, versus another adding 30 and losing 20. In gross terms, the second ecosystem is more turbulent, more selective, and arguably more “experimental,” even though the net change is identical.

This section therefore adds a short interpretive layer on change type, distinguishing (where evidence allows) between births, deaths and pivots that sit underneath the net signals already reported. It draws on Lab inventories and qualitative material from the broader IN SITU project, and it is presented explicitly as a companion to the index. Gross change is generally easier to evidence for the Cultural Celebration layer (inaugural and discontinued events/festivals) than for the CCI layer, where firms may pivot to new business models without being recorded as "new" entities; where relevant, this section treats such pivots as part of the underlying novelty dynamic, rather than forcing them into a crude births/deaths count.

Read this as an additional layer on the preceding tables, and as an effort to better interpret change.

**Western coastal periphery, Ireland**

Across 2021–2024, the pattern of change in Galway, within the Western coastal periphery of Ireland, reads as a two-speed trajectory: an increasingly active and outward-facing cultural calendar alongside a thinning enabling base. On the Cultural Celebration components, activity and internationalisation rise sharply (Events & Festivals 160 → 242; International Festivals 30 → 56), while the stock indicators contract (Cultural Spaces 80 → 64; Cultural Organisations 197 → 160). In practice, this points to a region that can still "produce" and convene at volume—often by intensifying use of what already exists—but where the underlying ecology of venues and organisational capacity is becoming more fragile over the same period.

Stakeholder voices consistently locate the contraction-side of this story in property and infrastructure constraints, rather than any loss of cultural ambition. Galway is repeatedly characterised as a city that improvises with space—major festivals relying on temporary premises and core venues (including arts and theatre buildings) widely seen as outdated and inaccessible—while wider cost-of-living and accommodation pressures push practitioners and activity out of the city centre. Post-pandemic disruption is also described in "sectoral deaths" terms: venues that closed and did not return, a damaged club landscape, difficulties in staffing technical roles and a shift away from sustained company structures towards more precarious, project-based collaboration among individuals.

At the same time, the growth-side of the change pattern is not superficial: it includes professionalisation, more strategic organisational behaviour and a stronger tendency to look outward for partnerships and funding pathways. Participant accounts describe a collaborative ecosystem with significant cross-disciplinary crossover, increasing European/international orientation and capacity-building habits that strengthened during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (strategic planning, governance, more developed project frameworks). Read against the celebration metrics, these are "birth" dynamics that help explain how programme intensity can expand even while spaces and organisations decline: Galway is, in effect, getting more out of a tightening set of resources, leaning on networks, reputational capital and an audience base that is perceived as unusually strong for a city of its scale.

In sum, the change type for 2021–2024 can be summarised as programme-led expansion under infrastructural constraint: festivalisation and internationalisation accelerate, while affordability, venue loss and limited capital investment hollow out the conditions that sustain everyday production and career pathways. The most credible "turning point" signal inside the period is the 2024 THRIVE award for the redevelopment of Nuns' Island Theatre (linked by participants to a potential reset in the relationship between cultural practice and the local state, and to a more diverse night-time offer), but cultural practitioner voices remain clear that without follow-through on space, access and housing, the risk is burnout and a missing next generation—particularly among those in their 20s and 30s who cannot assemble a viable livelihood in the city and the broader region.

**West Region, Iceland**

Across the West Region of Iceland, the change recorded between 2021 and 2024 sits within a cultural economy that is both dispersed and highly person-dependent. The region's creative and cultural life is repeatedly described as under-resourced in infrastructure and venues, with a particularly acute absence of publicly supported cultural space, which pushes activity into informal venues and small-scale, independently driven initiatives. This produces an ecosystem in which a small number of committed actors carry disproportionate organisational and emotional labour, often across multiple roles, and where "capacity" becomes a central constraint on what can be sustained year-to-year.

At the same time, there are clear signs of incremental professionalisation and a broader policy turn that legitimises culture as part of regional development. Focus group participant accounts point to a growing recognition of the creative sector's value—especially where it intersects with tourism—and to mechanisms that increasingly bind culture to development strategy (including Regional Plans of Action and more explicit innovation-oriented infrastructure such as the Breið Innovation Centre in Akranes). Post-pandemic reopening also appears to have generated a surge of activity, even if followed by fatigue, while newer cooperative structures (e.g., strengthened coordination between museums and exhibition sites) signal an attempt to thicken regional cultural networks rather than leaving each locality to operate alone.

The "deaths" and frictions in this period are less about culture disappearing entirely than about the erosion of volunteer-led production, the exit (or withdrawal) of practitioners and the narrowing of what is viable without stable support. Voices from the sector describe declining participation in choirs, theatre groups and other community forms, alongside a shift towards more commercialised programming and stronger expectations of payment for cultural labour-changes intensified by cost-of-living pressures and the knock-on effects of the pandemic on sociality and participation. There are also repeated references to institutional stagnation and closed local governance cultures (including concerns about merit, hiring and gatekeeping), and to uneven support across artforms—particularly the vulnerability of visual arts and arts education in local settings.

Overall, the change type for the West Region of Iceland from 2021–2024 can be characterised as "fragile expansion under capacity constraints": more activity, more institutional talk of culture-as-development, and new or strengthened initiatives, but with persistent thinness in infrastructure, governance frictions and a weakening volunteer base that limits depth and continuity. This helps explain how an index might register improvement (e.g., more events, organisations or visible programming) while lived experience still stresses precarity, burnout risk and uneven cultural breadth. The forward trajectory implied by the data is therefore less about a linear growth story and more about whether the region can convert initiative-led dynamism into durable capability—through cultural space and housing solutions, better-supported organisers (not just artists) and broader inclusion of non-Icelandic communities as participants rather than only as labour or audiences.

**Rauma and Eurajoki, West Coast and Baltic Sea archipelago, Finland**

Across 2021–2024, the change pattern in Rauma–Eurajoki is best read as modest "programme-led" growth occurring without a corresponding expansion of the enabling base. In the Cultural Celebration series, events and festival activity increases slightly, while cultural spaces and organisations contract marginally, suggesting a region that is sustaining (and in places extending) its cultural calendar even as the underlying organisational and spatial stock tightens.

On the "births" side, the most visible dynamism sits in formats that are relatively adaptable: outdoor and public-space programming, incremental festivalisation, and new uses of existing or underused venues. Lumen (established in 2021) is repeatedly positioned as emblematic of this—an outdoor light-art model that gained traction during COVID-19 conditions and then consolidated as a signature event. At the same time, the region's international-facing cultural offer continues to strengthen through mechanisms such as residencies (e.g., RaumArs) and the Rauma Triennale, while wider "interim" or temporary-use models point to an opportunistic capacity to bring culture into unexpected spaces when dedicated infrastructure is limited.

On the "deaths" (or at least "threatened viability") side, the dominant pressure is financial: austerity-driven public funding cuts translate into uncertainty for institutions and heightened precarity for practitioners, including accounts of cultural production becoming increasingly bound up with constant applications for short-duration project support. These pressures intersect with ongoing out-migration risks (artists and producers leaving for larger centres where resources are concentrated) and anxieties about the erosion of rural arts, crafts and village activities under generational change. Post-pandemic audience behaviours intensify this fragility: later ticket purchasing, greater price sensitivity and the cancellation risk that follows from weaker pre-event cashflow all make planning harder, particularly for smaller organisers.

The "type of change" here is less a clean growth narrative than a recalibration: institutional infrastructure is broadly stable in form, but increasingly unstable in resourcing, pushing the ecosystem towards flexible, event- and project-based cultural production, volunteer labour and partnership-

building to keep activity visible. The most plausible near-term trajectory is therefore mixed: continued internationalisation and experimentation (enabled by digital tools and residencies) alongside an everyday struggle to sustain local organisational capacity, with resilience increasingly rooted in peer collaboration, new revenue models and stronger culture–business interfaces rather than in straightforward expansion of spaces or organisations.

**Valmiera County, Latvia**

Across 2021–2024, the quantitative change pattern for Valmiera County reads like consolidation under constraint. In the Cultural Celebration components, Cultural Spaces decrease (16 to 14), Cultural Organisations hold steady (7 to 7), Events and Festivals fall (36 to 30), and International Festivals remain unchanged (3 to 3). In cohort terms, Valmiera County sits at (or close to) the bottom of the 2024 distribution across multiple components, which helps explain why its celebration-change profile is interpreted as stagnation with some decline rather than momentum. In this context, Valmiera County's change is less about absolute growth in events and more about repositioning, coordination and the slow build-up of visibility and capability.

However, the IN SITU project research reports and data also suggest that "change" in Valmiera County during this period has been strongly institutional and narrative, even where it is not immediately visible in the simple counts. Two shifts matter in particular: Latvia's 2021 administrative territorial reform (merging Valmiera city with the surrounding county) forced a reappraisal of cultural infrastructure and service provision across a larger territory, including the practical and political sensitivities of maintaining oversized, energy-inefficient Soviet-era cultural centres. In parallel, the (unsuccessful) European Capital of Culture 2027 bid is repeatedly described as a catalyst for reframing Valmiera from an industrial/sports city to a place willing to claim a more explicit cultural identity—helping to surface new priorities, programmes and a more strategic cultural narrative.

Local voices also locate the period's "births and deaths" less in the arrival or disappearance of large institutions, and more in shifting modes of participation and mediated visibility after COVID-19. The pandemic normalised remote work and left a residue of reduced appetite for in-person events, even as audiences have returned strongly in some settings; at the same time, it accelerated digital content creation and widened a practical digital divide between those who built digital capability and those who did not. There is also a reported preference shift towards small-scale, in-person cultural moments that enable informal sociality, rather than dense programming alone—implying that the ecosystem may be rebalancing formats and expectations rather than expanding in absolute volume.

Finally, Valmiera County's change trajectory is tightly coupled to tourism and broader development capacity, which shapes what kinds of growth are realistic. The region is described as lacking "magnet" attractions and sitting outside the main international visitor radius from Riga, leading to a strategy that leans on smaller cultural assets, heritage networks and periodic large events to pull flows, while also confronting structural barriers (housing availability, labour shortages and the limits of municipal

budgets). Future-oriented accounts emphasise digitisation and circular economy agendas, plus the emergence of an Innovation Quarter logic that clusters institutions and support functions to generate collaboration; the consistent subtext is that Valmiera County's near-term "change type" may be best characterised as infrastructural reconfiguration and cross-sector alignment under demographic and resource constraints, rather than straightforward ecosystem expansion.

**Azores archipelago, mid-Atlantic Ocean, Portugal**

Across 2021–2024, the Azores register as the lowest performer on the CCI change pillar, with a sharp net contraction in both entities and employment. The reported CCI inventory falls from 486 to 324 entities (–33.3%), while associated employment drops from roughly 11,440 to 6,270 (–45.2%), producing a composite CCI change score of 0 in the current normalisation. This is the core "net signal" already catalogued for the region: a system-wide thinning rather than incremental growth.

Interpreting that decline as a change type, the most plausible reading is that a historically large, institutionally inflected baseline has either been partially lost, partially reclassified or both. In other words, the magnitude of the drop likely reflects not only closures or reduced activity, but also measurement vulnerabilities that come with uneven inventories, shifting classification boundaries, and the difficulty of tracking hybrid cultural work in an archipelagic, publicly mediated ecosystem.

At the same time, the period contains meaningful "birth" dynamics that do not necessarily offset the contraction in aggregate counts. IN SITU project reports and data highlight the emergence and consolidation of independent anchors and platforms (notably the Walk&Talk and Tremor festivals, and VAGA), alongside a turning point when national DGArtes funding became accessible to Azorean entities (around 2017/2018), enabling multi-year support, staffing, space and more consistent programming for organisations able to compete successfully. The mobilisation associated with the 2027 ECOC bid (and the subsequent Portuguese Capital of Culture 2026 designation) is also described as generating inter-island connectivity and advocacy, including the formation of MOVA (Movimento pela Arte e Cultura nos Açores) in 2023—signals of institutional learning and political activation even in a contracting ecosystem.

Reflections from sector participants deepen the "death/thinning" side of the ledger and clarify why the net signal can be so negative even while selected nodes professionalise. They emphasise extreme territorial disparities in institutional resourcing across islands, the compounded costs of insularity (particularly for touring and exhibition logistics) and the fragility of circulation—work may be produced and premiered but fails to travel, limiting audience accumulation and revenue. They also describe post-COVID-19 audience attrition (particularly among older cohorts) and a stronger digital filtering of attention that concentrates demand and makes it harder for live culture to regain momentum, with knock-on effects for volunteer and community-based activity. Taken together, the Azores look less like a uniform collapse than a bifurcated change type: consolidation around a small

number of professionalised, networked anchors alongside attrition, invisibility or degradation across a wider long tail of community practice and under-resourced infrastructure—broadly reinforcing the direction of change already indicated by the index, while also flagging the limits of the underlying inventory.

**Šibenik-Knin County, Croatia**

Šibenik- Knin County enters the 2021–2024 window with one of the larger CCI bases in the study, substantial organisational infrastructure and a strong heritage-driven visibility profile, even if public-facing cultural celebration is more selective or uneven relative to that production base. Within the IN SITU Creative Ecosystem Change Index, the region registers very high change on CCIs and Cultural Celebration (both 100), while Cultural Vibe change is markedly lower (38.7), producing a strong top-line change score overall (79.6). Read qualitatively, this pattern suggests that the dominant "change type" is not foundational ecosystem-building from scratch, but the continued scaling, formalisation and diversification of an already substantial system. This is most easily recognised through enterprise dynamics and structured programming capacity, rather than a uniform acceleration in externally mediated visibility across all digital-attention measures.

Local reflections consistently describe the ecosystem as a three-pillar structure: long-standing public institutions (museum, theatre, library), a modern institutional anchor organised around the Fortress of Culture and an agile civil/independent scene (including Azimut and 4B) characterised by grassroots collaboration and DIY production cultures. The longer arc of change matters here, because many of the "birth" moments that shape 2021–2024 dynamics sit in the 2010s: the Terraneo festival as a cultural-tourism turning point, the opening of Azimut and the establishment of the Fortress of Culture as an integrating institution that, crucially, has collaborated with independent actors rather than displacing them. Those institutional and organisational births created an enabling architecture for subsequent growth (including new multi-purpose venues such as House of Art Arsen), and also shifted expectations across legacy institutions towards audience development and modernised programming.

Within the specific 2021–2024 window, sector voices point to a different kind of motion: maturing capacity, post-pandemic adaptation and signs of plateau. Contributors emphasise hyperproduction of events relative to city size, increasing audience fatigue and declining attendance for some programming—an "over-supply" problem that becomes visible once a boom phase stabilises. At the same time, the period is marked by structural shifts in consumption and production habits following COVID-19: cultural content moved further into hybrid/online forms; inflation and rising ticket and participation costs contributed to more selective audiences; and youth participation was perceived to be falling, shaped by intensified digital distractions. While there were genuine "births" during and after the pandemic (for example, new initiatives and consolidations around 4B and other digital projects), the same reflections describe fewer new independent entrants in the most recent years—

suggesting a change type characterised as consolidation under strain rather than continual renewal through new grassroots formation.

Taken together, the 2021–2024 change in Šibenik-Knin County is best framed as consolidation after rapid expansion: strong infrastructure and institutional capacity provide stability, but the system now faces coordination, renewal and sustainability constraints. Sector perspectives argue that future resilience depends less on adding more events and more on building platforms and networks (to reduce fragmentation and overlap), creating pathways for generational renewal (new organisers, makers and audiences) and managing the spatial consequences of touristification and urban development that can displace cultural life and raise operating costs. These pressures sit alongside wider place-based challenges identified for the region—depopulation and youth retention, uneven development between coastal and inland areas (including the Knin hinterland) and the double-edged role of tourism as both opportunity and constraint. In other words, the region's "headline" growth in the index can coexist with a qualitative narrative of saturation and fragility, where the key question is how to convert a successful boom-era architecture into a more strategically governed, renewal-oriented ecosystem.

**Cross-readings of IN SITU Lab regions**

These six cases underline why the index is best read as a map of trajectories rather than a single ladder of performance: similar net movements can be produced through very different underlying dynamics, ranging from consolidation around a small number of anchors, to programme-led intensification under infrastructural constraint, to fragile expansion dependent on a handful of people, to reconfiguration driven by administrative reform and strategic repositioning. The point is to make visible the mechanisms that sit beneath it—births that do not always register as new entities, deaths that present as quiet attrition, and pivots that fall between categories. This information be seen as synthesising what the index tells us about change across the cohort, clarifying what kinds of resilience (or fragility) the patterns imply and identifying the practical implications for how peripheral regions can sustain cultural capability beyond short-term growth.

## 10. Conclusions

If there is one result worth holding onto from this exercise, it is that the IN SITU cohort is best read as a set of divergent ecosystem pathways, rather than as a single continuum of performance. The index separates out different dimensions of cultural change that are often conflated in policy talk—industry structure, public cultural life and mediated visibility—and shows that they do not necessarily move together.

The headline table already tells a nuanced story. The West Region of Iceland shows what "momentum" can look like in a small system: it leads the cohort on overall change (Top Line 85.2) by registering strong movement across all three pillars rather than relying on a single spike. Šibenik-Knin County, in contrast, reads like a case of industry and celebration pulling in tandem: it sits at the ceiling on CCI and celebration, suggesting a broad-based consolidation across enterprise structure and public-facing cultural activity, even if its vibe momentum is comparatively modest. Valmiera County is a useful reminder that visibility is its own terrain: a very high vibe score (94.9) can coexist with weak or stalled celebration momentum. In other words, a region can become more visible externally without simultaneously expanding the infrastructures and programmes that underpin everyday cultural life.

For Galway in the Western coastal periphery and Rauma–Eurajoki, the index points towards a more incremental, mixed picture—neither collapse nor breakout. Galway's Top Line score (45.9) reflects moderate movement in CCI (55.5) and celebration (51.6), with a weaker vibe momentum (30.6). Rauma–Eurajoki sits lower overall (Top Line 33.6), driven by modest change across all three pillars (CCI 45.8, celebration 33.6, vibe 21.5). The Azores archipelago profile (Top Line 14.1, CCI 0) stands out as low among this cohort and, in practical terms, acts as a flag for deeper interpretive work: whether this reflects genuine contraction, definitional shifts in the underlying inventory, data capture differences or a more complex reorientation that a change score cannot narrate on its own.

The Cultural Vibe layer, in particular, benefits from being handled with the interpretive cautions made explicit in the report: vibe is a mediated construct, capturing platform and media visibility rather than lived cultural experience; some indicators behave like slow-moving "stocks," while others are volatile "flows"; and, crucially, change scores are comparative within the six-region cohort, not absolute measures of cultural value. This layer is best read diagnostically, in conjunction with Lab knowledge, for a more concrete understanding.

Finally, "Reflections on Change" sits deliberately alongside the index as a qualitative companion, speaking to change type where evidence allows—births, deaths and pivots that sit underneath the net signals. Its purpose is not to revise the scores, but to sharpen what the scores can mean in practice, and to make visible where consolidation, churn or reconfiguration is doing the work of change. The index is therefore best read as a scaffold for interpretation—one that can be returned to, revised and added to over time as the Labs continue to map what culture does in peripheral places, and how those places make culture matter on their own terms.

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## Appendix A. Individual metric derivation and sources

This table documents each metric used in the sub-indices, the operational definition, the primary data source, the temporal window and key reproducibility notes.

*Table 9 - Summary of metrics used in the sub-indices, the operational definition, the primary data source, the temporal window and key reproducibility notes*

| Pillar | Metric (as used in tables) | Operational definition (what is being counted) | Primary source | Time window | Notes for reproducibility / implementation detail |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CCI Change Index | CCI entities (2021/2024) | Count of cultural, creative and craft entities in the region, classified by NACE into Creative, Cultural and Craft sub-domains (see Appendix B) | IN SITU Lab inventory (standard datasheet) | Baseline 2021; endline 2024 | State the provenance of the enterprise inventory per region (e.g., business register, sectoral directory, partner-maintained list) and any inclusion/exclusion rules |
| CCI Change Index | CCI employment (2021/2024) | Approximate employment associated with the entity inventory (same classification and geography) | IN SITU Lab inventory (standard datasheet) | Baseline 2021; endline 2024 | |
| Cultural Celebration Change Index | Cultural spaces | Count of cultural spaces in the region, as defined in the shared template | IN SITU Lab-reported template | 2021 and 2024 snapshots | Defined by shared template |
| Cultural Celebration Change Index | Cultural organisations | Count of cultural organisations in the region, as defined in the shared template | IN SITU Lab-reported template | 2021 and 2024 snapshots | Defined by shared template |
| Cultural Celebration Change Index | Events | Count of cultural events in the region, as defined in the shared template | IN SITU Lab-reported template | 2021 and 2024 | Specify whether this is events held in the calendar year versus events recorded/known; |

| Pillar | Metric (as used in tables) | Operational definition (what is being counted) | Primary source | Time window | Notes for reproducibility / implementation detail |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | (typically annual event counts). | | | clarify how recurring events are counted |
| Cultural Celebration Change Index | International festivals | Count of international festivals in the region, as defined in the shared template | IN SITU Lab-reported template | 2021 and 2024 | Provide the rule used to define 'international' (e.g., programme composition, audience, artists, branding, funding or formal accreditation) |
| Cultural Vibe Change Index | Cultural POIs (Google Places) | Count of cultural points-of-interest returned by a predefined category list within the region boundary | Google Places/ Google Maps | 2021 and 2024 snapshots | State the category list used, how duplicates are handled (e.g., de-duplicate by Place ID) and whether the count is treated as a stock (inventory at query time) |
| Cultural Vibe Change Index | GDELT media hits (all sources) | Count of media documents matching the defined region query across all sources | GDELT | Calendar year totals (2021, 2024) | Query terms, API endpoint (Document vs. Events), filters and whether de-duplication is applied (e.g., syndicated reprints) |
| Cultural Vibe Change Index | GDELT international press hits | Count of media documents matching the defined region query under the stated 'international' filter rule | GDELT | Calendar year totals (2021, 2024) | Define 'international' operationally (e.g., source country not equal to region country; foreign domains list). Note that this may not be a nested subset if the queries differ |
| Cultural Vibe Change Index | IMDb titles | Count of film/TV titles associated with the region based on the chosen IMDb logic (e.g., filming location, setting | IMDb | 2021 and 2024 snapshots | State the exact field logic used (filming location vs. setting vs. place tags) and whether counts come from IMDb datasets or advanced search |

| Pillar | Metric (as used in tables) | Operational definition (what is being counted) | Primary source | Time window | Notes for reproducibility / implementation detail |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | or production association) | | | |
| Cultural Vibe Change Index | MusicBrainz artists | Count of artists linked to the region by origin/area attributes under the chosen mapping rule | MusicBrainz | 2021 and 2024 snapshots | State whether you count artists only or include groups; clarify whether 'area' mapping is city/region/country-level and how ambiguous cases are handled |
| Cultural Vibe Change Index | Wikidata cultural entities | Count of Wikidata entities representing cultural assets, people and institutions linked to the region using defined classes and region-membership properties | Wikidata | 2021 and 2024 snapshots | State SPARQL logic, inclusion classes, and how regional membership is asserted (e.g., located in/ administrative territorial entity) |
| Cultural Vibe Change Index | Wikipedia pageviews | Total pageviews for the defined Wikipedia target set for the region (main page and/or curated set of regional cultural pages) | Wikimedia Pageviews API | Calendar year totals (2021, 2024) | State the target set definition: region page only or an aggregate basket; specify language edition(s) used and whether redirects are consolidated |
| Cultural Vibe Change Index | YouTube uploads | Count of uploads returned by the defined query strategy for the region term | YouTube Data API | Calendar year totals (2021, 2024) | State query terms, language constraints (if any) and whether counts represent videos published in-year or search-result totals at time of query |

## Appendix B. NACE coding groups for CCIs

*Table 10 - List of NACE coding groups for CCIs used in this research*

| Nace Rev.2 | Title |
|---|---|
| **GROUP 1** | **Manufacturing (textiles, clothes, bags, footwear)** |
| 13.10 | Preparation and spinning of textiles |
| 13.20 | Weaving of textiles |
| 13.30 | Finishing of textiles |
| 13.91 | Manufacture of knitted and crocheted fabrics |
| 13.92 | Manufacture of made-up textile articles, except apparel |
| 13.93 | Manufacture of carpets and rugs |
| 13.99 | Manufacture of other textiles n.e.c. |
| 14.11 | Manufacture of leather clothes |
| 14.12 | Manufacture of workwear |
| 14.13 | Manufacture of other outerwear |
| 14.14 | Manufacture of underwear |
| 14.19 | Manufacture of other wearing apparel and accessories |
| 14.20 | Manufacture of articles of fur |
| 14.31 | Manufacture of knitted and crocheted hosiery |
| 14.39 | Manufacture of other knitted and crocheted apparel |
| 15.11 | Tanning and dressing of leather; dressing and dyeing of fur |
| 15.12 | Manufacture of luggage, handbags and the like, saddlery and harness |
| 15.20 | Manufacture of footwear |
| **GROUP 2** | **Printing** |
| 18.11 | Printing of newspapers |
| 18.12 | Other printing |
| 18.13 | Pre-press and pre-media services |

| Nace Rev.2 | Title |
|---|---|
| 18.14 | Binding and related services |
| 18.20 | Reproduction of recorded media |
| **GROUP 3** | **Manufacturing (glass, ceramics, stone, metals)** |
| 23.13 | Manufacture of hollow glass |
| 23.14 | Manufacture of glass fibre |
| 23.19 | Manufacture and processing of other glass, including technical glassware |
| 23.20 | Manufacture of refractory products |
| 23.31 | Manufacture of ceramic tiles and flags |
| 23.41 | Manufacture of ceramic household and ornamental articles |
| 23.49 | Manufacture of other ceramic products |
| 23.70 | Cutting, shaping and finishing of stone |
| 23.99 | Manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products n.e.c |
| 24.41 | Precious metals production |
| 24.51 | Casting of Iron |
| 24.53 | Casting of light metals |
| 24.54 | Casting of other non-ferrous metals |
| 25.71 | Manufacture of cutlery |
| 25.99 | Manufacture of other fabricated metal products n.e.c |
| **GROUP 4** | **Manufacturing (electronics, computers, clocks)** |
| 26.11 | Manufacture of electronic components |
| 26.12 | Manufacture of loaded electronic boards |
| 26.20 | Manufacture of Computers and peripheral equipment |
| 26.30 | Manufacture of Communication equipment |
| 26.40 | Manufacture of consumer electronics |
| 26.51 | Manufacture of instruments and appliances for measuring, testing and navigation |
| 26.52 | Manufacture of watches and clocks |

| Nace Rev.2 | Title |
|---|---|
| **GROUP 5** | **Manufacturing (perfumes, jewellery, musical instruments, games)** |
| 20.42 | Manufacture of perfumes and toilet preparations |
| 32.12 | Manufacture of jewellery and related articles |
| 32.13 | Manufacture of imitation jewellery and related articles |
| 32.20 | Manufacture of musical instruments |
| 32.40 | Manufacture of games and toys |
| 32.99 | Other manufacturing n.e.c. |
| **GROUP 6** | **Other manufacturing (wood, paper) and roofing** |
| 16.29 | Manufacture of other products of wood; manufacture of articles of cork, straw and plaiting materials |
| 17.23 | Manufacture of paper stationery |
| 17.24 | Manufacture of wallpaper |
| 31.01 | Manufacture of office and shop furniture |
| 31.02 | Manufacture of kitchen furniture |
| 31.09 | Manufacture of other furniture |
| 43.91 | Roofing activities |
| **GROUP 7** | **Retail (linked to core creative industries)** |
| 47.41 | Retail sale of information and communication equipment in specialised stores |
| 47.42 | Retail sale of telecommunications equipment in specialised stores |
| 47.43 | Retail sale of audio and video equipment in specialised stores |
| 47.51 | Retail sale of textiles in specialised stores |
| 47.53 | Retail of carpets, rugs, wall and floor coverings in specialised stores |
| 47.59 | Retail sale of furniture, lighting equipment and other household articles in specialised stores |
| 47.61 | Retail sale of books in specialised stores |
| 47.62 | Retail sale of newspapers and stationery in specialised stores |

| Nace Rev.2 | Title |
|---|---|
| 47.63 | Retail sale of music and video recordings in specialised stores |
| 47.65 | Retail sale of games and toys in specialised stores |
| 47.71 | Retail sale of clothing in specialised stores |
| 47.72 | Retail sale of footwear and leather goods in specialised stores |
| 47.77 | Retail sale of watches and jewellery in specialised stores |
| 47.82 | Retail sale via stalls and markets of textiles, clothing and footwear |
| **GROUP 8** | **Retail (broader creative industry link)** |
| 47.29 | Other retail sale of food in specialised stores |
| 47.52 | Retail sale of hardware, paints and glass in specialised stores |
| 47.54 | Retail sale of electrical household appliances in specialised stores |
| 47.78 | Other retail sale of new goods in specialised stores |
| 47.81 | Retail sale via stalls and markets of food, beverages and tobacco products |
| 47.89 | Retail sale via stalls and markets of other goods |
| 47.91 | Retail sale via mail order houses or via the internet |
| **GROUP 9** | **Publishing** |
| 58.11 | Book publishing |
| 58.12 | Publishing of directories and mailing lists |
| 58.13 | Publishing of newspapers |
| 58.14 | Publishing of journals and periodicals |
| 58.19 | Other publishing activities |
| **GROUP 10** | **Film, TV, music, radio** |
| 59.11 | Motion picture, video and television programme production activities |
| 59.12 | Motion picture, video and television programme post-production activities |
| 59.13 | Motion picture, video and television programme distribution activities |
| 59.14 | Motion picture projection activities |
| 59.20 | Sound recording and music publishing activities |

| Nace Rev.2 | Title |
|---|---|
| 60.10 | Radio broadcasting |
| 60.20 | Television programming and broadcasting activities |
| **GROUP 11** | **Software publishing, computer and information technology** |
| 58.21 | Publishing of computer games |
| 58.29 | Other software publishing |
| 62.01 | Computer programming activities |
| 62.02 | Computer consultancy activities |
| 62.03 | Computer facilities management activities |
| 62.09 | Other information technology and computer service activities |
| 63.11 | Data processing, hosting and related activities |
| 63.12 | Web portals |
| **GROUP 12** | **Media (news, PR, advertising, marketing)** |
| 63.91 | News agency activities |
| 63.99 | Other information service activities n.e.c. |
| 70.21 | Public relations and communication activities |
| 73.11 | Advertising agencies |
| 73.12 | Media representation |
| 73.20 | Market research and public opinion polling |
| **GROUP 13** | **Architecture, design, photography** |
| 71.11 | Architectural activities |
| 74.10 | Specialised design activities |
| 74.20 | Photographic activities |
| **GROUP 14** | **Engineering, research and development** |
| 71.12 | Engineering activities and related technical |
| 72.11 | Research and experimental development on biotechnology |

| Nace Rev.2 | Title |
|---|---|
| 72.19 | Other research and experimental development on natural sciences and engineering |
| 72.20 | Research and experimental development on social sciences and humanities |
| **GROUP 15** | **Translation and other professional service activities** |
| 74.30 | Translation and interpretation activities |
| 74.90 | Other professional, scientific and technical activities n.e.c. |
| 79.90 | Other reservation service and related activities |
| **GROUP 16** | **Cultural education, arts and recreation** |
| 85.52 | Cultural education |
| 90.01 | Performing arts |
| 90.02 | Support activities to performing arts |
| 90.03 | Artistic creation |
| 90.04 | Operation of arts facilities |
| 91.01 | Library archives activities |
| 91.02 | Museums activities |
| 91.03 | Operation of historical sites and buildings and similar visitor attractions |
| 91.04 | Botanical and zoological gardens and nature reserves activities |
| 93.21 | Activities of amusement parks and theme parks |
| 93.29 | Other amusement and recreation activities |