



POTENTIALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRY PROJECTS THROUGH EU FUNDS

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Received 16.07.2025, Revised 15.01.2026, Accepted 20.01.2026

Abstract

Research background: The cultural and creative industry (CCI) is vital for economic growth, social development, and tourism, offering unique experiences that highlight cultural heritage and contemporary creativity. Despite its importance, there is a research gap in the effective use of EU funding to support the CCI.

Purpose: This study explores EU financing opportunities for the CCI, focusing on successful projects in Croatia, and aims to establish a research foundation for understanding the impact of these funds on the CCI across the EU. A key outcome is the proposal of a model to monitor CCI development in the EU through these funds.

Research methodology: The study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing a detailed exploratory approach to analyse EU funding opportunities for the CCI sector by examining the specific conditions required to secure these funds. Through a qualitative review, it assesses Croatian initiatives from various funding programs, providing an overview of their impacts on economic growth, cultural identity, and tourism.

Results: The findings indicate that EU funds have significantly supported innovative and culturally significant initiatives in Croatia. Additionally, the study proposes a model for tracking CCI development and suggests expanding the research to include more projects and EU member states.

Novelty: This study adds value to existing knowledge by offering a comprehensive qualitative analysis of EU funding for the CCI and by presenting successful initiatives in Croatia. The proposed monitoring model should be tested, and the research expanded to cover a broader range of projects and member countries.

Keywords: cultural and creative industry, EU funds, project management, tourism

JEL classification: L83, O22, R11, Z10

Introduction

The Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) in the European Union encompass a wide range of sectors that are vital to cultural, artistic, and economic activities. These subsectors include architecture, libraries, museums, artistic crafts, the audio-visual and multimedia sectors, cultural heritage, design, festivals, music, literature, publishing, the performing arts, and visual arts (Tsimitakis, 2024). Studies have shown that CCIs significantly enhance job opportunities and contribute substantially to regional GDP, with their economic importance being comparable to traditional industries. Additionally, CCIs are seen as catalysts for social cohesion and cultural identity, as they unite diverse communities and support the preservation of cultural heritage (Pratt, 2008).

Based on Eurostat data, approximately 8.7 million residents are employed in CCIs, which corresponds to almost 3.8% of the entire workforce in the member countries (European Commission, 2024b). This sector not only supports cultural diversity and social cohesion but also plays a crucial role in the EU's economic dynamics, contributing roughly 4% to the GDP. The intersection of CCI and tourism creates a unique and compelling value proposition for destinations worldwide. Cultural tourism, which includes visits to heritage sites, participation in cultural festivals, and engagement with local arts and crafts, is a growing segment of the global tourism market (Richards, 2018). This form of tourism not only drives economic benefits by attracting international visitors but also enhances the cultural vibrancy of destinations, enriching the visitor experience and promoting cultural exchange. Zadel and Rudan (2019), in their paper note that the introduction of creative programmes at tourist destinations has

contributed to the diversification of the offer and the increase of competitiveness, making the country more recognizable and richer in cultural experiences.

Moreover, the role of CCI in addressing major societal challenges in the EU is increasingly recognized. The cultural and creative sectors are essential in fostering innovation, supporting sustainable growth, and promoting social cohesion (Gustafsson, Lazzaro, 2021). They are pivotal in responding to climate change, digital transformation, and the green economy, demonstrating their capacity to drive forward-looking solutions and smart growth (European Commission, 2021).

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the potential of EU funds in supporting CCI projects, with a specific focus on Croatia and to give a proposal of a model for monitoring EU funds impact on growth of CCI in the EU. EU funds represent a crucial source of financial support that can help overcome these barriers and unlock the full potential of CCI in contributing to economic growth, social development, and tourism enhancement in Croatia. This analysis aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of EU funding mechanisms, identify the best practices, and offers recommendations for optimizing the use of these funds to support CCI initiatives.

1. Theoretical background and research question

The resilience of CCIs was particularly tested during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which these industries saw a significant downturn. The European Union responded by implementing a variety of support mechanisms aimed at mitigating the economic impacts on this sector. These included direct grants, tax reliefs, and specific financial aid to sustain the livelihoods of those working within the CCIs (IDEA Consult et al., 2021). For example, the European Commission's Creative Europe program has been instrumental in providing financial assistance and promoting cross-border cooperation among creative sectors (European Commission, 2023b).

The impact of these initiatives has been profound. A study by the European Parliament (2021) highlighted the role of EU funding in sustaining small and medium-sized enterprises in creative industries, which are particularly vulnerable to economic shocks.

Moreover, the cultural sector's recovery has been bolstered by innovative approaches to digitalization and the use of new technologies. For instance, Krajnović et al. (2021) emphasized the growing importance of digital platforms in enhancing the reach and accessibility of cultural

content. This shift has not only helped maintain audience engagement during lockdowns but also opened new revenue streams for artists and cultural organizations.

Furthermore, the role of CCIs in regional development has been increasingly recognized. Studies by Zemite et al. (2022) demonstrate how cultural initiatives can drive sustainable development in small cities and rural areas, contributing to economic diversification and social inclusion. This aligns with the findings of O'Connor (2016), who argued that cultural policies should prioritize local contexts and community needs to maximize their impact.

In addition to economic contributions, CCIs play a vital role in fostering social cohesion and cultural identity. As noted by d'Ovidio and Pradel (2013), cultural activities provide platforms for community engagement and dialogue, helping to bridge social divides and thus promoting inclusivity. This is particularly important in multicultural urban settings, where cultural initiatives can enhance mutual understanding and cooperation among diverse populations.

As highlighted by Pratt (1997), continued investment in cultural infrastructure and education will be crucial in sustaining the growth and development of the sector. Moreover, the integration of sustainability principles into cultural policies, as discussed by Dallaire and Colbert (2012), will ensure that the benefits of CCIs extend to future generations.

The European Union (EU) provides a range of funding programs designed to support the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI). These programs aim to encourage innovation, cultural diversity, and economic growth in the EU. Some of the most relevant EU funding programs for CCI include Creative Europe, Horizon Europe, and different tenders co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) such as Interreg Programs (European Commission, 2020).

Creative Europe is a program that supports the cultural and creative sectors by promoting cross-border cooperation, platforms for creative professionals, and efforts to reach new audiences (European Commission, 2023a). It has been instrumental in enhancing the competitiveness of the CCI sector and promoting cultural diversity. Within Creative Europe, the MEDIA subprogram focuses on the audio-visual industry, supporting the development, distribution, and promotion of films, television programs, and video games. It aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the European audio-visual sector and promote the circulation of European audio-visual works across borders. The Culture subprogram supports initiatives in the fields of arts, culture, and heritage, funding projects that foster cultural cooperation, promote European cultural heritage, and enhance the capacity of cultural organizations. Activities include support for cross-border cultural projects, networks, and platforms that facilitate the mobility of artists and

cultural professionals and the circulation of cultural and creative works. The Cross-Sectoral subprogram addresses the broader cultural and creative sectors by promoting collaboration across different cultural and creative disciplines. It includes support for innovative cross-sectoral projects and initiatives that use new technologies and digital tools to reach and engage audiences. The Cross-Sectoral strand also funds the Creative Europe Desks, which provide information and assistance to potential applicants and beneficiaries of the program (European Commission, 2024d).

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding program for research and innovation, including specific clusters dedicated to culture, creativity, and inclusive societies (European Commission, 2024e). This program fosters innovation within the CCI sector, supporting projects that integrate new technologies and sustainable practices. Within Horizon Europe, Cluster 2: Culture, Creativity, and Inclusive Society focuses on promoting research and innovation in cultural and creative industries. It supports projects that address societal challenges, foster cultural heritage preservation, and enhance social cohesion. The European Innovation Council (EIC) supports high-risk, high-impact innovation projects across various sectors, including cultural and creative industries. It provides funding for startups, SMEs, and researchers to develop breakthrough technologies and scale up innovative solutions, aiming to bridge the gap between research and the market. The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) support research training and career development for researchers across all disciplines, including the cultural and creative sectors, providing funding for international and intersectoral mobility, promoting collaboration between academia, industry, and cultural organizations (European Commission, 2024e).

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) co-finances projects that promote economic, social, and territorial cohesion through various Interreg Programs. These programs have funded numerous CCI projects, facilitating regional development and cross-border cultural initiatives (European Commission, 2020). Interreg Europe supports interregional cooperation projects that aim to improve regional development policies, including those related to cultural and creative industries, facilitating the exchange of experiences and best practices between regions. Interreg Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) promotes cooperation between neighbouring regions across national borders, funding projects that address common challenges and opportunities, including those in the cultural and creative sectors. Interreg Transnational Cooperation (TNC) supports cooperation between regions from multiple countries within larger transnational areas, funding projects that address regional development challenges, including those related to cultural and creative industries (European Commission, 2020).

In Table 1, you can find a summary of EU programs responsible for supporting CCIs.

Table 1. Programs for supporting CCI in the EU

Feature/ Program	Creative Europe	Horizon Europe	European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
Description	EU program supporting cultural and creative sectors to promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and strengthen sector competitiveness	EU research and innovation program supporting various sectors, including CCI, with a focus on global challenges and industrial competitiveness	Aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the EU by promoting regional cohesion, supporting innovation, digitalization, and sustainable development
Sub-programs	MEDIA: Supports the audiovisual sector with funding for development, distribution, and promotion CULTURE: Supports a range of cultural activities, focusing on transnational cultural projects, networks, and literary translation	Includes various clusters and partnerships relevant to CCI, focusing on cultural heritage, creative industries, and inclusive societies	Supports CCI through initiatives that enhance regional innovation, preserve cultural heritage, and promote sustainable tourism and digital innovation INTERREG PROGRAMME: Supports cooperation between regions in different countries across Europe, addressing common challenges and finding shared solutions in various fields including culture
Eligibility Criteria	Open to cultural and creative organizations based in the EU and participating non-EU countries. Projects should promote cultural diversity and have a European dimension	Open to a wide range of entities, including universities and SMEs. Projects must address Horizon Europe work program topics and demonstrate innovation potential	Open to public authorities, NGOs, SMEs, focusing on regional development. Projects must align with regional strategies and contribute to the economic and social cohesion of EU regions
Application Process	Applications through the Creative Europe website. Regular calls for proposals with specific requirements and deadlines	Applications via the Funding & Tenders Portal. Calls outline scope and evaluation criteria, assessed by experts based on excellence and impact	Managed by national and regional authorities. Calls and funding guidelines published by managing authorities

Source: authors' compilations based on the European Commission (2020, 2023a, 2023b, 2024d, 2024e) and Interreg Europe (2020).

Recent academic studies have further explored the impact and potential of EU funding on the CCI sector. Sacco (2011) in a study “Culture 3.0: A new perspective for the EU 2014–2020 structural funds programming” discuss the transformative potential of CCIs in the context of EU structural funds and highlight the need for an integrated policy approach. Pratt (2008) in “Creative cities: The cultural industries and the creative class” emphasizes the economic significance of CCIs and the role of EU funding in supporting employment within the sector. Lee (2019) in his research „Making creative industries policy in the real world: differing configurations of the culture-market-state nexus in the UK and South Korea” examines

how different EU policies impact the CCI sector and suggests ways to optimize funding strategies. Khlystova (2023) in "The impact of the creative industries and digitalization on regional resilience and productive entrepreneurship" explores the intersection of digital transformation and EU funding in enhancing the productivity and reach of CCIs. Kalfas et al. (2024) in "Contribution of the Cultural and Creative Industries to Regional Development and Revitalization: A European Perspective" provides insights into how EU policies have shaped the development and internationalization of CCIs.

These sources collectively offer a comprehensive understanding of how EU funding programs have supported and can continue to support the development of Cultural and Creative Industries. Given the significant role of Cultural and Creative Industries in economic and social development within the EU, this paper explores the potentials for the development of CCI projects through EU funds. Specifically, it addresses the question:

What is the potential for developing the cultural and creative industry through EU funds, and how can these projects enhance tourism and regional development according to examples in Croatia?

This research question aims to uncover the opportunities and challenges in leveraging EU funding to support Cultural and Creative Industry (CCI) projects, with a particular focus on their impact on tourism and regional development. Answering this question will establish a foundation for further research on the impact of EU funds on CCIs and provide a model (researching a sample of projects in each member state) that can be applied to improve funding conditions for CCIs through EU funds. Additionally, this study will propose a model that can serve as a basis for monitoring the impact of EU funds on the development of CCIs across the EU.

2. Methodology

The Republic of Croatia has significant experience in accessing EU funds, which has been crucial for the development of its economy, infrastructure, and social initiatives. Since joining the European Union in 2013, Croatia has gained access to various funding programs that have supported the development of multiple sectors. According to the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, Croatia has utilized approximately 80% of the available EU funds, primarily focusing on infrastructure projects, agriculture, education, and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. This extensive use of EU funds has played a pivotal

role in fostering economic growth and regional development across the country (European Commission, 2024a; Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2024).

In the financial period 2021–2027, Croatia has been allocated nearly €25 billion from the EU budget. This funding includes €9 billion from Cohesion Policy funds aimed at promoting economic, social, and territorial cohesion, as well as advancing green and digital transitions (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2024). These investments are expected to reduce regional economic disparities and enhance skills, training, and employment opportunities across the country (Europski Strukturni i Investicijski Fondovi, 2024).-

Focusing on Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI), various EU funds have provided financial support for numerous projects. The study employs a qualitative research methodology, analysing four successful projects from the NUTS 2 regions in Croatia: Pannonian, the Adriatic, and Northern Croatia. For each region, one successful project from the Interreg, ERDF, Horizon Europe, and Creative Europe programs was selected, enabling a qualitative analysis of their implementation and impacts.

The criteria for selection include achieved results, project sustainability, and impact on the CCI in the region. In the analysis, Northern Croatia and the City of Zagreb were considered together because the City of Zagreb is geographically the smallest region, encompassing only the area of the City of Zagreb.

The analysis will observe the following aspects for each project. For the Interreg Program, projects will be evaluated based on the success of cross-border and transnational cooperation, the enhancement of cultural exchange, and the creation of sustainable cultural networks. For the ERDF projects will be assessed on the development of cultural infrastructure, improvements in facilities for cultural activities, and the contribution to regional development. In terms of Horizon Europe, projects will be reviewed for innovative approaches, the integration of new technologies in culture, and the promotion of sustainable practices. Lastly, for Creative Europe, projects will be examined for their efforts in promoting cultural diversity, expanding audience reach, and engaging new audiences.

By selecting one successful project from each of the above-mentioned program per NUTS 2 region, the analysis aims to provide a detailed and representative overview of the impact of EU funds on the CCI sector in Croatia. Through this analysis, the expected outcomes are an enhanced understanding of how each EU fund contributes to the development of the CCI sector in different regions of Croatia and the identification of the best practices that can be replicated in other regions or projects. The paper also proposes a model “Impact of EU funds

on the development of CCI” which can be a great base for measuring the impact of EU funds on the growth of CCIs in the EU.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Adriatic Croatia

The AdriPromTour project, part of the Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014–2020 cross-border cooperation program, aimed to enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the Adriatic region by strengthening visibility and promoting tourism. The project successfully developed sustainable cultural itineraries and innovative tourism solutions, promoting a shared cross-border identity and importantly preparing for future funding initiatives. The project involves partners from Italy and the Adriatic in Croatia, with the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County as the Lead Partner (LP). The project has a total budget of €590,000 and ran from June 2022 to June 2023 (Italy-Croatia.eu, 2019). It is closely connected to the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) as it aims to integrate cultural and creative sectors into the tourism offerings, promoting sustainable and innovative forms of tourism.

The Center for Creative Industries (CCI) project in Zadar County, supported by the European Regional Development Fund, has successfully concluded with a significant milestone: the establishment of a specialized entrepreneurial incubator for the creative industries. With a total investment of approximately 3,256,913.17 EUR, 85% of which was funded by the ERDF, the project began in September 2018 and ended in September 2020. This specialized incubator serves as a dynamic hub designed to foster innovation and entrepreneurship within the creative industries, with a particular focus on the IT and audio-visual sectors. The completion of the project marks a pivotal advancement for Zadar County, promising to boost the local economy through job creation, enhanced competitiveness in the creative sector, and increased community engagement in cultural and creative activities (INOVAcija, 2020). This development not only supports local creatives but also positions Zadar as a growing center for creative industries in the region.

The SmartCulTour project, funded by the EU’s Horizon 2020 program, started from January 2020 to December 2023 with a budget of €2.99 million euros. It aimed to foster sustainable cultural tourism and regional development in Europe. The project involved the Croatian partner the University of Split, Faculty of Economics, Business and Tourism and partners from Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Austria and France. The project successfully developed new models for sustainable cultural tourism, engaged stakeholders in

policy-making, and improved the measurement and evaluation of cultural tourism impacts (SmartCulTour, 2023). Additionally, it strengthened collaboration among partners which developed a great base follow up of the project.

“Who Cares?” was a European Cooperation Project under the Creative Europe programme, focusing on integrating care practices into the arts with an EU grant of 180,805 EUR. The project, which started in September 2020, and ended in November, 2022, involved a partnership between Centro Huarte (Navarre, Spain), Idensitat (Barcelona, Spain), SPACE (London, UK), Rupert (Vilnius, Lithuania), and Grey Area (Korcula, Croatia). The project’s objectives included fostering transnational innovation in artistic practices, developing works co-produced with communities to address vulnerability, enhancing audience development expertise, and facilitating knowledge exchange among partners. The implementation of “Who Cares?” aimed to boost collaborative and partnership research through shared experiences and practical applications. This interdisciplinary and participative process emphasized knowledge exchange and highlighted significant challenges, particularly those posed by the COVID-19 crisis. The results of the project are anticipated to influence various economic and social activities across Europe. “Who Cares?” aims to become a trusted source of information, tools, and good practices in collaborative art, engaging social creativity and innovation. By involving community members previously not engaged in the arts, the project seeks to promote active learning and empower these individuals to become organisers of art events, thereby enhancing cultural confidence (European Commission, 2025).

3.2. Pannonian Croatia

The *Eat Green* project was co-financed by the Interreg Hungary-Croatia program. The total value of the project was 380.000,00 euros, with the Municipality of Kneževi Vinogradi participating as a partner from Pannonian Croatia. The project was focused on exploring the hidden potentials of lesser-known areas of traditional gastronomy along the Baranja Greenways route. The project enhanced the diversity of the tourist offer by introducing wild edible plants, medicinal herbs, and forest mushrooms, as well as by reviving old culinary technologies and tools. As part of the project, the “Green Market” was established in Kneževi Vinogradi, providing locals and tourists with the opportunity to purchase high-quality, locally produced goods. The *Eat Green* project was closely linked to the cultural and creative industries (CCI) through the revitalization of traditional culinary techniques and the promotion of local gastronomy, contributing to the preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage and

encouraging creative innovations in the tourism and food industries of the region (Županijska razvojna agencija Osječko-baranjske županije, 2024).

The PISMO Entrepreneurial Incubator, located in Novska, was established to boost entrepreneurship in video game development within Sisak-Moslavina County. The project, valued at approximately €3.32 million, was funded by ERDF with a grant of €2.65 million. The incubator offers equipped offices, co-working spaces, and specialized equipment, facilitating the growth of start-ups and strengthening entrepreneurship in the region. The project ran from September 2017 to February 2020. This initiative significantly impacts the development of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) in Sisak-Moslavina County by fostering innovation and creating opportunities in these sectors (Razvojna agencija Sisačko-moslavačke županije, 2024).

The Horizon Europe Project: “TRANSiTION” aims to enhance the digital skills of healthcare workers and non-clinical staff. The project started in January 2023 and concluding in January 2025. The lead partner is the Cyprus University of Technology (Technologiko Panepistimio Kyprou), with a total project budget of 1,500,000 EUR. The project brings together 27 partners from 15 EU member states, with the Faculty of Medicine at the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (MEFOS) representing Pannonian Croatia. An additional goal of the project is to promote continuous professional development in the context of digital health solutions, facilitating better integration of technology into everyday medical practice (Smarthealthdih.eu, 2023). This project is expected to impact the development of cultural and creative industries by promoting the application of innovative technologies that can be utilized in other sectors, thereby fostering creativity and innovation across a broad range of industries.

The project “All Strings Attached: Pioneers of the European Puppetry Behind the Scenes” was part of the Creative Europe program, aiming to revive and promote the rich heritage of European puppetry from the early 20th century. This initiative highlighted the work of pioneers such as Milan Klemenčič from Slovenia, Vittorio Podrecca from Italy, and Hermenegildo Lanz from Spain. The project was led by Comune di Cividale del Friuli in Italy, with the Umjetnička akademija u Osijeku representing Croatia, and partners including Lutkovno gledalište Ljubljana from Slovenia and Títeres Etcetera S.L. from Spain. Running from September 30, 2015, to September 30, 2017, the project had a total budget of 199,476 EUR (European Commission, 2024c). It involved organizing traveling exhibitions and workshops to promote puppetry’s history and techniques, enhancing awareness about the importance of preserving puppetry heritage, and fostering innovative and creative events for broader audience interaction. The project aimed to improve the perception of puppetry as an art form

for all ages, not just children, thereby contributing to a greater appreciation and understanding of European puppetry.

3.3. Northern Croatia and the city of Zagreb

The project “Zeleno želimo” was part of the Interreg Slovenia-Croatia program. The project aimed to develop new tourist attractions based on cultural and natural heritage in rural areas. A key outcome included the establishment of the “Kulturnatura” brand and free education for 232 people on sustainable tourism. The project, led by the Agricultural Forestry Institute of Murska Sobota, involved partners from Northern Croatia, including the Tourist Board of Varaždin, the City of Ludbreg, and the Croatian Chamber of Commerce. It ran from September 2017 to February 2020, with a total value of €836,515, 85% of which was co-financed by EU grants. The establishment of the “Kulturnatura” brand increased visitor numbers, helped promote local artists, craftsmen, and cultural events, strengthening the connection between tourism and the cultural and creative industries, thereby creating new economic and cultural potential for regional development (Turistička zajednica grada Varaždina, 2024).

Project “Reconstruction and Equipment of the Technology Park Varaždin KK.03.1.2. 01.0043.” led to a significant enhancement of capacities and working conditions for innovative companies in Northern Croatia. The project started in September 2017 and concluded in February 2021. The total value of the project was approximately 2.19 million EUR, fully funded by the European Regional Development Fund. The reconstruction and modernization of Technology Park Varaždin have provided modern workspaces equipped with the latest technology, such as 3D scanners, 3D printers, CNC machines, and tools for processing various materials. This infrastructure offers entrepreneurs and innovators in the creative industry optimal conditions for developing, prototyping, and realizing innovative ideas. As a result, the local entrepreneurial scene is strengthened, creating a conducive environment for the growth and development of the creative industry throughout the county (TechPark.hr, 2024).

The “Sustainable Historic Environments holistic reconstruction through Technological Enhancement and community based Resilience (SHELTER)” project, funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 program aimed to enhance the resilience of historic areas against climate-related hazards. The project’s total value was 5,999,448.75 EUR with the Croatian partner, the International Sava River Basin Commission, receiving a 209,365 EUR EU grant. The Partnership consortium included partners from Italy, Spain, Turkey, Belgium, Czechia, Austria, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The project was officially started on May 3, 2019 and ended on May 31, 2023. Led by TECNALIA Research & Innovation from

Spain, SHELTER focused on developing data-driven and community-based frameworks to better understand and manage the impacts of climate change and natural hazards on cultural heritage. SHELTER's primary objectives included increasing the resilience and reducing the vulnerability of historic sites, promoting safer reconstruction practices, and creating comprehensive disaster risk management plans tailored to the specific characteristics of cultural heritage and regional hazards. By integrating concepts from disaster risk management and climate change adaptation with cultural heritage management, the project aimed to provide inclusive and informed decision-making tools. Key achievements of the SHELTER project included the development of a multi-scale, multi-source data-driven platform to support planning and adaptive governance. The project's methodologies and tools were validated through five open labs located in different European regions, each representing various climatic and environmental challenges. This approach enabled the integration of scientific data and local knowledge, fostering innovative governance models and community-based strategies to enhance resilience and ensure sustainable reconstruction (shelter-project.com, 2024).

The Zagreb Film Festival (ZFF) project, supported by the Creative Europe programme, focused on enhancing the visibility of European films and fostering cultural exchange through various activities. This initiative was part of the MEDIA sub-programme under the Festivals Support action. The project ran from May 22, 2020, to May 21, 2021, and received an EU grant of 35,000 EUR. The main objectives of the ZFF project were to promote European films and filmmakers, enhance audience engagement, and support cultural activities within Croatia. The festival included a variety of activities such as film screenings, workshops, and networking events. These activities aimed to provide learning opportunities for audiences and support emerging filmmakers. Through these initiatives, the festival sought to increase the accessibility of European cultural content and foster collaboration among professionals in the film industry (Zagreb Film Festival, 2024). The project successfully contributed to the cultural enrichment of its audience by involving community members and promoting active participation in film-related events.

4. Discussion

Qualitative analysed projects have a positive impact on the development of CCI, which directly reflects on the enhancement of tourism in various regions of the country. All projects demonstrate how investing in cultural and creative industries can have multiple benefits,

including strengthening the tourism offer, preserving cultural heritage, and stimulating the local economy.

For example, the AdriPromTour project in Adriatic Croatia successfully integrated cultural and natural heritage into the tourist offer, creating sustainable cultural itineraries that attract visitors interested in authentic local experiences. This project not only improved the visibility of the region but also laid the foundation for further collaborations and the development of new tourism initiatives. Similarly, the Eat Green project in Pannonian Croatia revitalized the traditional culinary skills of Baranja, promoting local gastronomy as a key part of the tourist offer. By opening the “Green Market” in Kneževi Vinogradi, the project created a new tourist attraction that draws visitors’ eager for authentic, locally produced products.

The PISMO incubator in Novska, although primarily focused on video game development, also has the potential to enrich the tourism offer through digitalization and innovative approaches in promoting cultural heritage. This project strengthens the capacities of local entrepreneurs, opening up opportunities for new forms of cultural-tourism products. In northern Croatia, the Reconstruction and Equipment of the Varaždin Technology Park project enabled local creatives to develop innovative solutions that can also be applied in the tourism sector, such as using 3D technology for the reconstruction of historical buildings or developing souvenirs. Projects like SHELTER, which focuses on the resilience of historical areas to climate change, demonstrate how innovative methods can be used to preserve cultural heritage, which is crucial for the region’s tourist appeal. This not only preserves historical sites but also creates new opportunities for tourism development in line with sustainable practices.

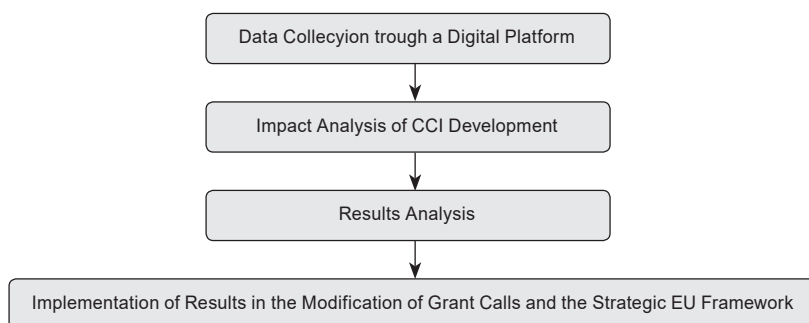


Figure 1. Model for the Development of CCI in the EU through EU funds

Source: own elaboration.

To fully understand the effect of EU funds on the development of CCI and tourism, it is essential to systematically monitor the results of these projects and their sustainability across the European Union. As a potential solution, we propose a model for tracking projects that co-finance the development of CCI within the EU (Figure 1).

This model could be based on several key principles. Firstly, it would involve systematic data collection from all EU-funded projects related to CCI, possibly through the use of final project reports and evaluations. Additionally, a digital platform could be developed to consolidate results across the EU. Secondly, a detailed analysis of the impact of these projects on various aspects, such as contributions to GDP, tourism, and employment within the CCI sector, would be conducted. Following the analysis of the results, a comprehensive evaluation would be carried out. Based on this evaluation, future grant calls as well as strategic documents would be adjusted to further improve the development of CCI within the EU.

Conclusions

According to the research results, there is significant potential for the development of cultural and creative industries (CCI) through EU funds, particularly in how these projects can enhance tourism and regional development. Examples from Croatia demonstrate that EU-funded projects have positively impacted these sectors, contributing to the growth of tourism and regional development. However, it is important to note that the analysis is limited by the small sample size of the projects studied.

The proposed Model for the Development of CCI in the EU through EU funds could serve as a solid foundation for developing a system to monitor the progress of CCI through EU funds. It would first need to be tested, which would involve piloting the model in a select number of regions or projects to evaluate its effectiveness and practicality. This initial testing phase is crucial for identifying any potential challenges or areas for improvement before the model could be implemented on a larger scale across the European Union. Additionally, the testing phase would provide valuable insights and data, contributing to a deeper understanding of the dynamics involved in monitoring and supporting the development of cultural and creative industries through EU funds. These insights could further stimulate additional research, helping to refine and optimize the model for broader application, ensuring its success in fostering sustainable growth within the CCI sector.

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Citation

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