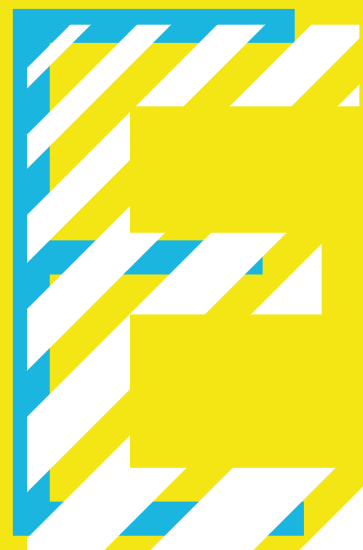
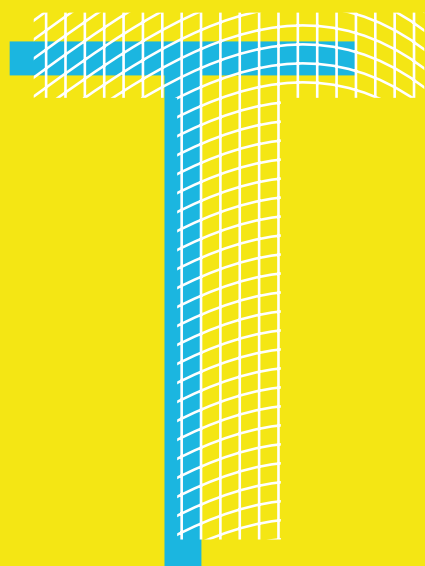
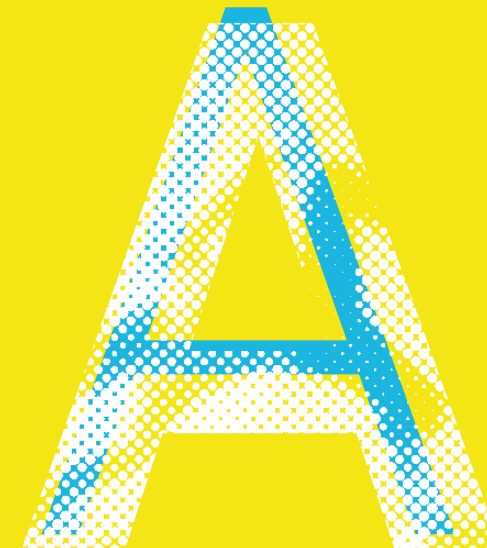
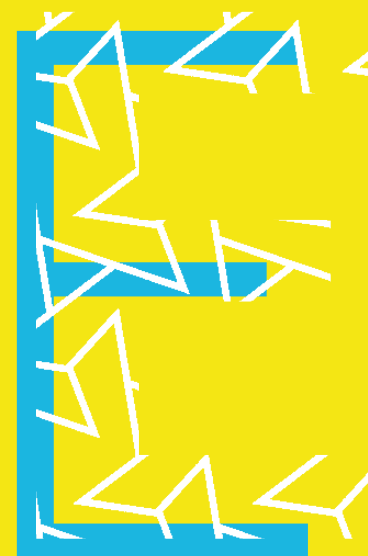




ARTS AND THE UK



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Foreword



The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries.

We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

Our work in arts creates new relationships between artists, organisations and audiences to develop stronger creative sectors around the world. We help artists to break new ground, support creativity and innovation, increase capacity by building skills to support livelihoods and cultural enterprise, extend safe spaces for creative exchange and contribute to research and policy.

Over the last five years our work in the arts has grown substantially. We operate in over 100 countries around the world, across six art forms covering the full breadth of UK creative industries. In 2017–18 our work in the arts reached 17.1 million people face-to-face and a further 241 million people online and through the media.

THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND CULTURAL RELATIONS

Above: Mix the City Katowice.
Image by Radosław Kaźmierczak,
courtesy of Katowice City of Gardens
Institution of Culture

Right: 11 Million Reasons to Dance Exhibition,
commissioned by People Dancing. Image by
Sean Goldthorpe

EU EUROPE REGION

The British Council's EU Europe regional team is made up of over 2,000 staff working with partners in 28 countries. We have a physical presence in 24 countries; in others, we use digital channels and work with embassies and cultural partners to promote opportunities for the British cultural sector.

The overriding factor influencing our work in the EU Europe region is the result of the UK's referendum on EU membership and the potential impact this could have on the sectors in which we work. Our vision is that UK arts and cultural expertise will be integral to building a stronger, more innovative and better-connected arts and cultural sector in Europe.



COUNTRY TABLE

1	Austria	8.7m	15	Italy	59.3m
2	Belgium	11.5m	16	Latvia	2.2m
3	Bulgaria	7m	17	Lithuania	2.9m
4	Croatia	4.3m	18	Malta	0.5m
5	Cyprus	1.2m	19	Netherlands	17m
6	Czech Republic	11m	20	Norway	5.4m
7	Denmark	5.8m	21	Poland	38.5m
8	Estonia	1.3m	22	Portugal	10.3m
9	Finland	5.5m	23	Romania	19.6m
10	France	67m	24	Slovakia	5.5m
11	Germany	82.5m	25	Slovenia	2.1m
12	Greece	10.8m	26	Spain	47.7m
13	Hungary	9.7m	27	Sweden	10m
14	Ireland	4.8m	28	Switzerland	8.5m



EU EUROPE'S
CREATIVE
SECTOR

Europe is a sophisticated political, economic and cultural environment. It is home to many of the world's oldest established and most influential cultural institutions, festivals, and biennales, including some of the world's most visited museums.

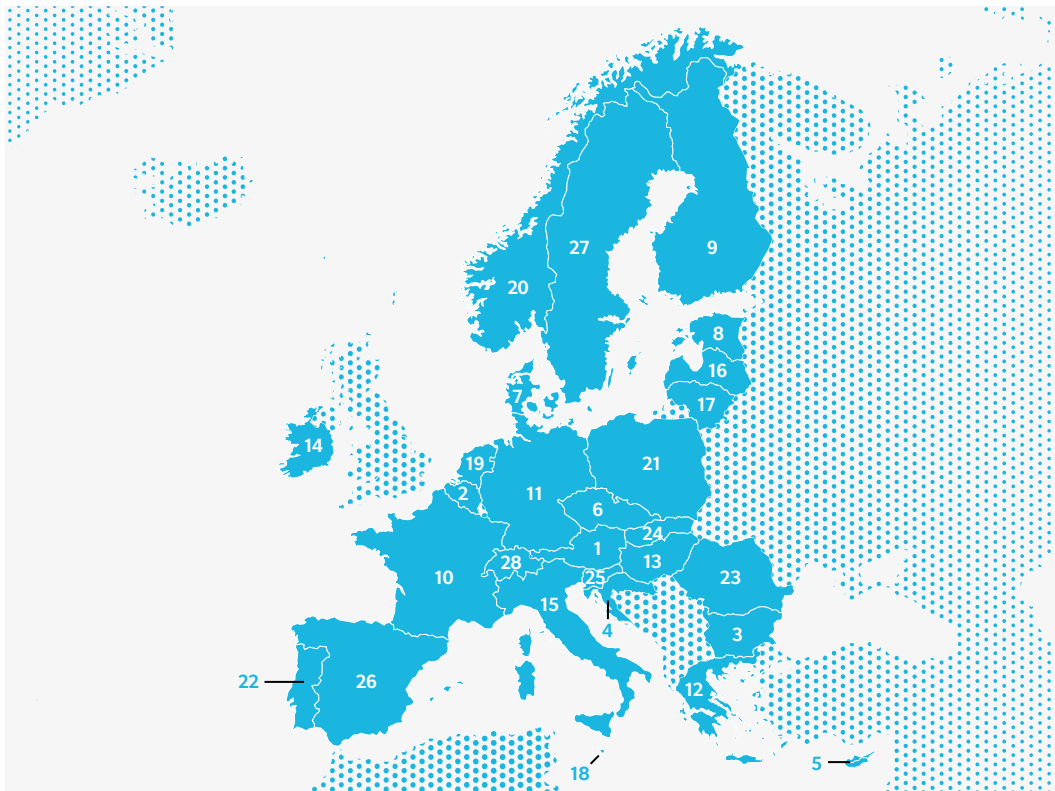
The European cultural sector is a dynamic trigger of economic activities and jobs creation throughout the EU territory, with 6.3 million people in the EU working in the cultural sector. The sector is growing at an average annual rate of 1.3 per cent (Eurostat).

The EU is the UK's single largest trade partner and is vital to UK economic sectors, including the arts and the creative economy. The arts and culture sector make a significant contribution to the UK's economy.

The European Commission has identified skills development as a top priority for the cultural industries. In its strategy document 'Promoting cultural and creative sectors for growth and jobs in the EU', it calls for stronger partnerships with employers and training providers to deliver vocational training and continuing professional development to address the lack of business and managerial skills in the cultural sector. It also calls for new pathways into the cultural sector, increased learner mobility and more jobs and growth to be created across the EU. Our strategy responds to this.

Europe's cultural richness is based on its history, the mix of public and private funding and its diversity. Cultural activities help promote an inclusive and progressive society.

Above: Lampa Festival Latvia
© Conversation Festival LAMPA - Juris Ross





MISSION STATEMENT EU ARTS 2018–23

The British Council's Arts programme in EU Europe aims to strengthen relationships during the UK's exit from the EU and to enable vital long-term partnerships between arts organisations and professionals from all four parts of the UK and the EU. At the core of our work are trust, mutuality and reciprocity.

In the next five years, our EU Arts strategy aims to place the UK at the heart of Europe's cultural conversation.

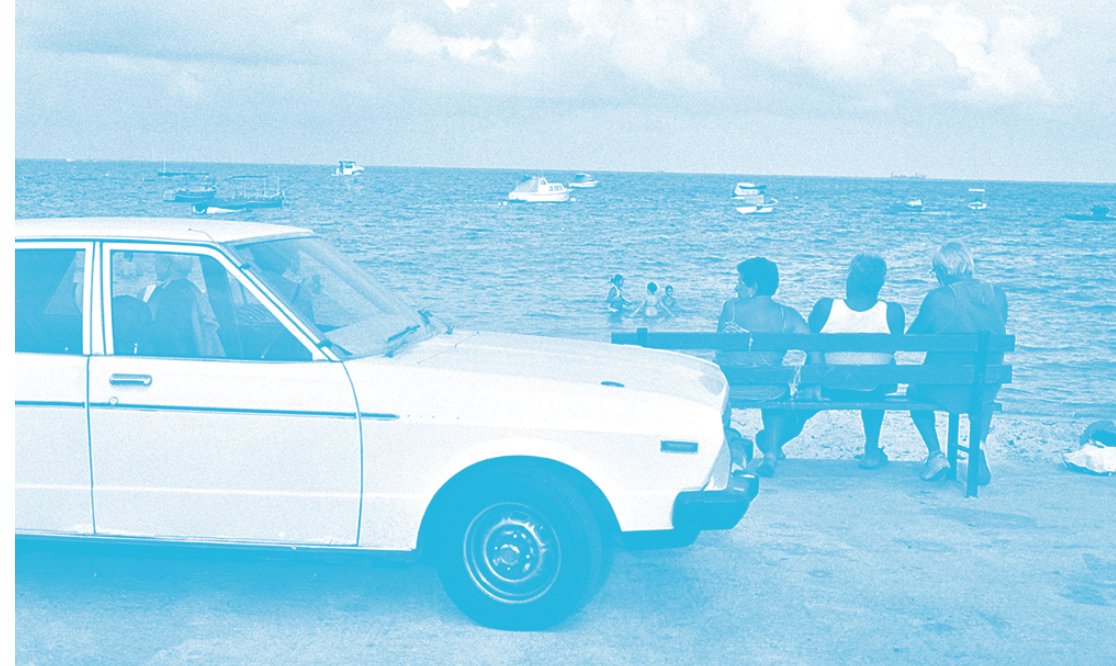
Arts will continue to connect the UK to the rest of Europe. The British Council will support the UK arts sectors to work throughout Europe in the following ways:

- maintaining our long-term strategic relationships with the EU at the most senior levels including the European institutions in Brussels
- brokering opportunities for artistic collaboration for artists and arts organisations from across the UK and connecting them to peers and networks in Europe
- keeping channels of communication open between UK and European arts networks and arts organisations
- ensuring that the voices of current and emerging UK arts leaders are heard in Europe and continue to take part in the exchange of creative ideas.

Top left: Dance in the City, Madrid July 2018. Image copyright Domingo Fernández. Courtesy Royal Ballet, Teatro Real and the British Council.

Top right: The Island is What the Sea Surrounds Exhibition, curated by Maren Richter. Image by Ali Tollervey

Right: European Development Days 2017. Image by Boris Hamilton, courtesy of British Council.



OUR PRINCIPLES

We are committed to enabling [creative partnerships](#) across the UK and the EU.

We will [support and advise](#) institutional partners, across the EU and the UK, to secure the role of the UK as a partner of choice for future generations.

We will [broker opportunities](#) for UK-based artists and cultural organisations to:

- share their work and their artistic processes across the EU
- foster collaborations and networks
- build capacity.

We will maintain our long-term strategic relationships with the EU at the most senior levels and will develop our [partnerships with other cultural relations agencies](#) across the EU, including the Goethe-Institut, Institut Français and Instituto Cervantes.

We will be [transparent in our decision-making](#).

We will use open calls wherever possible and appropriate. Where this is not the case, our decision to work with carefully selected partners will be made in close consultation with our specialist colleagues in the UK.

We will work in partnership with the [four UK arts councils](#) to ensure a consistent approach to internationalisation and to help broker appropriate international relationships with their portfolios across the EU.

Our work will [enable long-term strategic connections, networks and partnerships](#) between people and organisations who put innovation and knowledge sharing at the heart of their collaborations.

[We will lead and facilitate partnerships to access funding](#) and our work with European Commission programmes will remain a focus of this. Our expertise to form consortia in order to bid for multi-country partnership funding has benefited the UK sector in the past. We will continue to play an active and central role in pursuing strategic funding opportunities to connect arts and cultural practices between the UK and Europe.

Left and right: 11 Million Reasons to Dance
Exhibition, commissioned by People Dancing.
Image by Sean Goldthorpe



We will work across the whole of the EU, but focus our [core arts activity](#) in Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Romania, Ireland and Greece.

The UK, Germany, France, Italy and Spain generate three quarters of Europe's total creative industries' turnover.

Furthermore, Poland, Romania and Greece have emerging and increasingly innovative arts sectors, for instance in visual arts and design with growing interest from UK organisations to connect.

In all other countries we will deliver value to the UK sector through an '[amplification' model](#) and through opening up opportunities across country borders, which include partnerships and networks within and beyond the core arts countries.

The amplification model means that we use our channels, influence and knowledge of the UK and local sectors to [raise the visibility](#) of UK artists and organisations working in the EU through a mixture of digital profiling and relationship building on their behalf. Our ambition is to increase engagement with the arts and visibility for the UK by amplifying existing arts activity.

We will [work in partnership](#) to deliver this strategy. We will take the broadest view of arts and culture and promote activity under focused themes, across all art forms and the wider creative economy.

We will develop and support innovative approaches to distribution of digital content and market development, making greater use of [digital channels and partnerships](#). Opportunities for digital networks, which are not constrained by borders, will feed into joined-up thinking about a virtual Europe.

The partnerships we broker will support cultural professionals and artists to develop their knowledge, artistic practice, skills and networks. We will focus on supporting [exchange and mutual learning](#) around [processes and methodologies](#), for example cultural skills, audience development, urban regeneration or festivals.

UK artists and arts organisations are recognised for their innovation in socially engaged artistic practice. We will prioritise work with partners who are developing excellence in arts and social change as well as inclusion, diversity and difference.

Socially engaged practice features in a similar way across many EU countries as artists and arts organisations respond to transnational challenges such as globalisation, economic and political instability or rising nationalism and populism.

Regional Programmes

Many of our programmes operate across the region, developing connections and networks and reaching diverse audiences.

Our programme to support disabled artists in the UK and the EU involves UK visits and networking events for leaders of European institutions. We connect high-quality organisations that promote disabled artists to European audiences. In 2018, we led a London study visit for 18 senior arts funders and cultural policymakers including national arts council directors, national culture ministries, city councils and European Capital of Culture designate cities. Participants gained insights into UK practices that encourage inclusion.

Creative Europe-supported Europe Beyond Access (EBA) is a four-year pan-European €4m project aiming to bring disabled artists into the mainstream of European theatre and dance. Through diverse activities EBA will support disabled artists to break the glass ceilings of the contemporary performing arts focusing on priorities like: transnational mobility, capacity building and audience development. It involves seven major theatre and dance organisations, with the British Council as the lead partner. Partners who will manage local activities are: Holland Dance Festival, Onassis Cultural Centre, Kampnagel, Per.Art, Skånes Dansteater and Oriente Occidente.

'The study visit was very useful for me to discover the approach and actions that have been developed in the UK toward disability and meet artists and policymakers and see structures that work in that field.'

A lot of work has to be done in France in the future and it is important to organise future meetings between French and UK partners.'

Representative from Institut Français at UK Arts and Disability Study Visit 2018

Above: Take Over - Performances
from the partner organisations
Image by Bios

Right: Creative Hubs
Image by Filippo Podesta

DISABILITY ARTS AND EUROPE BEYOND ACCESS



THE EUROPEAN CREATIVE HUBS NETWORK (ECHN)

The European Creative Hubs Network (ECHN) was a two and a half year project, which ended in June 2018. Co-funded by the Creative Europe programme, it was set up to support the resilience and growth of the creative hubs sector in the UK and across Europe. It promoted hubs as innovative models to support Europe's creative economy.

Evaluation conducted over the first year of the project showed that two out of three respondents state that they gained new insights to help improve the performance of their hubs with 87 per cent having significantly developed their network with other European hub managers.

'Being part of the European Creative Hubs Network has opened new doors for us in terms of collaborations and networks that will help our creative hub grow – both as an organisation and personally.'

Creative Hub leader participating in ECHN

PEOPLE 2 PEOPLE BALTIC STATES

The People 2 People Project in the Baltic States is a five-year project, which works on a social cohesion agenda for communities in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Working in partnership, we deliver cross-sector and cross-thematic activities with a civil society focus while promoting increased co-operation with the UK. The aim is to develop a more sustainable approach to bringing different linguistic communities together to solve shared social issues in the three Baltic countries.

Through our Festivals and Seasons programme we create new opportunities for artists and organisations to work internationally. The UK/Germany 2018 season is a dynamic, year-long programme exploring and celebrating cultural connections between the UK and Germany. We will build on its legacy and explore future bilateral season programmes.

FESTIVALS AND SEASONS

CORE ACTIVITY

France



COUNTRY CONTEXT

France is a developed country with the world's fifth largest economy. Its population of 67 million people is spread over metropolitan France and several overseas regions and territories. It hosts Europe's third largest number of cultural UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and receives around 83 million foreign tourists annually, more than any country in the world. France has a diverse, and highly developed cultural environment. Its cultural institutions are strong and its arts scene is famous the world over.

Demand for UK education remains buoyant, and bilingual education is becoming more common in both the public and private sectors. There is high demand for continued co-operation with the UK from France's cultural and education sectors.

The overall unemployment rate remains at ten per cent (the EU average is eight per cent). Geographical proximity to the UK and a long and complex history between the two countries mean Britain and France enjoy a close relationship in trade, employment, study, tourism, and cultural and artistic exchange.

Left: George Henry Longly 'The Lobbyist', 2016. © Photo: Lance Brewer / Courtesy of the artist and Valentin, Paris

Above: Hard to be Soft by Oona Doherty. Image by Luca Truffarelli

Right: Family Honour by Kwame Asafo-Adjei/Spoken Movement. Performed at Danse Elargie festival, Théâtre de la Ville. Image © Laurent Philippe

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

France's cultural landscape includes influential national and international festivals such as Avignon and Cannes; networks of contemporary theatres, opera houses and arts centres; smaller experimental spaces; street festivals; an emergence of creative hubs; and renowned arts venues and companies. Cultural institutions benefit from public funding at national, regional and local level, but this is diminishing and models that mix public and private sponsorship have become more prevalent.

Artistic independence is highly valued. France prides itself on strong international artistic connections, and the environment has a reputation for artistic rigour and critique. France is an important platform for UK artists, not only for touring and building relationships in Europe, but also as a testing ground for creative practice and artistic development. This can be difficult to penetrate for emerging or mid-career practitioners.

The creativity of the UK sector is respected and highly regarded in France, particularly that which explores new aesthetics, or approaches shared challenges such as diversity in the arts, access to culture, audience engagement, creative learning, and resilient funding models.

FLUXUS ART PROJECTS

Fluxus Art Projects is a bilateral programme supporting artist mobility. It connects artists and curators in France and the UK and introduces audiences to new work and emerging practice. It is managed by a partnership between the British Council, the Institut Français and the French Ministry of Culture. Projects include exhibitions, curatorial visits, and residencies. Over 120 artists have benefited to date. The diversity of projects supported, from small regional arts centres to contemporary arts spaces in major cities, offers a window for UK creativity in France and French creativity in the UK.



Germany

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Germany is the most populous country in the EU, with 82.5 million people. Around 107,000 British people live in Germany. There are 139,700 Germans living in the UK, and more than 3.3 million Germans visit the UK annually. Germany has the world's fourth largest GDP, is one of Europe's biggest markets, and is the UK's top export market in Europe. Germany is the second largest investor into the UK. It is estimated that some 400,000 jobs depend on this investment. Germany hosts the most internationally active partner organisations, corporate companies and foundations in the EU. Many of the issues facing the UK are also common to Germany, including devolution, migration, climate change, and youth and skills. Germany is, and aims to continue to be, a strategic partner on the international stage. It sees itself as a cultural nation – the inclusion of culture as a human right in the German constitution is a topic of much discussion. Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, and the North Rhine-Westphalian cluster of cities are highly dynamic and entrepreneurial, creating vibrant communities of influencers from all over the world.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

The German cultural sector plays a significant part in its economy, with 1.6 million people in Germany working in arts and culture in 2016 and an annual turnover of 154 billion euros – 3.1 per cent of GDP. Germans see their country as a cultural nation, exemplified by the massive network of Kunstvereine - art associations – supporting artists in and around every town and city, and forming the basis of an array of globally important art collections and museums, including the paradigm shifting Humboldt Forum, opening in 2019. 2019 is also the centenary of the Bauhaus movement, which is still influential around the world, and a prime example of German innovation.

There are numerous opportunities for funding from German federal, regional and city sources. Connections with such a rich cultural environment are vital to the UK's artistic economy. However, navigating opportunities requires in-depth understanding of Germany's institutional structures and hierarchies.

LITERATURE SEMINAR

The British Council Literature Seminar opens debate on topics of interest to Germany, the UK and the world through the works of emerging UK writers. Since it was founded in 1986, the seminar has featured authors including Angela Carter, Salman Rushdie, Jeanette Winterson, and Ian McEwan. The seminar is recorded before a live audience in Berlin and enjoyed by thousands online. In 2018, as part of our UK/Germany 2018 season, 3,670 people from 45 countries tuned in to our live web stream. #BritLitBerlin had 5.7 million impressions online. Themes in recent years have included crime, diverse voices, and gender and sexuality.

'Don't even have the sentences to say how truly inspiring the #britlitberlin seminar is.'

Kerry Hudson, author

'I was happy that there was a wide range of minds and positions, and that there was a welcoming atmosphere, open-minded, that brought people together who are interested in nature writing and in discussing its issues and challenges.'

Monika Schuster, scholarship holder, on BritLitMunich

Above: British Council Nature Writing Seminar curated by Robert Macfarlane. Courtesy of British Council Germany

Left: British Council Nature Writing Seminar curated by Robert Macfarlane. Courtesy of British Council Germany

Greece



COUNTRY CONTEXT

Greece is a country of 10.8 million people, one-third of whom live in and around metropolitan Athens. Despite the severe economic crisis that hit Greece in late 2009, the Greek art scene – especially in Athens – has begun to flourish again. Several international initiatives have placed Greece, and in particular Athens, at the centre of cultural discourse, including its selection as UNESCO World Book Capital for 2018, the organisation of multi-venue contemporary art exhibition documenta 14 and the announcement of Eleusis as European Capital of Culture in 2021. Relations between the UK and Greece have a major historical dimension, from the Greek struggle for independence to the two world wars. EU and NATO collaboration lead to frequent cultural and diplomatic visits, and many Greek students and artists are resident in the UK.



Above: Drum Works. Image by Dimitris Sakalakis Courtesy of National Opera of Greece

Right: International Museum Academy with Stavros Niarchos Foundation. Image by Enri Canaj. Courtesy of British Council

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Greece's importance in European history and heritage has long drawn international artists to the country. Now, progressive initiatives such as collectives and civil society projects are increasing. Many UK and international artists have relocated to Athens, partly due to low rents and spacious work spaces, but also because of the community spirit that underpins the sector. Public investment in culture is limited, but Greek cultural organisations have become more experimental with finance models. There is ground for development and growth and an unprecedented opportunity for international exposure and visibility.

Cultural institutions are seeking alternative ways to expand their activities, such as crowd-funding and private investment. In doing so, they are becoming more competitive internationally. There is a great interest in artist and residency networks, arts for social change, culture and the public space, community engagement, and capacity building. This is a great opportunity for exposing the UK's best artistic practice and methodology and forming partnerships and networks with Greek institutions.



TRANSFORMING FUTURE MUSEUMS

Transforming Future Museums launched in 2016 as a professional development programme. It has been engaging with museums and cultural professionals in Greece and the UK for two years, helping them understand the impact they make and find ways to increase that impact and become more sustainable. The programme consists of an International Museum Academy, regional hubs (smaller academies across Greece), a Museum Professionals' Network, study visits to the UK, and museum twinning. It has already reached more than 800 people face-to-face. Numbers will rise through toolkits and pop-up meetings developed as part of the programme. It is supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, the International Council of Museums, the Greek Ministry of Culture, and museums across Greece. Transforming Future Museums will enable organisations and individuals to test ways of working. Museums will become central to communities and make use of international opportunities.

'It was a very enriching experience, I've returned very inspired and confident to delve deeper, share and apply the rich knowledge I've acquired.'

Museum Next cohort participant, Transforming Future Museums programme

'The International Museum Academy seemed to be an extremely worthwhile endeavour. Participants got a huge amount out of the content but also the networking.'

Guest Speaker, Fundraising and Income Generation

Ireland



COUNTRY CONTEXT

Ireland and the UK are valued neighbours and strong trading partners. Both countries share a common language in English. Over 1,000 flights connect the UK and Ireland every week, and the flow of trade between the countries is worth more than €50 billion per year. Up to a quarter of people currently living in the UK claim to have an Irish parent or grandparent, and there are about 100,000 UK citizens living in Ireland, a country with a total population of 4.75 million. As Ireland and the UK emerged from a highly contentious and intertwined past, culture has played a key role over the years in bringing people closer. Arts have fostered good relations and promoted valuable dialogue and collaboration, particularly across the island of Ireland. There is now uncertainty around the nature and timing of the UK's exit from the EU and what this means for the land border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. Once again, cultural relations are vital to ensure continued co-operation, prosperity and security between both countries.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Ireland has a vibrant cultural landscape that reflects its young and changing population and merges modern trends with rich history. Irish people are proud of their literary heritage, which includes the literary giants James Joyce, Oscar Wilde and Samuel Beckett. The Irish craft of storytelling can now be seen in the film and animation industry, which draws critical acclaim and international awards.

The Irish government's development agency for the arts, the Arts Council, is the major cultural funder. With a grant of €68.2 million in 2018, it aims to enhance access to arts and promote the social and economic role of the cultural sectors in Ireland, encouraging artistic expression, awareness and participation. A second body, Culture Ireland, promotes Irish arts internationally. Its special focus in 2018 is entitled GB18: Promoting Irish Arts in Britain. Despite a five per cent increase in government financing for artists and arts organisations in 2018 and recognition of the value of internationalism, years of cuts have left significant concerns within the Irish cultural sector. There is also uncertainty about the impact of the UK leaving the EU on funding and freedom of movement.

PERSPECTIVES AND AFFINITIES

The Decade of Centenaries is a programme of activity marking events in Irish history between 1912 and 1922, from the campaign for Home Rule to the foundation of the Free State.

In Perspectives, one gallery from each Irish province hosted an exhibition of works from the British Council Art Collection, while the British Council in London hosted an accompanying exhibition of items from those galleries. The Affinities digital collection included interviews with seven artists sharing the moments when they felt 'most Irish'. Among interviewees were poet Bernard O'Donoghue, BAFTA Cymru winning actor and singer-songwriter Ryland Teifi, and Sarah Glennie, former director of the Irish Museum of Modern Art.

'Cork Midsummer Festival has hugely benefited from partnering with the British Council in recent years, supporting us in presenting leading UK artists Complicite, Far From The Norm (Union Black) and FK Alexander. The British Council's commitment to broadening access to the arts also closely aligns to our festival ethos, which has been clearly evident through our partnership.'

*Lorraine Maye, Director,
Cork Midsummer Festival*



Above: Hibo Muse in *Hijabi Monologues* London directed by Milli Bhatia. Image by Helen Murray, courtesy of the Bush Theatre

Left: Union Black at Cork Midsummer Festival. Image by Camilla Greenwell, courtesy of Cork Midsummer Festival

Italy



COUNTRY CONTEXT

Italy shares land borders with France, Switzerland, Austria, Slovenia, San Marino, and Vatican City. With around 61 million inhabitants, it is the fourth most populous EU member state. Italy has the third largest nominal GDP in the eurozone and the eighth largest in the world. It has the sixth highest life expectancy in the world. The country plays a prominent role in regional and global affairs. It is home to 53 UNESCO World Heritage Sites – the most in the world.

Italy is slowly recovering from the 2008–09 global financial crisis. Unemployment remains high, at more than ten per cent, with a much higher percentage in the south of the country. The youth unemployment rate is around 40 per cent and more than 1.2 million young people are not in education, employment or training.

The demand for cultural connections between the UK and Italy, and for personal opportunities from young Italians, continues to increase.



CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Unlike other areas of the economy, Italy's cultural sector has experienced growth over the last five years, particularly in design, video games and music. Tourism is a national industry, with art exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale drawing local and international audiences.

Architecture and design are at the core of Milan's Salone and Triennale. There is lower participation in theatre and dance. Cultural systems are tightly tied to politics – mainly devolved to regional and local government, with funding decreasing and political instability a frequent hindrance. Banking foundations are beginning to support arts programmes and the creative economy, a sector which lacks a national agenda.

Italian institutions recognise the need to improve digital access, 'unblock' an outdated museum system, and help cultural organisations diversify audiences. Seven out of 20 recent state museum director appointments were non-Italians, demonstrating the desire for fresh talent and ideas.

National arts networks are a rarity, making touring opportunities scarce. Italians often look abroad for opportunities and are very receptive to international collaboration, although lead times are significantly shorter than in the UK.

UK–ITALY PARTNERS FOR CULTURE 2017

The British Council's UK–Italy Partners for Culture programme brought together cultural leaders from Italy and the UK to address shared problems and priorities.

Our public event on women in the creative industries, held in Rome, was attended by Karen Bradley (then Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport), Maria Balshaw (Director of Tate), and British Council Chief Executive Sir Ciarán Devane. Italian panellists included former Culture Minister Giovanna Melandri, who is currently President of Rome's MAXXI museum of 21st century art; and Anna Ascani, a prominent young Italian MP who is vocal in cultural policy. A second cultural ministry bilateral conference resulted in an agreement to continue the UK–Italy Partners for Culture initiative, building it into a cultural memorandum of understanding. With high media coverage, this placed the British Council at the heart of arts policy discussion in Italy.

Above: ISLAND at the British Pavilion: bird's-eye view of Island at the British Pavilion for the Venice Architecture Biennale 2018 © British Council photo by Cultureshock Media

Left: Rome, MAXXI Museum - UKItalyCulture. Image by TH4image, courtesy of British Council

Poland

COUNTRY CONTEXT

With a population of over 38.5 million people, Poland is the sixth most populous member of the EU.

It has the eighth largest economy in the EU, and one of the most dynamic too. The Polish Stock Exchange in Warsaw is the largest in central Europe. Poland maintains a high-income economy along with high standards of living, quality of life, safety, education, and economic freedom.

Poland's development goals and policies include strengthening its economy, expanding the international market for Polish goods, and promoting creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation.

The government is addressing social inequality through a number of different policies. However, there is a strong polarisation of the Polish nation into right-wing and more liberal groups, and both extremes use arts and culture to frame their narratives.

There are nearly one million Poles living in the UK, and the two countries enjoy a close relationship through investment and exchange, employment, study, and tourism.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Poland has a vibrant cultural sector, based on a rich historical cultural heritage. In Poland, the arts have always been deeply involved with questions of national identity, and work is commonly 'political'. This is certainly relevant to the current environment, where the radical nationalist government is taking a strong interest in the cultural sector.

Most arts institutions remain heavily dependent on government funding, and the commercial sector remains relatively underdeveloped. As well as funding from the Ministry of Culture, the major cities all have substantial budgets for arts and culture. The major cities hosting a flourishing arts scene are Warsaw, Kraków, Gdańsk, Wrocław, Poznań, Łódź, Lublin, and Katowice.

The creative industries are significantly underdeveloped when compared to the UK. There is strong awareness of this in policy circles, and efforts are beginning to build up an effective creative economy in Poland. Poland has always looked west for its international cultural dialogue and artistic exchange, and there is a keen interest in British culture. However, there are not many organisations with the financial capacity to programme and present high-quality international arts.

CREATIVE MIKSERS

Creative Miksers is a series of seminars and networking events designed to share best UK practice and stimulate collaboration amongst creative practitioners. Session topics range from 'effective film trailers' to 'sustainable fashion'. To date the British Council has run 16 sessions in Warsaw, in partnership with the City Council, attended by an audience of 1,400. Recently we extended the programme to other cities under the name Creativity Talk.

The series is making a valuable contribution to the development of the creative industries in Poland as well as seeding a network of Polish creative entrepreneurs with a connection to the UK.

'Thanks to long lasting cooperation with British Council our creative entrepreneur community in Warsaw has the opportunity to get insight into the best practices from their colleagues in the UK. Each Creative Mikser has the top UK representative of the trending topic.

The collaboration we have created makes the exchange of experiences and networking possible, gives inspiration and leads to new chances.'

Michał Olszewski, Deputy Mayor City of Warsaw

Above: Market Focus Poland at The London Book Fair 2017. Image by Lucia Sceranková, courtesy of British Council

Left: Market Focus Poland at London Book Fair 2017. Image credit — London Book Fair press materials

Romania



COUNTRY CONTEXT

Romania has a population of nearly 20 million people, mostly located in urban areas. The country's history and cultural heritage is marked by a richness of influences that reflect its geopolitical position, at the border between East and West. It is a young democracy that shares a long Ottoman past with the Balkans.

Romania is a developing country and one of the poorest in the EU, although in 2017 its economy grew at an annual rate of seven per cent – the highest in the EU. It attracts increasing amounts of foreign investment. However, the country is faced with an ageing population and high emigration of skilled labour.

Young Romanians are interested in pursuing opportunities for work and higher education in western Europe, especially the UK. In 2015, Romanians were the fifth largest minority group in the UK, so commercial and trading relations with Britain are strong.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

The Romanian artistic and cultural environment is vibrant and growing, with international recognition in film, visual arts and performance, and an active theatre and music scene. Small but steady progress is being made towards inclusion and gender equality.

Funding is mainly dependent on public sources from national or regional governments, with a slight rise in city municipalities' investment in the cultural field. The success of Timisoara's bid to become European Capital of Culture 2021 has accelerated this trend. Most artistic and creative activity gravitates around Bucharest and a few bigger cities. There is a need for capacity-building on a country scale.

Lack of funding generates a divide between the public and independent sectors. Professional cultural networks are isolated and closed, and public-private collaborations are rare.

The three priorities for the Ministry of Culture in the coming period are the centenary of Romanian unification, the Romania-France cultural season (December 2018 – July 2019), and Europalia, where Romania is the guest of honour in 2019.

Above, left and right: Arts Culture Pavilion at Queen's Birthday Party celebrating 80 years of bilateral cultural relations in Romania
Image by Octav Ganea, courtesy of British Council



COUNTRY CONTEXT

Spain is a unitary state with a high degree of decentralisation and devolution to its 17 autonomous communities. Current challenges facing the government include the economy after the European financial crisis and the Catalan independence question. With a current population of 47.7 million, Spain's demography is steadily decreasing. There are likely to be significant challenges as the dependency ratios rise while the economically active population decreases.

Spain is a major political force in the EU. The government supports greater EU integration post-2020.

Inbound tourism is a major factor in the Spanish economy, with arts and culture as a core part of the offer, especially in Madrid, Barcelona, Malaga and Bilbao. Respect for UK arts, creativity and education, and the automatic inclination to look for UK partners and innovation, is providing great opportunities for long-term partnerships.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Spain has a sophisticated, diverse and highly developed cultural environment, including many of Europe's leading cultural institutions and a rich history of festivals. Spain hosts two museums which were among the 14 most visited in 2016, a ranking surpassed only by the UK. Three per cent of the population work in the cultural industries; two million students are following courses leading to culture-related higher-education qualifications, and the spend on recreational and cultural services was around 18 billion euros in 2016. Culture has been a major player in the restoration and development of liberal democracy in Spain. Creativity and independence in the arts are highly prized.

Since the financial crisis, the arts sector faces the challenge of developing audiences while making the most of their reduced funding. An ambitious new generation of arts managers who aim to address this are now reaching decision-making positions. This may mean better involvement of civil society in the arts programmes, clearer process and more transparency in the nomination of directors. Careers and seasons are becoming more international in their focus. Entrepreneurialism and new technologies are being better integrated to strengthen and export the Spanish creative industries.

TEATRO REAL

Our partnership with Teatro Real, Spain's royal opera house, exemplifies how we connect with important Spanish institutions to share UK expertise.

With us, Teatro Real has been able to develop its international and online audiences, such as through the BBC's Opera Passion Day, screenings of Shakespeare Lives short films, and live streaming on British Council channels. Teatro Real and the British Council are involved in mutually beneficial high-level conversations, including Teatro Real's strategic council and the British Council's EU-UK series, which brought together over 400 leaders from UK and European cultural, political, education and research sectors.

The partnership enables us to foster inclusion through the arts. We are supporting Teatro Real's collaboration with the Royal Opera House around a new version of Swan Lake by UK choreographer Liam Scarlett. The performance involves both disabled and able-bodied dancers, and both professionals and amateurs.

'It was clear that the Royal Opera House and British Council were on the same page and able to develop a project based on shared values of inclusivity, outreach and FUN! I was particularly delighted with the attention to detail paid to the realisation of the accompanying films as a resource for participants. (...) The commitment and integrity of the group's performance matched that of the Royal Opera House dancers and out of that vast range of abilities in the room, a balanced and beautiful performance emerges with each person contributing in equal measure.'

Elizabeth Foster, Lecturer in Dance Movement Studies at the University of Derby

Above: XR Escena 2018 in Madrid.
Image courtesy of Fundación Telefónica

Left: Fleur East at WorldPride Madrid 2017
Image by Domingo Fernández courtesy
of British Council

AMPLIFICATION ACTIVITY

Our Amplification Activity

Austria

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Austria is a federal republic consisting of nine states, with Vienna as federal capital. Each state has its own government. In December 2017, a coalition between the Austrian People's Party and the nationalist Freedom Party made Austria the only western European country with a far-right presence in government.

Geographically in the centre of Europe, Austria is the seat of several European and international political institutions. In July 2018 Austria assumed presidency of the Council of the European Union which it will hold until 31 December 2018.

The official language is German, although Croatian, Slovenian and Hungarian are recognised in some regions. The country is officially Catholic and the church plays a powerful role in society.

Austria and the UK have a good relationship, particularly in the areas of educational and cultural exchange. Over 2,330 Austrians studied at UK institutions in 2015–16. There is a strong tradition of research collaboration with the UK; since 2012, the UK and Austria have co-produced over 14,000 research articles, with a focus on science and medicine.

Austria is a relatively hierarchical country, and personal connections are essential to any international venture.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Culture plays a significant role in Austria's identity. Public access to the arts, for example at 'people's theatres' (Volkstheater), is a proud tradition. Vienna and Salzburg are seen as the jewels in Austria's cultural crown, while Innsbruck, Graz and Linz have a vibrant and eclectic cultural scene.

The Ministry of Culture defines policy, and each state has a cultural lead. The Austrian Cultural Forum in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs promotes culture externally, while KulturKontakt Austria assists with exchanges and education programmes.

Arts and culture are largely financed by the government, with private funding limited to a few commercial art galleries.

Music is a national obsession, from the grand opera houses in Vienna and Salzburg, to music and drama festivals such as the Bregenzer Festspiele and Ars Electronica in Linz. Music universities such as the Mozarteum Salzburg are recognised the world over.

Museums and cultural institutions are highly regarded and have well-developed institution-to-institution links, for example between Tate and the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

Belgium

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Belgium is a densely populated country. Many of its 11.5 million people live in cities and towns such as Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent and Liège. Belgium is a federal state, composed of communities and regions. The largest community, six million Flemish speakers, live mainly in Flanders in the north; 4.5 million French speakers live mostly in Brussels and Wallonia; and one million German speakers live near the German border. About 28 per cent of Belgians speak English as a second language.

Belgium is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse. However, communities still favour culture in their own language. Flemish speakers also draw from English-language culture, which dominates sciences, professional life and news media.

Brussels's role as Europe's political capital is a dominant feature. Home to the European Commission and European Council of Ministers, its international community numbers over 70,000. Also based in Brussels are the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), a huge press corps, and non-governmental and pan-European organisations, including the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC), which is the EU's network of cultural organisations of which the British Council is a member. The EU also funds cultural programmes, especially around development and the creative economy.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

State funding for culture reflects Belgium's regions and linguistic communities. In Flanders, for example, some funding comes from the Flemish government through the Department of Culture, Youth and Media. As elsewhere in Europe, state funding is under pressure, but local arts are proving resilient and private models are developing. The Creative Wallonia programme, for example, supports innovation to develop Wallonia's creative economy.

The Brussels region has one of Europe's most dynamic cultural scenes. Contemporary arts venues such as Recyclart and MIMA are blossoming. The BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts, the region's most visited cultural destination, has an international programme. World-class museums and galleries also exist in cities such as Antwerp and Bruges.

Ghent Festival, which has run for over 60 years, is one of Belgium's many festivals. Music festivals are especially significant, such as Ars Musica and Couleur Café in Brussels, and Klarafestival, an international classical music event in Brussels, Antwerp and Bruges. The Theatre de la Monnaie opera house is internationally recognised, as are Belgium's jazz and contemporary music scenes, from pop to hip-hop.

Bulgaria

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Bulgaria is at the crossroads between Europe and Asia and a growing tourist destination. With an area of some 43,000 square miles, Bulgaria is a little smaller than England. The present population is just over seven million. Young people and professionals are concentrated in the capital, Sofia, and a few big cities. Sofia has more than two million inhabitants – about 30 per cent of the population. Twenty years of relative economic stability and progress have created favourable conditions for business in Bulgaria, but the country is still the poorest in the EU in terms of household income and GDP per capita. Bulgaria was among the British Council's first overseas offices in the 1930s but the office was closed in 1950. Towards the end of the 1980s, as the country started its democratic transition to a market economy, the British Council expanded its work in Bulgaria significantly and reopened a local office in 1991.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Bulgaria has a rich cultural life and tradition, although the country is third lowest in the EU in the percentage of people employed in the cultural sector (2.8 per cent, compared to the EU average of 3.7 per cent). Public funding is scarce but there are independent organisers of festivals, concerts and other events who work successfully with local and international artists. The performing arts – theatre in particular – are enjoying increased interest by local audiences and stabilising their operating models. Some theatres in Sofia have started subtitling performances in English to respond to the recent increase in international tourists. Alternative cinema is another niche. The British Council partnered with local cinemas to launch screenings of National Theatre performances, and these were followed by more UK content from the Royal Opera House, Kenneth Branagh Theatre Company, and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Many headline Bulgarian festivals were also founded or influenced by the UK.

Croatia

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Croatia is the newest EU member, having joined in 2012. About 60 per cent of the 4.3 million population live in urban centres occupying less than 15 per cent of the country. One in four people lives in the capital, Zagreb. Split is the second largest city, followed by Rijeka. Almost a quarter of the population is over 60 years of age, and about 15 per cent is under 15. Croatia has the third highest unemployment rate in Europe, with 20 per cent youth unemployment. It invests EU and national funds in training schemes for young, vulnerable groups. The country aspires to OECD membership. It is addressing its educational challenges by implementing reforms to the curriculum and vocational education, and by internationalising higher education. Tourism is booming, accounting for 13 per cent of GDP. Cultural tourism and heritage management are growing areas of interest. Croatia will hold the presidency of the Council of the EU in 2020, focusing on anti-corruption, decentralisation, protecting minorities, and promoting culture.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Croatian audiences are avid cultural consumers, but this heavily subsidised sector struggles to reach a wider, especially younger, audience. The government is acting to address these issues, and EU funding plays an important part in such development projects.

Numerous festivals are organised throughout Croatia, covering all art forms. Some significantly contribute to Croatia's tourism offer (especially music festivals) and regularly present UK artists.

Croatia is a popular partner for international film co-productions thanks to its skilled workforce, attractive locations and tax refunds in this area.

Rijeka will be a European Capital of Culture in 2020. Rijeka plans to influence cultural policy at local and national level that involve other Croatian cities on the Capital of Culture shortlist: Dubrovnik, Pula and Osijek. The year offers many opportunities for UK–Croatian partnerships, especially cultural sector skills development and community building.

Cyprus

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Cyprus was a British Colony until independence in 1960. Britain retains two sovereign base areas on the island where troops are stationed.

Throughout the 1960s there was a lot of intercommunal conflict. After Turkey's military intervention in 1974, the two main communities lived separately – Greek Cypriots in the south under the Republic of Cyprus and Turkish Cypriots in the north. Recently restrictions on movement between the two have relaxed.

There are 65,000 British citizens resident in Cyprus, and 400,000 Cypriots in the UK. The Republic of Cyprus is a member of the Commonwealth, the European Union and the eurozone. Its geographical location, at a crossroads between Europe, Africa and the Middle East, creates a dynamic cultural mix.

Approximately 10,000 Cypriots study at undergraduate or postgraduate level in the UK. In the Republic of Cyprus 84 per cent of the population have good English language proficiency at B2 level or above. In the north, English skills are lower. However, conclusive data on this is hard to find.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Today artists move and work relatively freely between Cyprus's communities. Before the easing of restrictions on movement, the British Council played a major role in convening inter-communal arts activities. Cyprus's capital Pafos was in the spotlight in 2017 as European Capital of Culture, jointly with Aarhus in Denmark. Historical connections with Britain mean many established arts organisations (mainly private sector) have close links to the UK and UK arts are highly regarded. However, there is frustration at perceived local underfunding of culture. Some observers believe this has resulted in a lack of interest in the arts among the wider population, with the exception being the national popularity of dance.

Czech Republic

COUNTRY CONTEXT

The Czech Republic has a population of 11 million people, with 1.3 million people living in the capital, Prague. It currently enjoys one of the highest GDP growth rates and lowest unemployment levels in the EU, with car manufacturing the largest industry. The Czech Republic joined the EU in 2004. The Czech Republic and the UK have strong political, defence, commercial, cultural and social connections; UK exports have more than doubled since 2000, and the UK is the Czech Republic's fourth largest trading partner. British companies such as Rolls-Royce, BAE Systems, and Marks and Spencer run their central and eastern European operations from Prague. Britain and the Czech Republic are both popular destinations for each other's citizens to holiday, study and work. Around 7,500 British citizens work in the Czech Republic, and over 300,000 Britons visit annually. In 2018, the Czech Republic marks several important anniversaries: 100 years since the establishment of Czechoslovakia, 50 years since the 'Prague Spring', and 25 years since the 'Velvet Divorce' and the creation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Prague is an established international city of culture, with world-class institutions and venues, and numerous events that attract artists from all over the world. A number of important festivals and events happen outside the capital, such as the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival and the Colours of Ostrava Music Festival. Financial support from the Ministry of Culture is vital for the national cultural sector. EU funding and commercial sponsorship also play an important part. Banks are among the major sponsors, for example Raiffeisen Bank supports the National Theatre, Komerční banka supports the National Gallery, and Česká spořitelna supports Colours of Ostrava. Traditional art forms such as classical music concerts, opera, theatre, exhibitions, and accompanying events remain popular. The Czech Republic scores highly in many cultural indicators, such as the number of persons visiting a cultural site at least once in the past 12 months, where it is second highest out of 21 countries surveyed (Eurostat, 2011).

Denmark

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Britain's relationship with this kingdom of 5.8 million people is traditionally strong. English is spoken by the majority of Danes, and the UK is a popular study destination. Denmark provides an affluent market for UK trade, tourism and culture. As many as 14,000 British people call Denmark their home.

Denmark has, over the last century, developed a competitive service-based economy with high employment levels and a generous welfare system. Its environmental policy is world leading. The government was led by the Social Democrats for most of the post-war period until the 1980s. They helped consolidate Denmark's reputation as a liberal, socially egalitarian nation. More recently, public concerns about high taxation levels and tensions about immigration have led to increased support for centre-right parties.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Copenhagen is Denmark's cultural hub, hosting major museums and the Royal Danish Ballet, among many other institutions. The city of Aarhus also gained prominence as European Capital of Culture 2017.

The Danish agency for Culture and Palaces supports arts, culture and heritage both internally and internationally. Some institutions are fully state funded, for example the National Gallery of Denmark in Copenhagen (SMK). The Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, one of the nation's foremost visual art museums, receives funding from both the New Carlsberg Foundation and the state. Major institutions frequently feature British artists – SMK recently hosted a Gillian Wearing exhibition, for example.

Film is a major focus; CPH PIX and DOX are significant Copenhagen-based international film and documentary festivals.

Danish design is internationally influential – Arne Jacobsen's iconic chair designs are a case in point – and the Danish Design Festival in Copenhagen is a meeting point for international designers.

Important festivals include the Hans Christian Andersen storytelling festival in Odense and the Danish Jazz Festival. Kulturmotet ('Culture Meeting'), is expanding its profile as an international summit for cultural policy.

Estonia

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Estonia has a population of just 1.3 million, with nearly a third living in the capital, Tallinn. It is among the least densely populated countries in Europe; just under half of the country is forest, and many locals spend May to August in houses outside cities.

Estonia's history has been marked by its location between Scandinavia, central Europe and Russia. 2018 marks the 100th anniversary of the Estonian Republic, with a large-scale programme of events celebrating its history and culture, as well as its connections with the EU and the rest of the world.

Essential to Estonia's context is its recent, rapid and co-ordinated transformation into a 'fully digital society'. Government-to-citizen interaction happens largely electronically, from fully encrypted digital voting to secure signing of documents online. Much local business is in digital industries such as advanced IT skills and robotics.

According to recent studies, Estonians are among the best English speakers in Europe. Twenty-seven per cent of the population speak Russian, and young educated Russians often speak Estonian, Russian and English.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Tallinn is Estonia's cultural hotspot, with many artistic institutions and diverse and international festivals including the Black Nights Film Festival, Jazzkaar, Head Read Literary Festival, and the Tallinn Architecture Biennale.

Outside Tallinn, hubs include Kuressaare, which has an opera festival; Viljandi, with its much-lauded traditional music festival; and Rakvere, with the Baltoscandal theatre festival. Narva is currently bidding to become European Capital of Culture 2024.

Estonians have a high regard for music. Traditional dance and music, especially choir singing (both folk and contemporary classical), are prevalent forms of cultural participation. Several contemporary composers are Estonian, such as Arvo Pärt.

Positive policy developments and state funding have bolstered Estonia's film and visual arts scenes.

Financial support from the Estonian Ministry of Culture, Estonian Cultural Endowment, and from the EU is vital to the sector. Commercial sponsorship is less dominant. Funding decisions are made by independent sector bodies. Estonia is becoming a popular location for creative residencies, including from the UK, particularly as the cultural sector is considered professional, structurally flexible and quick to make decisions.

Finland

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Finland's population is almost five and a half million. The country prides itself on being a safe, peaceful, young, dynamic, and democratic nation with an established welfare state. It comes close to the top in maths and literacy in the PISA study. Research by Save the Children and others suggests it is one of the best places in the world to be a woman. Finland is open to international ideas and is regarded as a bridge between western and eastern Europe. The UK remains an important trading partner. After the UK's vote to leave the EU, there was a drop in the number of Finnish students applying to UK universities, a trend reflected in other European countries. However, as elsewhere, demand for UK courses is still high, with 2,540 Finns studying in the UK in 2016–17. Finland continues to look to the UK for cooperation, especially in social innovation.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

The state and municipalities in Finland play a major role in funding arts and culture, allocating around €463 million in the 2017 budget. The legacy of 'Suomi 100', the 100th anniversary of Finnish independence in 2017, offers many international opportunities. The close ties between the UK and Finland are celebrated in A Tale of Two Countries, a digital gallery of Finnish-British cultural relations created by the Finnish Institute in London with the British Library, the National Archives of Finland and others. Helsinki's best-known contemporary art museum, the Kiasma, marks its 20th anniversary in 2018. It will host exhibitions by Grayson Perry and Nathaniel Mellors, the official Finnish Pavilion artist at the 2017 Venice Biennale. Amos Anderson Art Museum, reopening in August 2018, has been marked as 'one to watch' by the BBC. Several of Finland's major festivals have a significant UK presence, not least Pori Jazz Festival, Tampere Film Festival, and Helsinki Design Week. Finnish designers are experts with natural materials. Mobile Home was a sustainable architecture project between the University of Westminster and the Finnish Cultural Institute which tasked students with building shelters in the Finnish wilderness to help them understand natural materials.

Hungary

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Hungary is the UK's fourth largest export market in central and eastern Europe. Both countries are popular destinations for each other's citizens for work and tourism. The recent rise of nationalism in Hungarian politics has deep implications for culture and education. A government campaign against businessman and activist George Soros has included threats to close Soros's Central European University and efforts to discredit his Open Society Foundations and related non-governmental organisations. Media crackdowns have seen Hungary fall in the Press Freedom Index to 71st place. According to Eurofound, Hungary has more tension between social groups than any European country. However, GDP is growing. Hungary boasts a highly skilled workforce and receives direct foreign investment. Unemployment is falling, though youth unemployment is high. The education system is undergoing major revisions in qualifications and teacher training. English is not compulsory, but remains the first foreign language of choice.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Hungary's rich arts scene is funded primarily by the National Cultural Fund. The sector is heavily centralised, with funds for specific genres such as the National Film Fund and the Hungarian Academy of Arts – institutions that have been criticised for being elitist. The Balassi Institute is the national cultural institute within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Municipalities support local cultural venues. Foundations such as Füge and SÍN Cultural Centre provide independent finance. Limited but important private funding comes from sources such as banks or corporations. Budapest remains the cultural epicentre, but Pécs has also grown following its year as European Capital of Culture 2010. Debrecen and Szeged boast relatively rich art scenes. Hungary is famous for festivals, from larger events such as Sziget to the smaller Valley of Arts. An arthouse film network involves cinemas such as Toldi and Muvesz. Contemporary arts centres include Műpa and Jurányi. Some popular music venues are Akvárium and A38. Traditional institutions include Ludwig and Műcsarnok. Participation in the arts remains largely limited to elites but questions are being raised around participation and pedagogy. A small but passionate group advocates for disabled artists.

Latvia

COUNTRY CONTEXT

With a population of 2.2 million, and situated in north-eastern Europe with a coastline along the Baltic Sea, Latvia has borders with Estonia, Russia, Belarus, and Lithuania. It has linguistic links with Lithuania to the south, and historical and religious ties with Estonia to the north. Latvia was welcomed as a member of the EU in May 2004, just weeks after joining NATO and not much more than a decade after it regained independence during the demise of the Soviet Union.

For centuries Latvia was primarily an agricultural country, but has made a rapid transition to the free market since the early 1990s.

More than a quarter of the population is primarily Russian speaking, and Russian propaganda efforts in this community are a cause of concern for the Latvian authorities.

In 2018, Latvia celebrates 100 years since it became an independent state by presenting its best in culture, lifestyle and innovation. The climax will be on 18 November 2018 – the date Latvia gained independence. The centenary celebration will span five years from 2017 till 2021.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Latvia's cultural sector is multifaceted and large for a comparatively small country.

The capital Riga has the largest number of cultural institutions and activities. In recent years, cities including Cēsis, Liepāja and Rēzekne have developed a more modern infrastructure supporting the cultural sector.

Latvia hosts several international festivals such as the contemporary art festival Survival Kit, Homo Novus theatre festival, Cēsis art festival, RIXC New Media festival, and adventurous music festival Skaņu Mežs. Latvia is famous for classical music, with events and institutions including Kremerata Baltica, Sinfonietta Riga, Sigulda opera festival, and the Latvian National Opera. Major events of the 2018 centenary celebrations will be the All-Latvian Song and Dance festivals, in their 26th and 16th years respectively.

There are several opportunities for residencies in Latvia, such as Serde in Aizpute, Rucka in Cēsis, or Kuldīga's residency programme.

Arts are mainly supported by grants from the state budget through the Ministry of Culture and State Culture Capital Foundation. Artists can apply for additional municipal or private sector support. A strong current focus is on creative industries.

Lithuania

COUNTRY CONTEXT

The 100th anniversary of the restoration of Lithuanian independence in 2018 involves a large-scale programme celebrating Lithuanian history and culture, and engaging with Europe and the rest of the world. Lithuania is among the least densely populated countries in Europe. Around a third of its 2.9 million inhabitants live in the capital, Vilnius, a city which combines modernity with late medieval, early modern and baroque influences.

Two other major centres are Kaunas, with striking art nouveau interwar architecture; and the port city of Klaipėda, which plays an important role in logistics and sea transport in the Baltic Sea. According to 2015 data, 86.7 per cent of the country's residents are ethnic Lithuanians, 6.6 per cent ethnic Poles, and 4.8 per cent ethnic Russians. Lithuania has one of the fastest-growing economies in the EU, a highly skilled workforce, and a developed digital infrastructure. Population decline is a widely recognised issue, largely due to emigration to other EU states, and social inequality is high. Successive governments have prioritised providing job opportunities and improving living standards.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

The Lithuanian parliament's Cultural Policy Change Guidelines, adopted in 2010, specify 'cultural identity and creativity of society'. The government aims to widen audience access, safeguard intellectual property, protect heritage, and build independent funding.

Vilnius is Lithuania's cultural hotspot, but rural areas and other cities host events, such as Varniai's Blues Festival and the Poetry Spring Festival in Druskininkai. Kaunas will be in the limelight as European Capital of Culture 2022. Institutions such as the National Arts Gallery and Contemporary Arts Centre are internationally acclaimed.

Film production is gathering speed, thanks to funding and international co-production. Lithuania is an attractive shooting location – for example, the recent BBC television adaptation of War and Peace was filmed here. Around one third of books published in Lithuania are translations, particularly from English. The Vilnius Book Fair attracts over 60,000 visitors annually.

The Lithuanian Ministry of Culture supports national institutions, while the Lithuanian Council for Culture allocates funding – more than €17 million in 2016. National and municipal arts organisations, NGOs, and private operators are the main funding recipients. Private cultural sponsorship is starting to emerge; the new Modern Art Museum in Vilnius was funded by a single private investor.

Malta

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Malta is a developed economy with well-established economic, cultural and educational infrastructures. The country has been a member of the European Union since 2004, and is also a member of the Commonwealth. Tourism is a huge part of the country's economy; 420,000 people are permanently resident in Malta, with 1.3 million visitors each year.

Maltese is the national language, but Malta also recognises English as an official language and English is widely spoken.

Malta has a long-standing, close and mature relationship with the UK, politically, socially and economically. The UK is an important destination for Maltese students pursuing postgraduate education overseas.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

The Maltese cultural sector is gradually professionalising. Malta's capital, Valletta, is joint European Capital of Culture 2018. Its programme focuses on community engagement and identity through arts. The British Council is supporting projects to build artist-run networks, as well as amplifying the activity of UK artists at Valletta. The aim is to promote UK creativity while investing in independent arts in Malta.

Cultural policy falls under Arts Council Malta and most funding comes from the government. There is a national dance company (Żfin Malta), theatre (Teatru Malta) and orchestra, as well as one of the oldest working baroque theatres in Europe, the Manoel Theatre. Spazju Kreattiv, Malta's national centre for creativity, presents a diverse programme from cinema and music to visual arts and theatre. Smaller theatre and dance companies are usually amateur, and financial barriers often prevent people from pursuing creative careers full time.

The UK arts scene is highly regarded, particularly music, theatre and visual arts. Annual arts events include the Malta International Arts Festival, Malta Jazz Festival, ŽiguŽajg children's theatre festival, and the Malta Mediterranean Literature Festival.

Netherlands

COUNTRY CONTEXT

The Netherlands is home to 17 million people, the majority based in the 'Randstad' area – the triangle between the capital Amsterdam, the seat of government in The Hague, and the business centre of Rotterdam.

The country currently has one of the best performing economies in Europe, with 3.3 per cent GDP growth over 2017. The British Council has operated in the Netherlands since 1946.

The Netherlands has world-class academic research and higher education institutions, and is home to ESTEC, the technical heart of the European Space Agency.

English is spoken well by most people and much Dutch higher education is delivered in English. UK qualifications and professional development are in demand.

The Netherlands and the UK co-operate closely on political, economic, cultural and civil society matters.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

The cultural sector in the Netherlands is funded through a mixture of public and private funding. The government's official line of policy is inclusivity and it has set aside 373 million euros for 2017–20. Dutch international cultural policy focuses on three areas:

- Eight priority countries, including the UK
- Creative industry (including architecture, fashion, new media, and gaming)
- Cultural heritage shared with other countries.

The culture scene in the Netherlands is vibrant and well respected. There is an appetite for arts from the UK. Multiple exchanges take place between universities, European Capitals of Culture (Liverpool 2008 and Leeuwarden-Friesland 2018), and educational institutes. There is a particular demand for collaboration in the areas of disability arts and literature, both of which the Dutch see as UK strengths.

Norway

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Europe's northernmost country achieved independence in 1905. After centuries of relatively basic living standards, the discovery of offshore oil and gas has made Norway one of the world's richest nations and the world's seventh largest oil exporter. Much of this wealth is invested in infrastructure, and the Norwegian constitution is focused on being a fair, equal and open society. However, the welfare state has been placed under strain with current levels of migration. The government has started to make moves to limit the numbers of people coming to Norway.

A long-time ally to Britain, Norway has started to pursue a more active international role in the last half century. It is a member of NATO but is outside the EU. Ex-premier Jens Stoltenberg is NATO Secretary General.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Norway's cultural sector receives high state funding. Arts Council Norway is the country's representative body. The Nordic Cultural Fund supports artists from all Nordic countries. The Norwegian Crafts Council promotes Norwegian craftspeople internationally, for example at the UK Crafts Council's annual Collect craft fair.

Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim and Tromsø are artistic hubs. The National Museum in Oslo incorporates the national museums for contemporary arts, architecture and decorative arts, and the national gallery. In 2020 a new 'all arts museum' designed by Kleihues + Schuwerk will bring these museums into one venue.

British artists have an important presence: there will be an Anish Kapoor exhibition at Fylkesgalleriet Punkt Ø in Moss in 2018, supported by UK and Norwegian arts organisations. Several British sculptors have installations at Artscape Nordland.

Many contemporary Norwegian writers have been translated into English – Nobel winner Knut Hamsun and literary sensation Karl Ove Knausgaard, for example. The House of Literature in Oslo regularly hosts lectures by British writers.

Important festivals include Øya Festival of rock music, Lillehammer Literature Festival, Northern Lights Film Festival, and Oslo Fashion Week.

Portugal

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Portugal is one of the oldest European nation-states, with the oldest established borders in Europe. It is the UK's longest-standing political ally. With a significant history of globalisation spanning many centuries, Portugal has left a profound cultural and architectural influence across the world, including a legacy of over 250 million Portuguese speakers worldwide. Portugal was governed by an authoritarian government in the mid-20th century, with democracy eventually restored after the Carnation Revolution in 1974.

Portugal is highly rated in terms of LGBT rights (ranked sixth in Europe by ILGA-Europe). It enjoys political stability and low crime rates. Studies have named it 'the most peaceful country' in the EU and third in the world.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Portugal has a sophisticated cultural environment, with a number of influential institutions and festivals. The current government considers culture as an essential pillar of democracy, national identity, innovation and sustainable development.

Key priorities include: democratic access to culture; the preservation, expansion and promotion of tangible and intangible heritage; and culture for innovation, qualification and economic competitiveness. Current policy focuses on identifying, stimulating and assembling cultural elements in all governance sectors.

The cultural public sector is undergoing reform. The government aims to build flexible and effective models, stimulate networks between central and local administrations and public agents and civil society, and redefine financial support schemes.

The sector has strong links with the UK and values UK expertise and experience, particularly on the issues of accessibility to the arts, gender equality, and sustainability. There is a rich presence of UK nationals and experts in leadership roles within Portuguese cultural institutions, including the current director of the Calouste Gulbenkian and the artistic director of Teatro Nacional de São Carlos.

Slovakia

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Slovakia is situated in the centre of Europe, with a population of 5.5 million. The capital, Bratislava, is situated in the far west of the country, just an hour's journey from Vienna, while the far east of the country shares a border with Ukraine.

The country, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, has been a member of the EU since 2004 and the eurozone since 2009. Economic growth of over four per cent is currently forecast. Slovakia is now home to four international car manufacturers and produces more cars per head of population than any other country. One challenge arising from this is the availability of sufficiently skilled workers. Another is the need to diversify the economy.

The country has good relations with the UK. An estimated 90,000 Slovaks currently live and work in Britain. UK universities are highly regarded and are a popular destination for Slovak students.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

The cultural sector in Slovakia is supported by the Ministry of Culture as well as the Slovak Arts Council, which is a self-governing body independent of central institutions. Its main mission is to support live arts and culture with a special focus on diversity.

Slovakia has a blend of traditional and new forms of culture. Traditional Slovak arts, dance and crafts receive a great deal of attention and support across the country and are popular across the generations.

Theatre is of a high quality, as are institutions such as the Slovak Philharmonics, which are situated in Bratislava and the second city, Košice. Creative industries such as computer gaming and fashion are becoming more prominent.

These latter sectors are probably where the UK could find most opportunities, as well as innovative areas such as arts and disability.

Slovenia

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Slovenia has a population of nearly 2.1 million, with approximately 500,000 people living in the capital, Ljubljana, and surrounding region. Slovenia has been an EU member since 2004 and adopted the euro in 2007. Slovenian citizens maintain strong family, business and cultural connections with the Western Balkan countries. Slovenia is one of the highest achieving countries in the international PISA education study in terms of academic attainment – third in Europe and 13th in the world in 2015. However, it had one of the lowest scores for motivation among students and classroom discipline. The Ministry of Education has made it a priority to improve the quality of learning, introduce innovative teaching techniques, and improve teacher training. English has recently been introduced into the school curriculum at early primary level, but progress is slow.

There is a gradual increase in foreign investment, generating employment opportunities. However, foreign organisations face challenges finding employees with acceptable levels of English. There are calls for better intercultural training and adequate language assessment.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

As a legacy of the strong cultural policies of the former Yugoslavia, Slovenes are demanding cultural consumers, especially in the performing and visual arts, film, literature and music. For a small country, the cultural agenda is rich and varied. Audiences of all ages have access to emerging and traditional artists from the Balkans and the wider EU. For a city with a population of just under 300,000 Ljubljana has a very high number of arts venues and cultural events. Some of the most important venues include Moderna galerija, Cankarjev dom and Mednarodni grafični center.

There is great interest in UK contemporary arts. In 2017, the Ministry of Culture secured funding to develop a strategy for the creative industries in Slovenia, offering opportunities for joint capacity building and partnerships between Slovene and British practitioners.

In early 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched its cultural diplomacy strategy for the Balkan region and Mediterranean countries, building on the influence of Slovenian expertise in creative industries. Slovenia's heritage sector is closely managed by the Ministry of Culture and regional authorities, and the sustainability of Slovenia's many historical sites is a high priority.

Sweden

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Sweden, a country of ten million people, has low unemployment and a strong economy. This prosperity is largely due to the 'Swedish model', a mixed economy of public-private partnership that was developed by the Social Democrats, who governed until 2006. Swedes enjoy an advanced welfare system, a high standard of living and long life expectancy. Sweden is well known for policies that promote gender equality and social democracy. However, issues around diversity and women's rights remain on the political agenda, especially in light of the recent #MeToo campaign.

In relation to the size of its population, a high number of refugees have come to Sweden in recent years, putting strain on its welfare system. Social entrepreneurship is a growing sector, with the UK seen as a country from which to draw inspiration.

In the education sector, the opportunities for exchange between the countries remain numerous both at university level and in terms of vocational training.

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

The UK and Sweden have long been close friends in politics, policy, arts and culture. The current director of ArkDes, the Swedish centre for architecture and design, is British-born Kieran Long, a former curator at the V&A.

In 2017 the singer Sting became the recipient of the Polar Music Prize, and Kazuo Ishiguro became the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature. Almedalen Week, held in the city of Visby on Gotland during the summer, is a major annual programme of speeches, seminars and events. The main focus is on all areas of politics, with arts and culture being given a platform ever more frequently. Members of the UK cultural sector will take part in 2018, with the Chair of Arts Council England, Sir Nick Serota, giving a keynote speech.

While Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö are best known as Sweden's cultural hubs, smaller cities such as Skellefteå and Umeå are becoming important international destinations for gaming, tech and contemporary art. For instance, John Akomfrah will be exhibited at the Bildmuseet in Umeå for a second time in 2018.

Switzerland

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Switzerland is a small and rich country with a skilled labour force and high standard of living. Much authority is devolved to the 26 Swiss cantons. Matters of national interest are decided by the Federal Council of seven members. Around 25 per cent of the country's 8.3 million people are foreign nationals. A number of cantons are bilingual. German is mainly spoken in the east, north and centre of the country; French in the west; and Italian in the south; with a small Romansh-speaking population in the east.

Swiss direct democracy is often lauded: citizens can call for a referendum on new laws and against certain international treaties. However, the country is highly traditional in many ways. Women did not have the right to vote until 1971. A number of global companies are Swiss, for example Nestlé and Roche. The higher education and research sectors are strong.

CERN is located in Geneva, and Switzerland topped the Global Innovation Index in 2017. Switzerland has 20 globally ranked universities, with ETH Zurich the highest ranked university outside the UK in Europe (QS World University Rankings 2018).

CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

Switzerland is ranked third in the world in terms of the percentage of its population employed in cultural industries. Pro Helvetia promotes Swiss culture and arts internationally, with guidance from the Ministry of Culture. Much internal cultural policy is devolved to cantons.

Arts and culture enjoy a large amount of state funding on a federal and cantonal level – the Basel Theatre Festival and the Paul Klee Museum are both mainly state-funded. Foundations and donations are also important sources of funding.

World-renowned music festivals such as the Montreux Jazz Festival happen annually, and smaller festivals have international and British involvement.

Visual arts are strong. Major institutions include Kunstmuseum Basel and Kunsthaus Zurich, with smaller galleries engaging in research and selling art to the affluent population. Art Basel is one of the world's most important art fairs, also taking place in Miami and Hong Kong.

Cultural institutions hold much brokering power and manage artistic exchanges and residences, meaning relationships with key stakeholders are paramount to any UK artist seeking to work in Switzerland.

Further information

See all of our current international opportunities
www.britishcouncil.org/arts/opportunities

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Ireland www.britishcouncil.ie	Switzerland www.britishcouncil.ch

Our Structure

The British Council's Arts department consists of two main parts: UK and international. In the UK, we have one executive, four cross-disciplinary, three national and six art form teams. These teams are responsible for developing an expert understanding of the UK and the potential partners the British Council might work with in their sector. Arts staff in countries within each of the seven regions work with their colleagues in the UK to co-create our programmes based on their expert knowledge of the local context in which they operate. Overall decision-making across Arts is made by a senior leadership team, which consists of a director in each region and 11 directors in the UK.

Our Funding

Over 85 per cent of the British Council's turnover is earned through teaching and exams, tendered contracts and partnerships. The British Council also receives grant-in-aid funding from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office. This makes up less than 15 per cent of our total income, but enables us to represent the UK's long-term interest in countries where we cannot rely on earned income alone. Much of our work in arts is supported by official development assistance (ODA) funding. ODA is UK tax payers' money that supports aid and development in low- to middle-income countries. Using this, we deliver arts programmes that promote economic development and welfare in these countries, which contribute to building trust and opportunity with the UK.