EUROPEAN CULTURAL COOPERATION PROJECTS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

13 projects that strengthen cultural cooperation and improve the cultural and creative industries in the region
Acknowledgments
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The EU and the Western Balkans share a history, deep cultural roots and a common future. In July 2019, the European Commission decided to reinforce cultural cooperation in the Western Balkans as an engine for reconciliation and good neighbourly relations. A specific call built on the Creative Europe programme and funded by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) was launched and applicants were encouraged to propose a consortium with a majority of partners from the Western Balkans in order to strengthen the ties within the region and maximise local impact.

This required the mobilisation of services and funding programmes across the board, including the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and the European Education and Culture Executive Agency. This innovative cooperation demonstrated the benefit of mobilising this programme to sustain the European Union’s external actions.

Amongst 350 proposals, EACEA selected 13 projects with 91 partners. The selected projects cover a diverse range of sectors and contribute to the cross-cutting objectives of the European Commission.

Considering the capabilities of the Western Balkans and the relatively low level of visibility of its cultural creative sectors, EACEA is supporting the dissemination of the 13 projects in order to improve their international outreach. A projects’ launch event took place on 19 May 2021, which included interventions by Mariya Gabriel and Olivér Várhelyi, the two European Commissioners in charge of culture and enlargement and neighbourhood negotiations, respectively. The current brochure is part of this effort. It has been conceived as a dynamic and multimedia publication with many resources about the projects and the involved organisations, including project descriptions; pictures; and videos; as well as all relevant links to project partners; relevant sites and social media accounts. These communication activities were conducted in partnership with the Cultural Relations Platform.

Roberto Carlini
Director
European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)
(Non)Aligned Movements is boosting the creative and collaborative potential of contemporary dance practices in the Western Balkans. It aims to reinforce the social impact of Balkan contemporary dance by raising its capacities for action and collaboration, promoting its heritage and inscribing it in future discourses and practices and supporting stronger connections on regional and European level.

The project aims to, firstly, create a positive environment and favourable conditions for Balkan contemporary dance to thrive in the European context. Secondly, it aims to develop a collective curatorial practice where co-working, co-creation and co-learning drive new organisational models and set an example for collaborative micro-politics. Lastly, it aims to reinforce the social impact of Balkan contemporary art and culture through dance, peer-to-peer learning, preservation of endangered and unsystematised dance heritage and systematisation of knowledge.
(Non)Aligned Movements has three main pillars. It presents the past: preservation of dance heritage through research, conceptualisation and presentation (exhibitions and digitalisation). It reflects the presence: critical discourse and reflection of the social, cultural and market value of contemporary dance in the Balkan society. It creates a future: an eco-responsible way to provide good working conditions for artists and introduce them to another context. The project pays particular attention to the underprivileged communities within the Balkan contemporary dance scene: women, LGBTQI, and body diverse artists, practices and experiences are given priority.
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Balkan Translations Collider project developed out of the partners’ common commitment – as literary NGOs, associations, small publishing businesses, literary agents, book fairs/ festival organisers and city authorities – to overcome barriers to literary cooperation, both within the Western Balkans and between the region and the EU Member States.

The project is focused on capacity building for literary managers and hands-on learning in international settings. It will equip the literary mediators of the future with new professional contacts, new knowledge of international book markets, and the motivation and confidence to operate transnationally. The project will also create a platform for dialogue between the publishing industry and policy-makers in the Western Balkans. In the long-term, the project will lead to an increased visibility of Balkan writers and contemporary literature across language barriers in Europe.
COORDINATOR
FONDACIA SLEDVASHTA STRANICA (BG)

PARTNERS
DRUŠTVO ZA IZDAVANJE, PROMET I USLUGI GOTEN GRUP DOOEL SKOPJE (MK)
GLAVNI GRAD PODGORICA (ME)
POETEKA (AL)
SRŠEN IVAN (HR)
UDRUŽENJE ARGH (RS)
The **Comics Alliance Network for Balkans** is a cross-border cultural network, enabling cooperation between artists and professionals from the world of comics in the Western Balkans and European Union.

Historical comics in the Balkans have a past marked by nationalist discourses and communist propaganda. Unfortunately, in many cases, this also characterises contemporary Balkan comics. The cultural consortium of partners from Albania, Belgium, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia wants to change this. They will create a network to facilitate cooperation between artists and specialists in the world of historical comics in the Western Balkans and the European Union, in the spirit of the values of the European Union.

To achieve this goal, the consortium encourages the creative exploration of history by comic artists in order to generate new works, original and unconventional contributions to the interpretation of European history in general.
and Balkan history in particular, with an impact on cultural spaces dominated by a cultural heritage with incompatible accents with the values of the European Union, by establishing a working tool (digital archive and historical studies) for the history of historical comics and an international open call to the artistic sector.

Another important objective of **Comics Alliance Network for Balkans** is to increase the audience for the field of comics through free access of the general public to attractive cultural events (itinerary of the project exhibition in the partner countries), as well as in the online area (digital platform).
IMMERSIVE STORYTELLING

DIGITAL ART / CULTURAL HERITAGE / STORYTELLING

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Cultural heritage represents an incredible meeting point for collaboration of the cultural and creative sectors. Its value lies in the storytelling potential it offers. Visitors often lack engagement, learning opportunities, as well as sharing the relevant information in a creative and concise manner.

General information sharing is problematic on cultural heritage sites in the Western Balkans, since they lack good visual presentation and audience engagement. The needs, as well as the attention span of the audiences are drastically changing so the aforementioned institutions must adapt to the new environment and the contemporary digital shift. The specific needs of these sites, due to their more conservative, historically preconditioned concept of presentation, provide a bigger challenge for innovation and joint collaboration with creative industries. The highly competitive market for attracting audience demands from them to develop new strategies and foster progressive collaboration that allows them to stand out and succeed. This requires creation of an innovative dissemination cooperation, based on the use of
advanced technologies and the enhancement of user experience. These challenges are not unique to cultural heritage institutions of a particular country but rather distinctive to the whole Western Balkans.

The project aims to build up capacities of the aforementioned institutions with a final goal to develop more immersive storytelling experiences for the visitors of cultural heritage sites. It will further extend the cooperation between the project partners and provide a base for development of the capacities of cultural institutions to explore the capabilities of immersive storytelling in creating narratives and experiences that will attract new audiences and disseminate the values of cultural heritage further.
MANIFESTA 14
PRISHTINA

CULTURAL HERITAGE / MUSEUM / ARCHITECTURE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In its relatively short history as the capital of the youngest nation state of Europe, Prishtina has experienced major transformations in its landscape by unrestrained neo-liberal policies of privatisation of open urban spaces. Prishtina is the perfect city from which to investigate how contemporary culture and social practices can address the identity of a country that is as composite as it is polymorphic.

Manifesta 14 Prishtina, scheduled to take place in 2022, aims to support the citizens of Prishtina in their ambition to reclaim public space and to rewrite the future of their city as an open-minded metropolis in the heart of the Balkans. In a place where 50% of its hospitable population is younger than 25, where Ottoman architecture is mixed with post-war neo-liberal philosophy, there is a lot to discuss, there is a lot to do and there is a lot of public space to reclaim.

Manifesta 14 Prishtina hopes to provide Prishtina with the means to reconstruct, redefine and reclaim a radicalised and diverse public space. As an integral part of Manifesta 14
Prishtina, the M14WB project aims to enlarge the outreach and duration of the European nomadic biennial by developing a cross-regional collaboration platform including a vast arrange of cultural and civic activities across the Western Balkans. Linking architecture, urban planning, human rights, arts and culture, the M14WB project animates the development of a new permanent institution for art and culture in Prishtina that researches, stimulates, and promotes processes of reconciliation in the region. The partner network of M14WB promotes a politics of care between different communities in the Western Balkans. The envisioned institution will address inter-cultural solidarity and co-existence and increase access to arts and education with specific attention to minority groups.
The overall aim of the ReCulture project is establishing a basis for improved visibility and modernised appearance of Western Balkan cultural institutions by supporting the inter-sectoral linking and cooperation between cultural and creative industries within the Western Balkans and EU Member States.

Specific project objectives are: 1) Capacity building of cultural institutions from Western Balkans through reconstructing their visual identities and developing new skills in strategic approach towards audience development and communication practices; 2) Gaining new professional experiences and expertise of young WB designers through fostering cooperation within WB and acquiring and practising new designing skills shared by European and Western Balkan design professionals; 3) Promoting new marketing and audience development approaches and testing new models of revenue of Western Balkan cultural institutions through education on new business skills, production of limited series of souvenirs and development of online souvenir shops.
Four Western Balkans’ cultural institutions will familiarise with best European practices in modern communication and audience development, get new visual identity and skills to strategically develop and maintain new communication and audience development approaches. Group of young Western Balkans’ designers will acquire wide range of experiences and skills and use them to, under mentoring of recognised EU and Western Balkans’ professionals, work on re-branding of four Western Balkans’ cultural institutions and, thus, improve their professional portfolios and employability. The process will be based on strategic participatory analyses of the work of Western Balkans’ cultural institutions followed with production and dissemination of set of documents with recommendations both for designers and institutions.

COORDINATOR
KULTURNI CENTAR TREBINJE (BA)

PARTNERS
FAKULTET DRAMSKIH UMETNOSTI (RS)
FIELS OG (AT)
INK FEST (RS)
MUZEJ SAVREMENE UMJETNOSTI REPUBLIKE SRPSKE (BA)
UMJETNIČKA KOLONIJA DANILOVGRAD (ME)
MUSÉE DES CIVILISATIONS DE L’EUROPE ET DE LA MÉDITERRANÉE (FR)
REGIONAL LAB

FILM / THEATRE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Regional Lab aims to develop inclusive and innovative models for cultural projects, based on existing knowledge and experience from the civil sector, to provide sustainable and stable cultural co-operation in the Western Balkans.

In the past decade, intensive bottom-up developments emerged in the region of the Western Balkans and South East Europe mostly among the civil sector in culture. New models of organising, working and governing outside traditional institutional frameworks encouraged regional peer-to-peer exchange of knowledge and experience.

This project builds on existing experiences and collaborations to develop regional and European exchange, creating a dynamic scheme of artistic exchange between cultural centers, generating evidence-based knowledge on new participatory models of operation, building capacities and skills of artists and cultural operators to act regionally and internationally and raising the visibility of regional collaboration both on local and European level.
The project represents an opportunity for actors in the region to create a sustainable and stable framework for future development of regional collaboration, taking a more active role in the processes of transition, reconciliation and mutual support. It will provide an up-to-date map and analysis of existing arrangements related to programme collaboration, management and governance within the civil sector in culture and will articulate this topic on the larger transnational scale maintaining an ownership of bottom-up collaborative processes.
RE:PLAY Redesigning playscapes with children in the Western Balkans is engaged in rethinking play as a distinctly human capacity which is currently underrated by urban design. It highlights the significance of designing spaces with children and pioneers a co-creative design process, involving children as its primary collaborators.

Five pilot projects will be implemented in each partner country, applying the findings and participatory designs hands on and later translating the work into various dissemination outputs, such as handbooks on co-creative design, videos, blogs and other publications. By increasing the skills of the cultural and creative sector working with child friendly design, the project aims to transform the status quo of play design in the Western Balkans region, where social, political and cultural boundaries often translate to segregated and privatised playscapes, with boring, risk-free standard equipment.
In a context, in which designers are more concerned with meeting safety standards than the design itself, it is deeply necessary to reach both the cultural and creative sector involved in urban design and the decision makers that crucially effect play conditions, to boost their awareness on the issue and raise the design standards.

In the long term, the project aims to provide significantly improved spatial conditions for enriching natural and unstructured play for all children living in urban environments.

COORDINATOR
KULTURNO OKOLJSKO DRUŠTVO PAZIIPARK (SI)

PARTNERS
KREATIVNI KRAJOBRAZI DOO ZA POSLOVE PROSTORNOG UREĐENJA (HR)
NGO GRADONICA (ME)
QENDRA MARRËDHËNIE (AL)
UDRUŽENJE ŠKOGRAD (RS)
RISE OF WOMEN IN CULTURE

VISUAL ARTS / PHOTOGRAPHY / FILM

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project will work on the development of a Western Balkans’ network of curators, and a regional virtual reality platform, to foster the creation of visual art from young female visual artists from the Western Balkans, and contribute to the promotion and dissemination of their art in the Western Balkans and Europe.

The modern age is an age of imparity to which art responds with diversity in expression and media. Understanding and acceptance are key. Art connects... And this will be presented through two exhibitions, Women about Women, both in real space and virtually.

Through the liaison work of female curators and female artists the project will raise awareness of the female angle of observation and reaction to reality. During the process there will be discussions, explorations, educational modules, collaborations, and moments for socialising and adaptation to the modern digital technologies.
Aware of the need for youthful energy and encouragement, the project also includes a residency programme with 30 female artists from the Western Balkans and Europe.
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Some Call us Balkans (SCUB) creates a large consortium of partners and local NGOs as a interdisciplinary collective from different parts of Europe among artists and activists with the ethos to travel in order to create spaces of encounter that transgress the borders of nationalism.

Some Call us Balkans (SCUB) is a transdisciplinary inquiry that since 2017 has explored and mobilised moments of collective imagination, research, and multivocal representations of the Balkan region beyond borders and nationalisms. We aim at enhancing intercultural dialogue between artists, cultural operators as well as the general public in the area by creating spaces of encounter, confrontation and imagination both in the physical and digital realm.

The project’s partners will conduct a series of actions which outcome will be a mobile forum imagined as a platform for questioning, discussing and imagining different narratives.
of the region that defy the constraints of national borders and ethnic separation. On the base of an initial collection of myths and legends of contemporary Balkans, looking at themes such as migration, gender equality, monuments, rurality, the arts, ruins, right to the city and equity, the partners would promote in their local contexts an open call for travellers.

In between the travellers and locally based entities involved, will be the narrative base for a growing transnational community of socially engaged entities, communities, artists, activists, researchers and professionals active in the cultural field.
#SYNERGY

MUSIC / CULTURAL HERITAGE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

#Synergy aims to overcome the obstacles, at present threatening the art music sector in the Western Balkans, which are the consequences of small and fragmented art markets, unequil economic development, and recent conflicts in the region.

The project underlines the need for cooperation between the Western Balkans and countries from the European Union in the field of classical contemporary music, which will result in a greater recognition of this important peripheral cultural and creative sector on a European scale. The title of the project reflects its primary goals: to sharpen the skills of the participants (in classical music, the sign ‘#’ is called ‘sharp’) and to synergise the activities of the project partners.

The project connects six relevant art music festivals from the the region (Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Kosovo, Slovenia and Croatia), which will co-commission new pieces by selected mid-career composers (2 composers...
per festival and 12 in total). Each composer will take part in a residence program in another project country and they will write a piece which provides an artistic response to a chosen socially relevant topic.

These pieces will be performed by selected emerging classical music performers from all project countries who will present this new music to the audiences. Thus, composers and performers will receive a strong international boost, while the festivals will benefit from the transnational exchange of know-how and resources which is, at the moment, virtually non-existent. In parallel, the project partners will undertake activities to further develop their own capacities in cultural management.
THE WAYS OF THE HEROES

THEATRE / PUBLISHING / DIGITAL ARTS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Ways of the Heroes aims to put the spotlight on positive role models for environmental change, and create contemporary art that addresses important issues in our societies.

Social apathy and absence of agency, especially in the Western Balkans, is a shared problem that all partners of the Ways of the Heroes have recognised. The project will examine this problem through art and offer ways to deal with it, while focusing on the most concerning issue that needs our immediate action: the environment.

The Ways of the Heroes is an impulse to question responsibility in times of crisis. The project’s team will gather the facts: but the question is what do we do with these facts? How do we act as individuals and communities? How do we react politically, socially, and emotionally to the crisis? The good news is that there are heroes amongst us and they can show us the ways! There
are many individuals acting for a good cause, but they are not visible enough. Inspired by Ibsen’s play An Enemy of the People, which questions the impact of the individual on the community and vice versa, the project will focus on making visible the stories of the everyday heroes through theatre, public space performances, exhibition, illustrated book for children, and online campaigns. The Ways of the Heroes analyses how artists affect the environment through their work process. An international team working on the co-production will gather documentary materials during the project implementation and will create a play. By engaging on a multidisciplinary level, the project’s team aims to bring dynamics to the public theatre sector and create contemporary theatre that is rooted in the needs of the community.

Click on image to play video

COORDINATOR
MACEDONIAN NATIONAL THEATRE - SKOPJE (MK)

PARTNERS
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EHO ANIMATO (RS) LA DRAMATURGIE (IT)
LOOP - ASTIKI MI KERDOSKOPIKI ETAIREIA (EL)
PUBLISHING HOUSE GAVROCHE DOOEL SKOPJE (MK)
STUDIO ZA RAZISKAVO UMETNOSTI IGRE, ZAVOD ZA KULTURNO DEJAVNOST (SI)
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**Translation in Motion** is a cooperation between nine organisations (one European network, 4 literary organisations from the Western Balkans, and 4 from the European Union) and several associated partners that aims to contribute to a lively and balanced flow of literary translations across Europe.

It offers literary translation residencies to translators working with languages of the Western Balkans, translators training, a European-wide mapping of residency opportunities, policy events, and a multitude of public events dedicated to the art of translation.

The focal points of the project include literary translators as artists, cultural mediators, and ambassadors of diversity; translation residencies as centres for literary hospitality; professional development for emerging translators; inclusion and participation of Balkans’ translation centres in a pan-European network.
The literary translations are just these types of hideaways that are, however, in the midst of the living language. They offer translators time for focused creative work on a literary translation project, the opportunity to immerse themselves into the source language of their translation to carry out research. But also to exchange with colleagues from around the world, to network with the local literary sector at the housing country, to discover new artists, to participate in debates and to present their work to the local audiences.

Translation in Motion also includes a pioneering programme for professional development to emerging translators.
Creative Europe is the European Union’s flagship programme to support the culture and audiovisual sectors. The Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 has a budget of €2.44 billion. Creative Europe invests in actions that reinforce cultural diversity and respond to the needs and challenges of the cultural and creative sectors.

The main objectives of the programme are to:

- safeguard, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage
- increase the competitiveness and economic potential of the cultural and creative sectors, in particular the audiovisual sector.

The Culture strand encourages cooperation and exchanges among cultural organisations and artists within Europe and beyond. Creative Europe aims to:

- foster artistic creation and innovation
- support the promotion and the distribution of European content across Europe and beyond
- help artists find creation and performance opportunities across borders,
- stimulate the digital and environmental transition of the European Culture and Creative Sectors.
**Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC)**

The European Commission’s Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) defines the overall policy framework and the annual work programme for Creative Europe. It directly manages some of the programme’s flagship initiatives such as the European Capitals of Culture and the EU Cultural Prizes.

For more information: [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe)

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**European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)**

The European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) is responsible for the management of the main funding mechanisms of the culture strand of the Creative Europe Programme.

For more information: [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu)

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**Cultural Relations Platform (CRP)**

The Cultural Relations Platform is an EU-funded project that connects cultural practitioners worldwide for dialogue, exchange and cooperation. It also provides expertise to the European Union (EU) in the field of international cultural relations.

For more information: [https://www.cultureinexternalrelations.eu](https://www.cultureinexternalrelations.eu)

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**Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)**

The mission of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) is to take forward the EU’s neighbourhood and enlargement policies, as well as coordinating relations with EEA–EFTA countries insofar as Commission policies are concerned. DG NEAR helps to promote EU values, policies and interests in this region, and to contribute to developing the special relationship of the EU with its neighbouring countries.


You can also find out more about cooperation between the European Union and the Western Balkans on the [WeBalkans.eu](http://webalkans.eu) platform, a one-stop shop for news, stories, and funding opportunities.
The CulturEU funding guide is an interactive tool created by the European Commission to help you find the best fund to support your project.

The guide covers opportunities linked to the Creative Europe programme, as well as a wide spectrum of around 20 other EU funding programmes, from Digital Europe to LIFE and EU Structural Funds.

You can find further information about the CulturEU funding guide in the Creative Europe website.

Check out the CulturEU funding guide.
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EUROPEAN CULTURAL COOPERATION PROJECTS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

13 projects that strengthen cultural cooperation and improve the cultural and creative industries in the region.

The EU and the Western Balkans share a history, deep cultural roots and a common future. In July 2019, the European Commission decided to reinforce cultural cooperation in the Western Balkans as an engine for reconciliation and good neighbourly relations. A specific call built on the Creative Europe programme and funded by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) was launched and applicants were encouraged to propose a consortium with a majority of partners from the Western Balkans in order to strengthen ties within the region and maximise local impact.

Amongst 350 proposals, the European Education and Culture Executive Agency selected 13 projects with 91 partners. The selected projects cover a diverse range of sectors and contribute to the cross-cutting objectives of the European Commission.

The current brochure presents the selected projects. It has been conceived as a dynamic and multimedia publication with many resources about the projects and the involved organisations, including: project descriptions; pictures; and videos; as well as all relevant links to project partners; relevant sites; and social media accounts.