



The impact of international cultural cooperation

Beyond the borders, beyond the figures



October 2025

DutchCu | ture
| Dutch platform for
| international cultural cooperation

New study shows: it pays to invest in international cultural cooperation

A new study by DutchCulture, commissioned by the City of Amsterdam, reveals that international cultural cooperation not only delivers artistic and societal value, but also contributes substantially to the Dutch economy. The annual added value can be as much as 10.6 billion euros, which is several times the amount invested. The study thereby demonstrates that investing in international cultural cooperation isn't just the right thing to do, but certainly a smart thing to do as well.

International cultural cooperation is serious business. The Dutch art and culture sector contributes approximately €14 billion as direct added value to the Dutch GDP, amounting to 1.5% of the total GDP. Within the sector, international cooperation generates up to €10.6 billion of added value:


€3.6 billion in direct value and up to €7.0 billion in indirect value, through sectors such as the hospitality industry, business services and suppliers.

Around 25 per cent of the added value in the culture sector derives from export. As such, the art and culture sector keeps apace with sectors like the hospitality industry (21%), construction (15%) and financial services (15%). A further striking finding is how cultural exports go hand in hand with the total trade in goods and services. The study shows that, among the top 10 export partner countries of the Netherlands, there is a strong correlation (approx. 85 per cent) between the volume of exported art and cultural activities and the total export of goods and services. This reveals that cultural cooperation doesn't just generate its own value, but also paves the way for wider economic relations.

...a powerful economic motor...

The economic value of international cultural cooperation has never before been mapped out in such a broad perspective, and drawing on so many sources. These figures explicate how international exchange forms a powerful economic motor for the Netherlands.

Amsterdam plays a key role in international cultural exchange. The city accounts for more than half of all art and cultural activities exported from the Netherlands. This reveals a cultural infrastructure with an exceptionally strong international orientation. For Amsterdam-based organisations such as the Holland Festival, Internationaal Theater Amsterdam and the Rijksmuseum, international cooperation is an intrinsic part of their identity.



Yet the value of international cultural exchange reaches far beyond the economic domain. It also forms an important stimulus for artistic innovation and sector-wide development. Working with international partners generates new ideas, dialogues and perspectives, inspiring the further development of art disciplines and diversifying the cultural offering. Knowledge exchange through co-productions and co-creations maintains the international character of organisations and boosts their international profile. Studies performed by OECD, UNESCO and WHO moreover show that cultural participation improves people's well-being as well as cognitive skills, and promotes social cohesion. By challenging stereotypes and addressing issues like sustainability and gender equality, art and culture continually expand their reach.

...diplomatic value...

International exchange additionally fulfils an important diplomatic and relational role. The Dutch government's international cultural policy acknowledges culture as a form of soft power that strengthens bilateral and multilateral relations. Studies by UNESCO, the European Commission and the British Council show how cultural programmes improve public diplomacy, enable the exchange of knowledge and competencies, and offer neutral platforms when classic diplomacy falls short. Through networks and programmes such as Creative Europe, projects are co-funded that contribute to more durable partnerships and a stronger international network.

The importance of international cultural policy is borne out by the interplay of economic, artistic, social and diplomatic values. It is in particular this wide-ranging impact that makes it ever more essential to continue to support this exchange, also in times of cutbacks. That is why the City of Amsterdam is choosing to take a clear step forward by earmarking additional resources for internationalisation. DutchCulture stands shoulder to shoulder with the municipality and with makers in the art and culture sector to highlight, reinforce and preserve the power of international cultural cooperation.

Values

This report examines the value of international cultural cooperation for the Netherlands.

- **What forms of international cultural cooperation** take place, and how much takes place?
- What is the **economic value of international cooperation**, directly, indirectly, and as a stimulus of other economic value creation?
- What is the **societal impact of international cultural cooperation**?

This study focuses on the import and export of arts and cultural activities, divided across twelve subsectors.

In scope

This study focuses on international cultural cooperation **for The Netherlands**¹



Activities

This study focuses on the import and export of arts and cultural activities, divided across 12 subsectors. The subsectors are:

- Architecture
- Visual arts
- Design
- Digital culture
- Sustainability
- Heritage
- Film
- Art & science
- Literature
- Music
- Education
- Theatre, dance & performance.



Financial Flows

The study focuses on public and private funds that finance international cultural cooperation. These include:

- Rijkscultuurfondsen:
 - Nederlands Filmfonds
 - Fonds Podiumkunsten
 - Mondriaan fonds
 - Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie
 - Nederlandse Letterenfonds
 - Fonds voor Cultuurparticipatie
 - Other state funds available for implementing international cultural policy.²
- (Public-) Private funds: Prins Claus Fund, stichting DOEN and European Culture Foundation



Data period

Waar mogelijk is gebruik gemaakt van data uit 2024 (meest recente volledige jaar)

In enkele gevallen is gebruik gemaakt van data uit 2022 of 2023, wat onder dezelfde beleidsperiode valt (2021-2024)

Out of scope

Other media, entertainment

- Broadcasters(nationaal and local)
- Advertising
- Entertainment, clubs, restaurants

Cultural heritage management

- Management of monuments
- Archives
- Archaeology

Libraries

Funding coming from **municipal funds and foreign embassies** in the Netherlands.

1. And thus not on international cultural cooperation between other countries

2. Including the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, supporting institutions and cultural organisations, Dutch representation abroad and budget for events and support, excluding the National Archives.

“At bottom,
internationalisation
is essential to
maintain the quality
of the field. In a
small country like
the Netherlands, you
need that context in
order to remain
relevant.”

Creative Industries Fund NL



1. Facts & figures

- 2. Economic value
- 3. Societal impact

1. Facts & figures

More than a quarter of Dutch culture is exported.



The Netherlands **produces ~€23 billion** worth of art and culture.

- **27% of the production** of art and culture in the Netherlands is **exported** to other countries (€6.0 billion).

Export



The export of Dutch art and culture is large, of a diverse nature, and relatively concentrated in certain countries, cities and sub-sectors.

- **Music is the sub-sector that exports most** based on the number of activities (47% of the total) and the value of the export (22% of the total); the top 3 based on activities is completed by Theatre, Dance & Performance (15%) and Film (14%), the top 3 based on export value is completed by Design (16%) and Theatre, Dance & Performance (15%)
- **Sub-sectors show considerable differences** in the extent to which they export art and culture consumption
 - Half of the sub-sectors (Digital Culture, Film, Design, Music, Literature and Theatre, Dance & Performance) export more than 25% of their production of art and culture to countries abroad
- **Nearly 70% of the total export** of Dutch art and cultural activities went to **the top 10 countries** in 2024, with Germany, the United States and Belgium forming the top 3, with approximately 20% of the total export concentrated in the top 10 cities
- **The Amsterdam cultural and creative sector** shows a comparatively strong international orientation (compared to the rest of the Netherlands) and **accounts for more than half of the art and cultural activities from the Netherlands**

Import



The **import of international art and culture** is of diverse nature, with notable differences in the measure of import per sub-sector

- **Of all the art imported to the Netherlands, the share of Visual Art dominates** with 31% of the total, followed by Film (24%) and Theatre, Dance & Performance (16%)
- Of all the Film, Digital Culture, Visual Art and Design in the Netherlands, **more than half is imported**

Facts & figures

Tourism



Art and culture fulfil an important role for international tourists in the Netherlands *and* for Dutch tourists abroad, with culture being a considerable factor when booking and arranging a holiday

- Research from Amsterdam reveals that **35% of the tourists cite 'art and culture' as the main reason** for their visit
 - International tourists account for **the majority of museum visits in major museums** in Amsterdam. In large art museums such as the Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum, international tourists account for 63% and 80% of the visits, respectively
-

Students



Almost half of the students in art education programmes are from abroad, with more than 70% of the students coming from the top-15 countries

Funding



In 2024, €22.5 million of the national budget was earmarked for international cultural cooperation (2.7% of the total national budget for arts and culture)



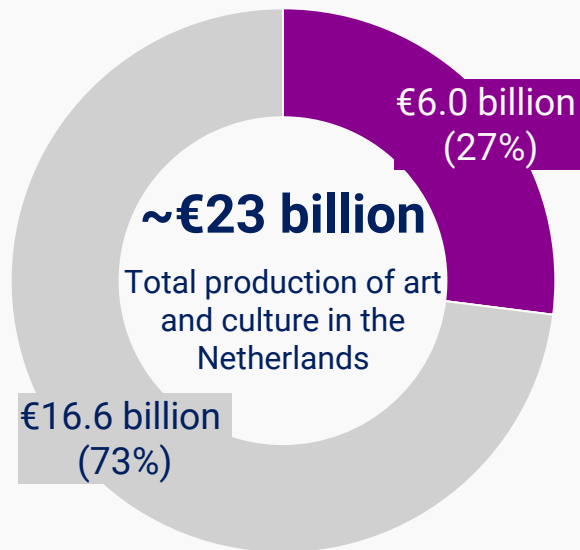
The Netherlands is an international cultural country

■ Export of art and culture abroad

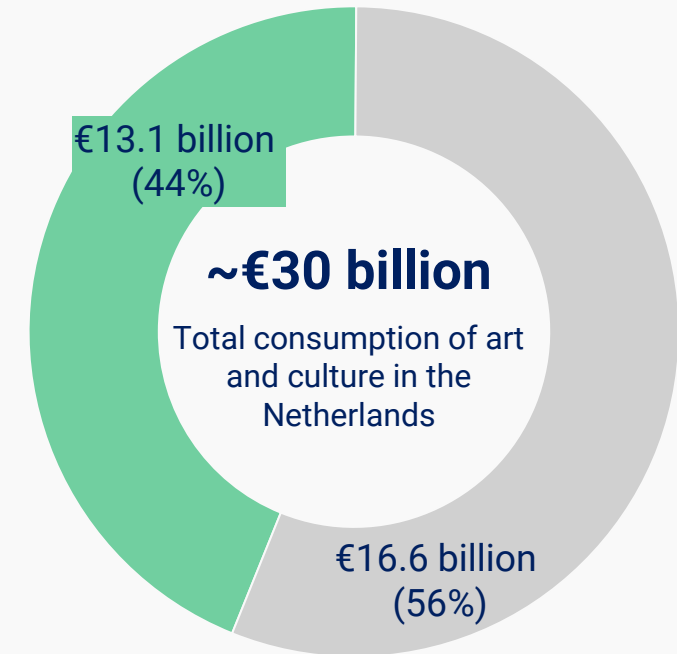
■ Import of foreign art and culture

■ Domestic production for domestic use

Total domestic production of art and culture¹, 2022, € billion



Total domestic consumption of art and culture, 2022, € billion



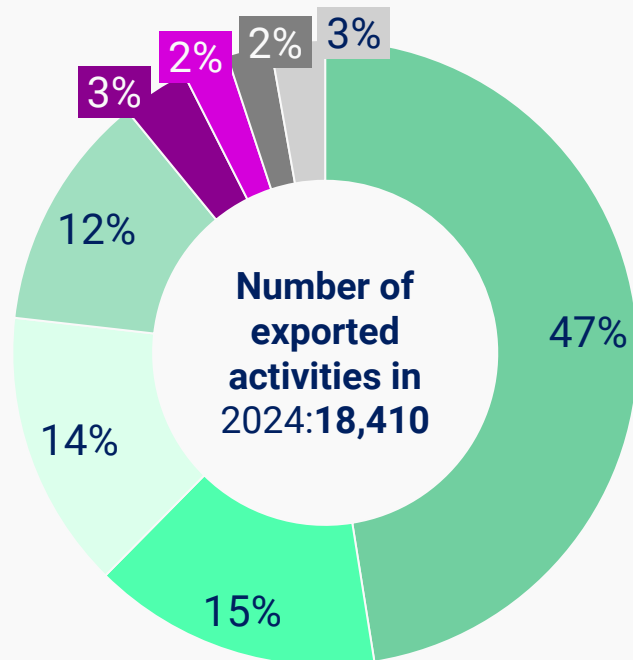
1. Excluding re-exportation. Re-exportation refers to goods imported into the Netherlands and then exported unchanged to other countries. Since these products are not produced in the Netherlands, they are not included in this analysis of domestic production and of the added value of art and culture.

Export | Top disciplines

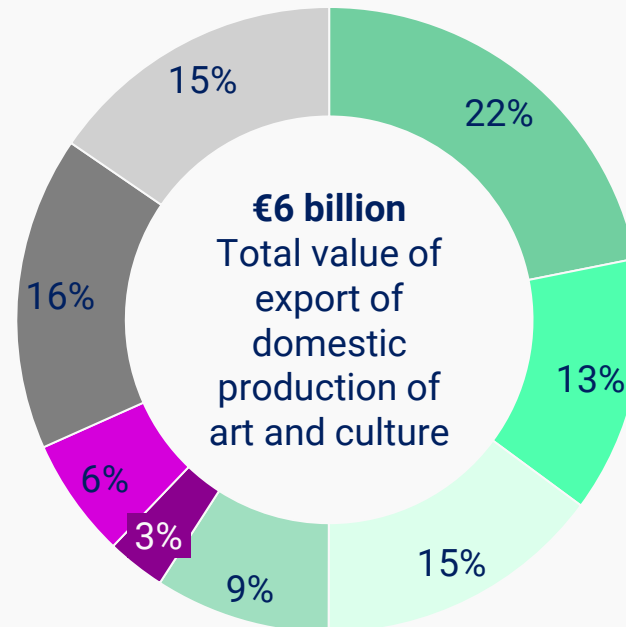


■ Music ■ Theatre, Dance & Performance ■ Film ■ Visual arts ■ Heritage ■ Literature ■ Design ■ Other¹

Exported art and cultural activities, 2024, % of total export



Value of exported art and cultural activities², 2022, % of total export



Main insights



Based on the number of activities, Music forms the largest sub-sector (47% of the total), followed by Theatre, Dance & Performance (15%) and Film (14%). Also **based on value, Music is the largest** (22% of the total), followed by Design (16%) and Theatre, Dance & Performance (15%)

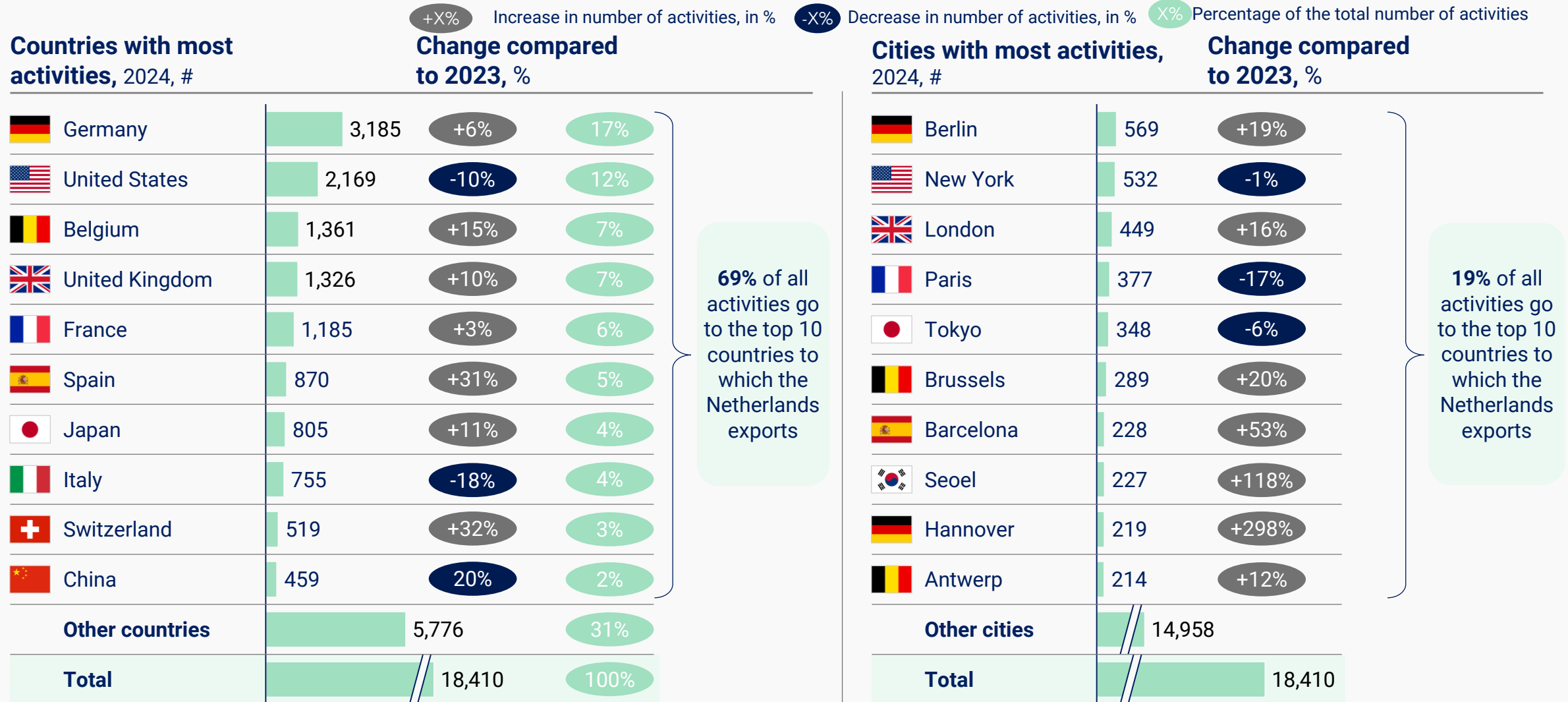


The five smallest sub-sectors account for **<3% of the activities, but contribute 15% of the value¹**, with Digital Culture accounting for 13% of the value (the difference might be due to digital products such as games, which data are not included in the activities data)

1. Sub-sectors of Digital Culture, Education, Art & Science, Architecture, and Sustainability

2. Based on export value (CBS), including products and activities

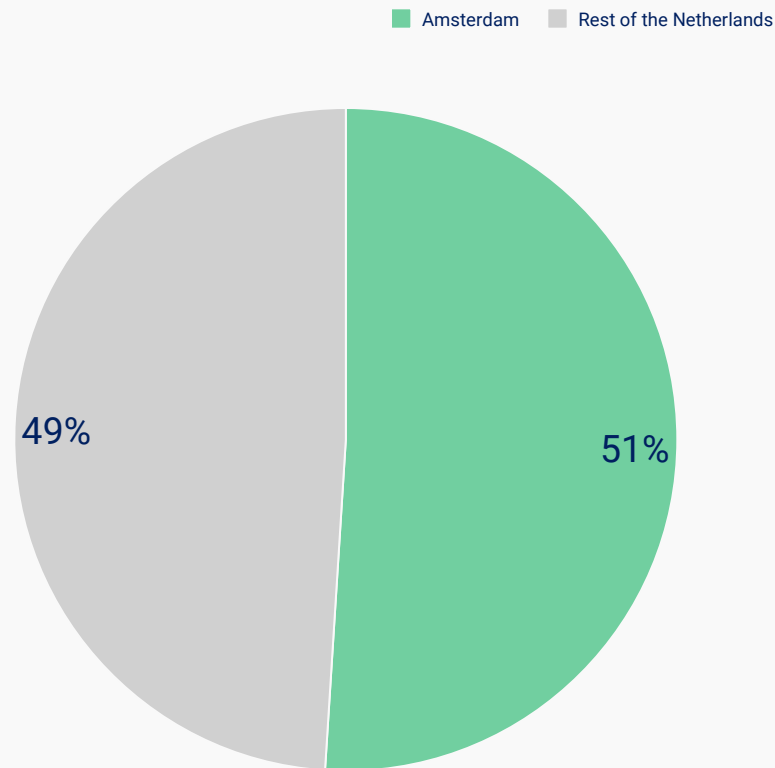
Export | Top countries and cities



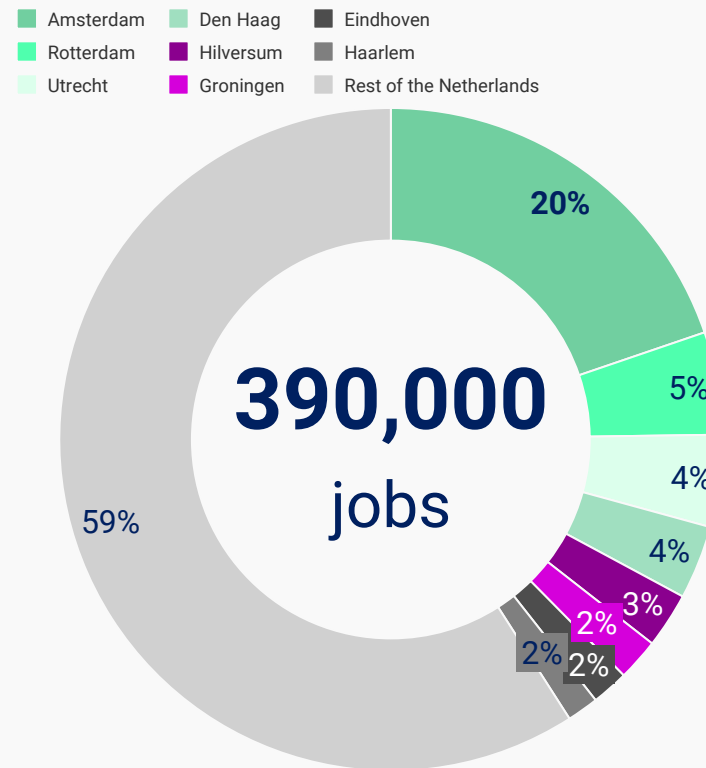
Export | Amsterdam international city of culture



Proportion of Amsterdam-based makers regarding the total volume of international activities by Dutch makers, 2024, % of the total export¹



Cultural and creative sector of Amsterdam compared to the rest of the Nederland, 2022, % (number x 1000), total number of jobs²



Main insights



More than half (51%) of the art and cultural activities originate from, while 20% of the jobs in the cultural and creative sector are found in Amsterdam. This implies that Amsterdam's cultural and creative sector is **relatively strongly oriented internationally** (compared to the rest of the Netherlands)

1. Data for 2022 were comparable to these data for 2024: 49% from Amsterdam and 51% from the rest of the Netherlands

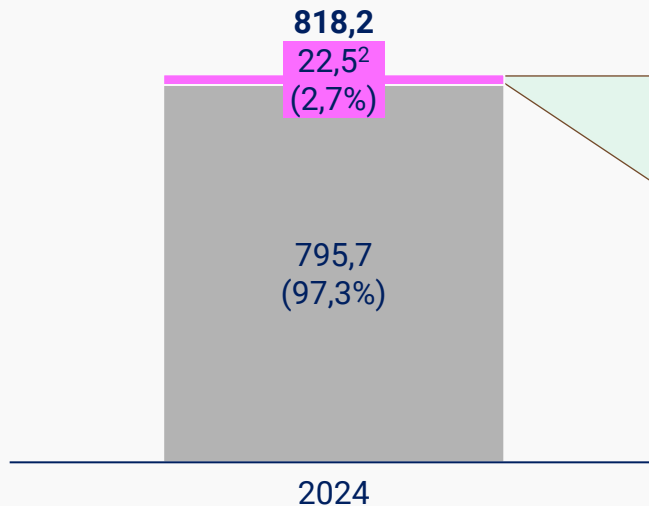
2. LISA-data concerns the total number of jobs

Funding | Of the public funding for arts and culture in 2024, **2.7 %** was earmarked for international cultural cooperation



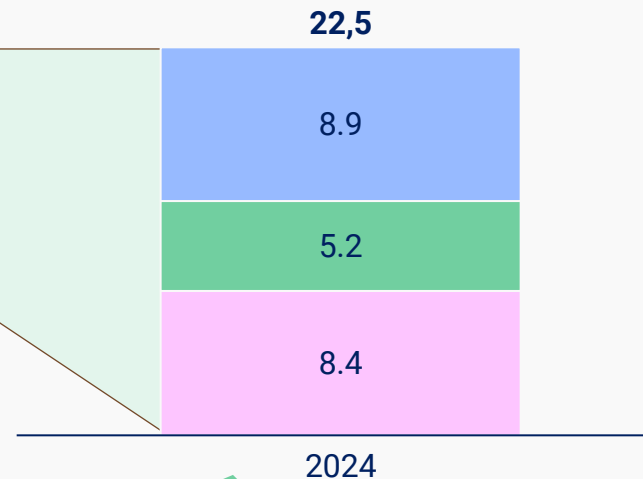
**Total national budget for arts and culture¹,
(€ million % of total), 2024**

■ Other funding for the arts and culture sector
■ Funding available for international cultural cooperation



**Total public funds explicitly earmarked for
international cultural cooperation²,
(€ million), 2024**

■ Foreign Affairs (BZ)
■ Foreign Trade & Development Cooperation (BHOS)
■ Education, Culture & Science (OCW)



Of the € 8.4 million in public funds from OCW, **€ 7.0 million** was channelled through the national culture funds.

Key insights



In 2024, **€ 22.5 million of public funds from BZ, BHOS and OCW was explicitly earmarked** for international cultural exchange.



Relative to the total national budget available for arts and culture, **2.7 % went to international cultural exchange.**




In addition to these earmarked amounts, national culture funds and individual institutions contributed **their own resources** for international cultural exchange.

1. Includes BIS institutions, national funds and heritage/museum institutions with a statutory role; excludes monument care, archives and other matters outside the scope.

2. Based on the international culture policy for 2021–24; actual 2024 expenditure may differ.

Source: OCW Annual Report and the Policy Framework for International Cultural Policy.



“Art and culture have a clear value, both locally and internationally. A strong cultural product contributes to the city’s attractiveness, but also serves as an export product that puts Amsterdam on the map worldwide.”

Rabobank

1. Facts & figures

2. Economic value

3. Societal impact

2. Economic value

International cultural cooperation generates up to 10.6 billion of added value

Production and consumption



- Total domestic **production of art and culture is ~€23 billion**, total Dutch **consumption is ~€30 billion**
 - Of the domestic art and culture production, **€6 billion (27%) is destined for export**
 - Of the total Dutch art and culture consumption, **€13 billion (44%) is imported from abroad**

Added value



- Art and culture generates **€14 billion** of direct added value for the **Dutch GDP, 1.5% of the total Dutch GDP** (this analysis does not include a part of the media, including advertisements and television)
- **International art and cultural cooperation generates €5.8 – 10.6 billion of added value**, excluding stimulative value
 - **€3.6 billion direct value** (value added directly to the Dutch economy by the sector)
 - Of the €6.0 billion export turnover value, **€3.6 billion** is the added value for the Dutch economy
 - **€2.2 - €7.0 billion indirect value** (value created elsewhere in the Dutch economy by the sector)
 - In addition to the €3.6 billion of direct added value, the art and culture created for **export** generates **€2.2 billion of indirect added value** for the Dutch economy
 - **Import** has no direct added value, but does **create up to €4.8 billion of indirect added value** for the Dutch economy through public revenue, business services and hospitality

Economic stimulative value



In addition to the direct and indirect added value, international cultural cooperation has a **potential stimulative value** for the Dutch economy

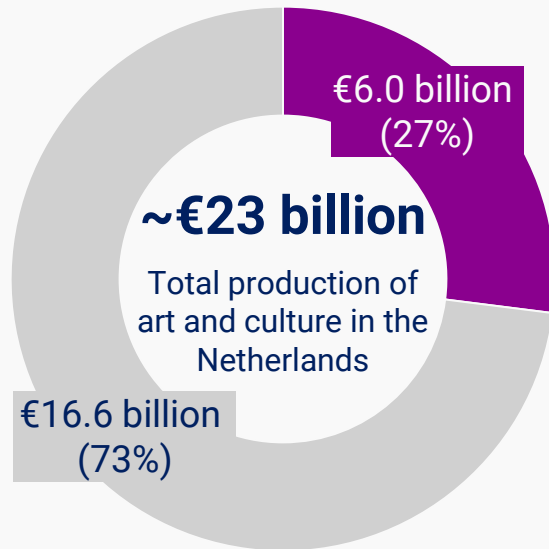
- Cultural cooperation **often goes hand in hand with a relatively high number of tourists**, which in turn contributes to the GDP
- Cultural cooperation **often goes hand in hand with more international trade**

Production and consumption | Total domestic production of art and culture is worth ~€23 billion, total Dutch consumption is worth ~€30 billion



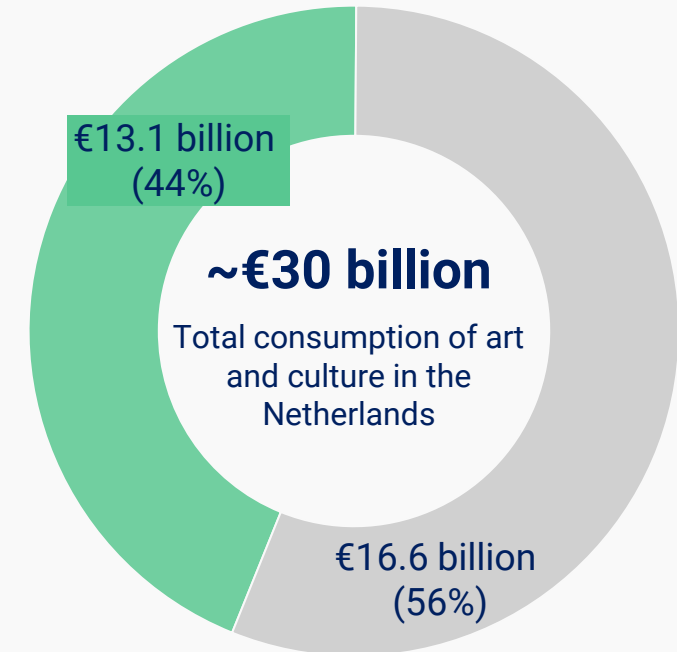
■ Domestic production for domestic use ■ Export of Dutch art and culture to other countries ■ Import of art and culture from other countries

Total Dutch production of art and culture¹, 2022, € billion



€6 billion (27%) of the total domestic production **is exported abroad**, based on the value of art and culture production in 2022

Total Dutch consumption of art and culture, 2022, € billion



€13 billion (44%) of the total Dutch consumption **is imported from other countries**, based on the value of art and culture consumption in 2022

1. Excluding re-export. Re-export refers to goods imported into the Netherlands and then exported unchanged to other countries. Since these products are not produced in the Netherlands, they are not included in this analysis of domestic production and the added value of art and culture.

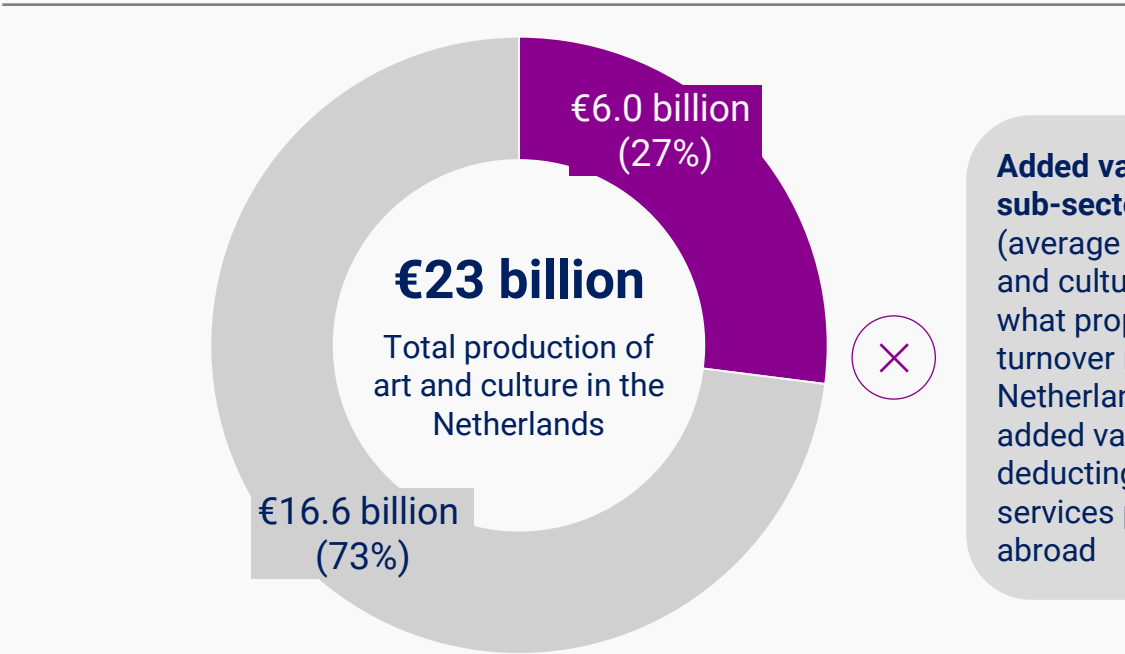


Added value | Art and culture generate €14 billion worth of direct added value

■ Domestic production for Dutch use

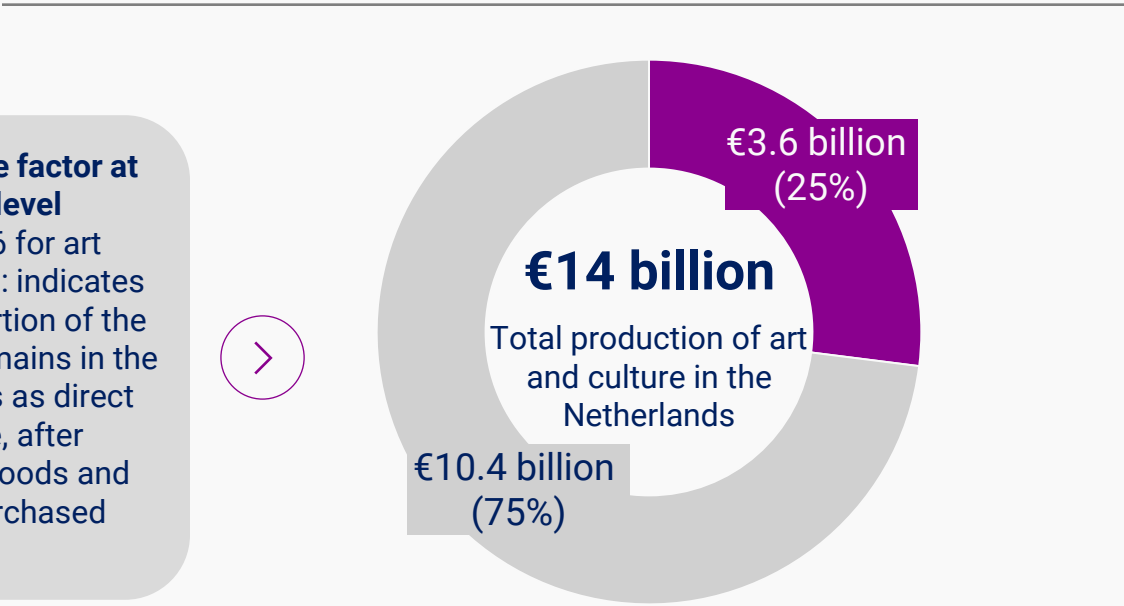
■ Export of Dutch art and culture to other countries

Total domestic production of art and culture¹, 2022, € billion



Added value factor at sub-sector level
(average 0.6 for art and culture): indicates what proportion of the turnover remains in the Netherlands as direct added value, after deducting goods and services purchased abroad

Total direct added value of art and culture, 2022, € billion



€6 billion (27%) of the total domestic production **is exported abroad**, based on the value of art and culture production in 2022

€3.6 billion (25%) of the total direct added value **is exported abroad**, based on the value of art and culture production in 2022

1. Re-export refers to goods imported into the Netherlands and then exported unchanged to other countries. Since these products are not produced in the Netherlands, they are not included in this analysis of the domestic production and added value of art and culture.


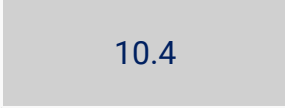









Total added value

■ Export of Dutch art and culture abroad

■ Import of art and culture from abroad

■ Domestic production for Dutch use

	Added value, € billion	Explanation
Total direct added value of art and culture	 14.0	The proportion of the domestic production of art and culture that remains in the Netherlands as added value , after deducting the proportion received by foreign suppliers – Imports have been produced abroad ; the value benefits the economy of the producing country
Total direct added value of domestic production of art and culture for Dutch use	 10.4	The proportion of the total direct added value of art and culture that can be ascribed to the domestic production for Dutch use
Direct added value of export and import of art and culture	 3.6	The proportion of the total direct added value of art and culture that can be ascribed to the domestic production that is exported abroad
Indirect added value of export and import of art and culture	 2.2  To 4.8	The indirect economic impact of the production and import of art and culture in the Netherlands (e.g. through the suppliers)
Stimulative value of export and import of art and culture		Broader expenditures that are stimulated by the import and export of art and culture , but are not strictly required for their production
Total added value of export and import of art and culture	 5.8  To 4.8  More than 5.8-10.6	

Added value | Import



Import does not yield direct added value, but does yield an estimated €4.8 billion of indirect added value

Type of income	Explanation	Added value
Direct	N/A	n/a
Indirect	Public revenue	Up to €4.8 billion ~0-37% of the total import value (based on the ratio between the indirect value of art and culture export and the total export value of art and culture ¹)
	Business services	
	Cultural hospitality & retail	

1. Export of art and culture generates an indirect added value of ~37% of the export value (€2.2 million of indirect value versus €6.0 million of export value), applied to an import value of €13 billion

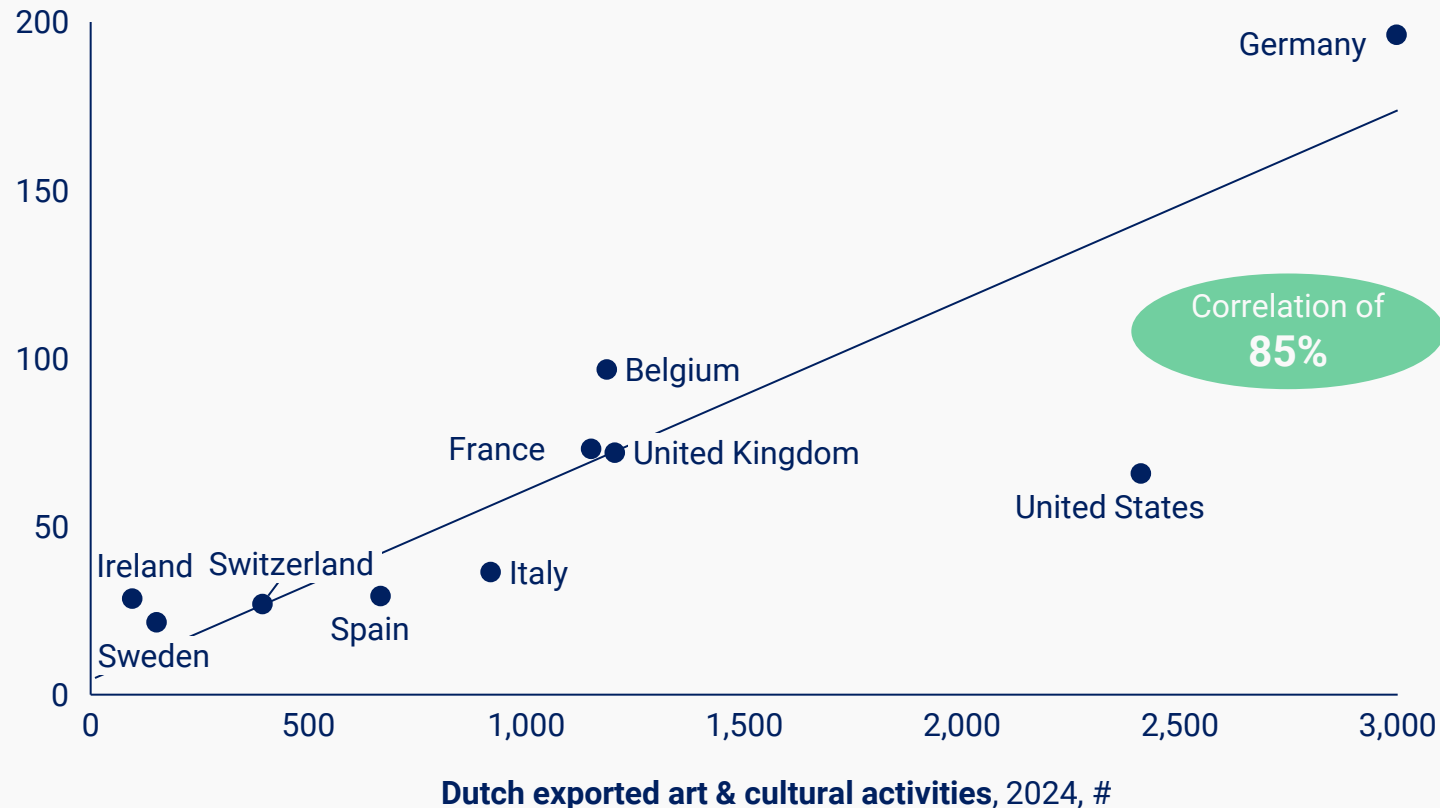
Economic stimulative value | Cultural cooperation often goes hand in hand with more international trade



Correlation between the export of art and cultural activities and the total export of goods & services

Top 10 export partners of the Netherlands versus the volume of corresponding art and cultural activities exported by the Netherlands

Dutch export of services and goods, 2023, € billion



Source: DutchCulture (2024), CBS (Nederland Handelsland 2023)

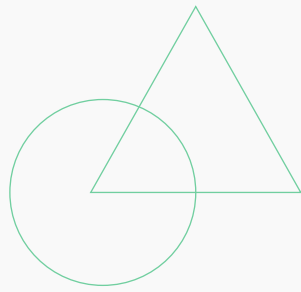
What do organisations and institutes say

RIJKS MUSEUM

*"We regularly organise travelling exhibitions...
Often we combine these with trade missions:
Rembrandt is a good conversation starter in Shanghai"*



*"**The Netherlands plays a pioneering role in the creative industry**, especially in design disciplines and in the way we contribute to tackling societal challenges. International cooperation is an opportunity to demonstrate our approach, **and it increases market opportunities for businesses**"*



"We deliberately chose to develop an international profile. We perform abroad, we see what's happening internationally, and you want to bring makers over here. This brings new perspectives and it inspires the makers and the audience."

International Theater Amsterdam

1. Facts & figures
2. Economic value
- 3. Societal impact**

3. Societal impact/value

International cultural cooperation creates demonstrable value (artistic, societal, diplomatic), confirmed by **UNESCO, the European Union, WHO** and Dutch organisations

Artistic value



- International cultural cooperation **strengthens the position** of Dutch artistic disciplines through **exposure and profiling** abroad
- International makers based in the Netherlands **contribute to artists and organisations** through artistic innovation and new perspectives, thereby **diversifying cultural offerings**
- For many Dutch organisations, international cultural cooperation is **inseparably linked to** their art form or identity

Societal value



- International cultural cooperation contributes socially at both individual and societal levels, showing demonstrable effects **within the Netherlands and abroad**
- At an individual level, **active cultural participation** contributes to a sense of meaning, happiness, mental well-being, and cognitive skills
- At a societal level, cultural participation fosters **social cohesion**, mutual understanding, and civic engagement
- Furthermore, international cultural cooperation plays an important role in putting **cross-border issues** such as sustainability, gender equality and LGBTI+ rights on the agenda

Diplomatic and relational value



- In the central government's ICB 2025-2028, culture is explicitly recognised as a **soft power** and used to strengthen bilateral relations and open dialogues.

Artistic value | International cultural cooperation enriches the cultural sector through knowledge exchange, innovation, and a more diverse cultural programming



Artistic value

According to **studies and reports** ...

Value for makers and organisations, as cultural cooperation contributes to:

- Artistic innovation
- The development of makers and organisations
- Intrinsic value for organisations

Strengthens artistic innovation and enriches the artistic sector as the collaboration with other cultures fosters new ideas, dialogue and perspectives: study shows that it stimulates innovation in art discipline development, public reach, value creation, and new organisational models [1, 2, 3]

Strengthens the development of makers and organisations by exchanging knowledge through co-production, co-creation and intercultural communication; the gained skills are brought back to the home country and contribute to its own sector as a whole [1, 2, 4, 5]

Preserves the intrinsic value of organisations for who international cooperation is a matter of course: e.g., when it concerns a cross-border art discipline, and when cooperation with other cultures is embedded in the organisation's DNA [2]

Value for the entire sector, as cultural cooperation contributes to:

- International recognition
- A more diverse and extensive cultural programming

Increases international artistic recognition as international audiences visit festivals and venues, and as makers and institutions boost their profiles abroad at the main venues, biennials and festivals. This increases the (global) exposure of a country's cultural and artistic quality [1, 4, 6]

Enriches the variety and programming of arts and cultural activities as foreign productions are staged at domestic venues and festivals, and because co-creation and co-production with international partners lead to a more diverse cultural programming [5, 6, 7]

Societal value | Studies show that international cultural cooperation has a positive impact on people's health, well-being, and social cohesion



Social and societal value

According to **studies and reports** ...

Value for the individual, as cultural cooperation contributes to:

- Health & well-being
- Cognitive skills
- Increased number of enrolments in higher education

Contributes to individual well-being: it promotes a sense of meaning in the long term and increases happiness and mental well-being in the short term; with demonstrated effects for both children and adults [1, 2, 3]

Strengthens cognitive skills: a UK study showed that young people who were actively involved in art scored 16-19% higher on non-verbal IQ, numeracy and spatial understanding, and 10-17% higher on skills like communication; in addition, artistic engagement stimulates curiosity, reflection, and self-confidence [1, 2, 3, 4]

Contributes to **better school performance and more enrolments in higher education for young people from lower socio-economic groups**; this effect is enhanced when the programming is culturally diverse, as people are more likely to participate in art that reflects their own backgrounds [6, 7]

Value for society, as cultural cooperation contributes to:

- Social cohesion
- Social Responsibility
- Putting socially relevant issues on the agenda

Promotes social cohesion by breaking stereotypes and increasing mutual understanding. For example: an Italian study carried out across 106 provinces showed that a 1% increase in cultural participation resulted in 20% fewer hate crimes [2, 5, 8]

Increase of civic participation and engagement: a US study amongst 12,000 students showed that young people in arts programmes were 21% more likely to volunteer, vote, and get engaged in school and community policies; a European survey amongst 30,000 households showed that adults involved in culture were 6-10% more likely to do volunteer work [1, 2, 6, 9]

Puts social issues on the table and increases their exposure by reaching a wider audience; in addition, international cooperation enables creators to address cross-border issues, such as the climate crisis [2, 10]

Diplomatic and relational value

International cultural cooperation is an important strategic tool for building international connections



Diplomatic and relationship value

According to **studies and reports** . . .

Strengthens existing relationships, as

cultural cooperation contributes to promoting:

- Bilateral relations
- Multilateral networks
- Public diplomacy

It deepens existing bilateral relationships by fostering trust and structural cooperation; publications by the EU and UNESCO show that cultural diplomacy strengthens sustainable dialogue and equal partnerships [1, 2, 3]

It supports multilateral networks and coalitions by structuring cooperation between countries – both within and outside the EU: in 2024, 21 international projects were co-funded by EUNIC, connecting over 140 clusters worldwide; in 2021-2022, 291 collaborative projects were funded via Creative Europe across 38 EU and non-EU countries [3, 4, 5, 12]

It contributes to public diplomacy by influencing the image that countries have worldwide; study shows that cultural programmes improve foreign policy perceptions; examples include the UK's 'Shakespeare Lives' campaign, reaching millions of people, and the Louvre Abu Dhabi [3, 6, 7, 8]

Strengthens existing relationships, as


cultural cooperation contributes to promoting:

- New relationships
- Dialogue in a tense context
- Knowledge, capabilities, and networks

It builds new relationships in countries where ties are still tender; as an example: since 2022, the Netherlands added 2 more African countries to the 3 with which it is already engaged in cultural diplomacy. They include Nigeria and South Africa, where cooperation around heritage and education is a foundation for broader partnerships [3, 9]

It provides safe, neutral spaces where conventional diplomacy proves to be insufficient: A study carried out by the British Council showed that projects between UK organisations and partners in Palestine and Sudan breached isolation, built up trust, and enabled sustained dialogue [6, 10, 11]

It contributes to knowledge, capacity and network building between other countries and provides (additional) funding where necessary; e.g., the Dutch Africa Strategy included equivalent education and culture programmes for younger generations [6, 9, 10, 13]



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DutchCu|ture
| Dutch platform for
| international cultural cooperation

Commissioned by the City of Amsterdam

✕ City of
✕ Amsterdam
✕



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