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Collaborating across Borders: Music within the Creative Europe Transnational Projects

Abstract: This paper examines how music features in projects funded by the Creative Europe program (2014–2020, subprogram Culture). It takes into account 29 music-including projects, aiming to identify the functions of project-framed musical practices. The methodology involves qualitative analysis of project descriptions and outcomes from the Creative Europe Project Results platform, employing a comparative interpretive approach that links the aesthetic and functional aspects of music. The findings reveal six overlapping types of musical practices within project framing: music as a core cultural activity; as a tool for social emancipation and civil-sector intervention; as an element of cultural networks; as part of an interdisciplinary cultural space; and as cultural heritage. The paper pays particular attention to the concept of the de-articulation of music, which pertains to its relational and participatory potential within the broader cultural domain. A tension between promoting music as an independent creative sector and acknowledging its broader social functions has been spotted as a defining aspect of the European Union cultural policy toward music.

Keywords: Creative Europe program (2014–2020); culture and creative sectors; project-framed music practices; de-articulation of music.

Theoretical background

The Creative Europe program is a major European Union (EU) initiative that supports the cultural and creative sectors. It was officially launched in 2014 and has been running in two cycles: 2014–2020 and 2021–2027. The program works alongside national policies to promote European cultural values through cross-border cooperation.¹ It is based on Article 167 (culture) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as well as Articles 173 (industry) and 166 (vocational training), which connect culture with industrial policy and skills development.² The program was established by merging the former Culture and MEDIA initiatives to strengthen

¹ The first cycle of Creative Europe (2014–2020) accounted for about 0.15% of the total EU budget. Cf. Giuliana Ciancio, “The Creative Europe Programme – a Conversation with Karel Bartak,” in *Be SpectACTive! Challenging Participation in Performing Arts*, ed. Lluís Bonet, Giada Calvano, Luisella Carnelli, Félix Dupin-Meynard, and Emmanuel Négrier (Editoria Spettacolo, 2018), 34.

² Anna Kandyla, “The Creative Europe Programme: Policy-Making Dynamics and Outcomes,” in *Cultural Governance and the European Union. Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics*, ed. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 49–50.

transnational collaboration and enhance the sectors' global competitiveness.³ These sectors include activities rooted in cultural or artistic expressions, which, as of 2021, have been acknowledged as “one of the EU’s 14 key industrial ecosystems.”⁴

Projects within the Creative Europe program can offer valuable insights into contemporary cross-border collaboration, enabling us to understand how specific creative practices and their aesthetic outcomes are transnationally coordinated under EU policy. Certain scholars emphasize transnational cooperation as one of the program’s most important aspects. Claske Vos notes that EU cultural policy has shifted from the representative model of the “staging of Europe”—which is based on shared heritage and identity—to a participatory model in which European belonging is constructed through project participation, transnational cooperation, and cultural exchange.⁵ Creative Europe exemplifies this second approach. While Bestvina Bukvić, Bjelić, and Šain argue that “European added value is ensured by the transnational nature of actions and activities” rather than solely by staging local creative potential, Borrione, Friel, and Miglietta focus on process innovations—such as new working methods, learning approaches, knowledge sharing, and collaboration—as well as the development of long-term partnerships, especially among micro and small cultural organizations.⁶ These are considered the program’s most impactful effects and key mechanisms. Previous policy studies have pointed to a shift away from institution-centered approaches toward network-based structures and greater professional connectivity.⁷ Transnationality is, therefore, viewed not only in logistical terms but also as a value in itself, as a means of European integration, and as a way to shape the European cultural added value.

Recent research highlights a shift in the European Union cultural policy from identity-focused to a creativity-driven growth strategy with the Creative Europe program.⁸ In this “creativity frame”, cultural and creative industries are seen as vital players

³ “Previous Programmes,” Culture and Creativity, European Commission, last updated November 4, 2021, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/resources/creative-europe-previous-programmes>; “Cultural and Creative Sectors,” Culture and Creativity, European Commission, last updated September 2, 2024, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-and-creative-sectors/cultural-and-creative-sectors>.

⁴ IDEA Consult, imec-SMIT-VUB, KUL-CiTiP, Amann Sylvia, and Heinsius Joost, *Research for CULT Committee – EU Culture and Creative Sectors Policy – Overview and Future Perspectives* (Brussels, 2024), 16.

⁵ Claske Vos, “Moving in and out of the European Cultural Space. Southeast European Encounters with the Creative Europe Programme,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 25, no. 2 (2022): 743–44.

⁶ Paola Borrione, Martha Friel, and Angelo Miglietta, “Unlocking Innovative Potential: Examining the Contributions of Creative Europe to the Italian Cultural and Audio-visual Sectors,” *Il Capitale Culturale. Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage* 30 (2024): 465, 474.

⁷ Andreas Wiesand in co-operation with Michael Söndermann, “The “Creative Sector” – an Engine for Diversity, Growth and Jobs in Europe. An overview of Research Findings and Debates Prepared for the European Cultural Foundation,” European Cultural Foundation, 2005, <https://culturalfoundation.eu/stories/the-creative-sector-an-engine-for-diversity-growth-and-jobs-in-europe/>.

⁸ Annabelle Littoz-Monnet, “Encapsulating EU Cultural Policy into the EU’s Growth and Competitiveness Agenda: Explaining the Success of a Paradigmatic Shift in Brussels,” in *Cultural Governance and the European Union*, ed. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou (Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks, 2015), 25–36; Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, “Introduction,” in *Cultural Governance and the European Union*, ed. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou (Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks, 2015), 1–4.

in tackling key European societal issues such as social cohesion and economic resilience.⁹ Creativity is viewed as a catalyst for innovation, experimentation, and smart growth. Therefore, approaching culture in its instrumental role has been emphasized as another key feature of the program. Dâmaso and Murray note that the EU deliberately refrains from explicitly defining culture in its strategic documents, thereby maintaining an open conceptual framework. This allows culture to be utilized across various political spheres.¹⁰ Primorac, Obuljen Koržinek, and Uzelac observe that over the past 30 years, the role of culture in EU politics has shifted from symbolic and identity-related aspects to an instrumental, economic focus, in which culture increasingly serves the objectives of growth, competitiveness, and employment.¹¹ “Creative Europe thus represents a new phase in the ongoing process of the instrumentalization of culture.”¹² Bruell describes this as the “economic style” of the program, where “culture is clearly framed as not existing apart from the orientation towards markets.”¹³ Economic considerations and competitiveness overshadow other aspects, particularly by disregarding the cultural sector’s intricate ecosystem.¹⁴ Behr, Brennan, and Cloonan assert that intrinsic value pertains to the inherent worth of artistic practices, while instrumental value pertains to the social, economic, or political benefits that cultural activities confer. The key question in arts funding is not just whether culture has measurable external impacts, but also why it holds value and merits public support in the first place.¹⁵

In this context, creative sectors, such as music, are adapting to address broader social challenges related to competitiveness, networking, the digital transition, and sustainability. Recent EU policy reviews emphasize that culture within the EU governance increasingly functions as a cross-cutting tool for social cohesion, innovation, and transformation, rather than as a purely independent artistic domain.¹⁶

⁹ Christer Gustafsson, and Elisabetta Lazzaro, “The Innovative Response of Cultural and Creative Industries to Major European Societal Challenges: Toward a Knowledge and Competence Base,” *Sustainability* 13, 23, 13267 (2021): 1–20.

¹⁰ Mafalda Dâmaso and Andrew Murray, “The EU’s Dualistic Regime of Cultural Diversity Management. The Concept of Culture in the Creative Europe Program (2014–2019; 2021–2027) and in the Strategy for International Cultural Relations (2016–),” *Journal of Cultural Management and Cultural Policy* 1 (2021): 180–83.

¹¹ Jaka Primorac, Nina Obuljen Koržinek, and Aleksandra Uzelac, “The Place and Role of Culture in the EU Agenda. Policy Implications of the Culture Sub-programme of the Creative Europe Programme,” *Medijska istraživanja: znanstveno-stručni časopis za novinarstvo i medije* 23m no. 1 (2017): 6.

¹² Sonja Hamhuis, “Contemplating a Sector-specific Approach to Music,” in “Music Moves Europe: Perspectives on the EU’s New Strategic Initiative for Music,” (Master thesis, Utrecht University, 2020), 25, <https://studenttheses.uu.nl/handle/20.500.12932/37663>.

¹³ Cornelia Bruell, *Creative Europe 2014–2020: A New Programme – A New Cultural Policy as Well?*, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e. V. (ifa, Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations, 2013), 7, 22, <https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/54757>.

¹⁴ Primorac, Obuljen Koržinek, and Uzelac, “The Place and Role of Culture in the EU Agenda,” 12–14; Bruell, *Creative Europe 2014–2020*.

¹⁵ Adam Behr, Matt Brennan, and Martin Cloonan, “Cultural Value and Cultural Policy: Some Evidence from the World of Live Music,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 22, 3 (2014): 405.

¹⁶ IDEA Consult, imec-SMIT-VUB, KUL-CiTiP, Sylvia, and Joost, “Research for CULT Committee – EU Culture and Creative Sectors Policy – Overview and Future Perspectives,” 26–27, 88–90.

Bruell highlights that a key change from the previous Culture program (2007–2013) is the shift in terminology from “cultural sector” to “cultural and creative sectors”, reflecting a focus on quantification, measurability, and market-based evaluation of cultural value.¹⁷ Nonetheless, creative sectors also produce “non-economic values”, such as “social cohesion, the inclusion of marginalized groups, and the development of diverse cultural identities.”¹⁸ Regarding the initial cycle of the program and the Culture sub-program, some scholars note that these sectors operated within an implicit cultural policy framework, lacked a clearly defined sectoral strategy,¹⁹ and served as platforms for experimenting with new forms of cultural cooperation, social relations, and coexistence.²⁰

Within the Creative Europe program, music was recognized as “an important pillar of European culture” because it “probably reaches the largest audience among the cultural and creative sectors” and “has the power to promote cultural diversity, inclusion and creativity. [...] More than 130 music projects received EU funding during the programming period 2014–2020 [...] addressing a wide variety of music genres (opera, jazz, classical, pop & rock, electronic, traditional, contemporary music, music for youth, etc.) and a number of common cross-cutting themes (for example gender balance, environmental sustainability or cultural heritage).”²¹ However, the literature suggests that the program did not address the sector’s specific structural needs, particularly regarding digital distribution, visibility, and fair pay for creators and performers.²² In this context, the Music Moves Europe framework emerged as an effort to better integrate music into the 2021–2027 cycle of Creative Europe as a distinct sector of cultural and creative industries. Music Moves Europe is a comprehensive initiative designed to support the green transition and environmental sustainability in the EU’s music sector, while also aiming to develop a cohesive EU music policy.²³ From 2014 to 2020, the Creative Europe program primarily treated music as a flexible cultural

¹⁷ Bruell, *Creative Europe 2014–2020*, 22.

¹⁸ Ivana Bestvina Bukvić, Kristina Bjelić and Marija Šain, “Uspješnost programa Europske unije u poticanju i financiranju kulturnog i kreativnog sektora u Republici Hrvatskoj,” *Pravni vjesnik* 36, no. 3–4 (2020): 211. Primorac, Obuljen Koržinek, and Uzelac, “The Place and Role of Culture in the EU Agenda,” 7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰ See more on this in: Giuliana Ciancio, “Between Cultural Participation, Trust and Policy Perspectives: the Case of the Creative Europe Programme. Experimenting Success and Failures of Co-imaginative Politics,” In *Cultural Policies in Europe: A Participatory Turn?*, ed. Félix Dupin-Meynard & Emmanuel Négrier (Éditions de l’Attribut, 2020), 55–68.

²¹ European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Creative Europe Culture 2014–2020, Music Projects* (Publications Office of the European Union, 2021), 6.

²² Hamhuis, “Contemplating a Sector-specific Approach to Music,” in “Music Moves Europe: Perspectives on the EU’s New Strategic Initiative for Music,” 2020, 28–30.

²³ “Creative Europe: New Call for the Greening of the Music Sector,” Culture and Creativity, European Commission, published December 3, 2024, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/news/creative-europe-new-call-for-the-greening-of-the-music-sector>; “Music Moves Europe,” Culture and Creativity, European Commission, published June 23, 2022, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-and-creative-sectors/music/music-moves-europe>.

resource. In the current cycle, however, the Music Moves Europe treats music as a distinct sector with tailored regulations for market distribution. Although this is the first dedicated EU music policy, it overlooks the sector's internal diversity, perceiving music as a uniform industry with shared interests.²⁴ This approach also reflects a culture-instrumentalization strategy intended to balance artistic, social, and economic values, though economic considerations often predominate.

Within this policy environment, music is increasingly viewed as a versatile element within larger cultural, social, and economic strategies. Among other creative industries, music holds a unique position due to its high mobility, broad audience appeal, and ability to serve as an aesthetic practice, a social tool, and an economic asset simultaneously. Consequently, its disciplinary boundaries become more fluid when involved in project-based formats. Instead of being defined mainly by aesthetic standards, music is often characterized by its functions, usage contexts, and relational impacts. This raises the question of whether, within the Creative Europe, music remains a unified creative sector or shifts into a collection of functional practices aligned with policy goals.

Aim

This research builds on the idea that, within the EU cultural policies, music is seen as one of the creative practices within a broader cultural sector. The goal is to categorize the musical practices in the Creative Europe projects, especially in the Culture subprogram (2014–2020). Studying music here is important because it shows how music operates when linked to the EU policy aims. The focus on music stems mainly from my background as a teacher in higher music education. Unlike previous studies that examined policy documents, this research mainly analyzes the project's discursive outputs, which serve as the main objects of study. While the paper primarily develops an analytical mapping of project-based musical practices, it also aims to critically reflect on the broader implications of these practices—particularly the shift from music as an autonomous practice toward music as a functional cultural resource within the EU policy frameworks. Therefore, the term 'de-articulation' is introduced to describe the reconfiguration of music within policy-driven frameworks. It can be understood as a specific mechanism through which this policy orientation operates: music becomes less defined by its internal aesthetic criteria and more by its capacity to fulfill external social, political, and economic functions.

²⁴ Hamhuis, "Contemplating a Sector-specific Approach to Music," in "Music Moves Europe: Perspectives on the EU's New Strategic Initiative for Music," 2020, 92.

Method

The research involves a qualitative comparative analysis of projects funded by the Creative Europe program (2014–2020). The sample includes project descriptions and outcomes accessible via the official Creative Europe Project Results platform.²⁵ Projects were selected based on criteria requiring music to be part of the activities and ensuring that descriptions of actions and objectives were available, thereby facilitating consistent comparison. A total of 67 music-related projects were identified, with funding starting in 2015, 2016, and 2017. Of these, 29 projects, all funded in 2017, were chosen. The year 2017 was selected not only because it contained the highest concentration of music-related projects, but also because it represented a mature phase of the program, in which its operational and policy logic had already stabilized. Focusing on a single funding year thus ensures analytical consistency and comparability across projects. All selected projects fall under the sub-program Culture, comprising 25 cooperation projects and 4 network projects.

The analytical framework is divided into key categories to facilitate a comparative analysis of all 29 projects and their music, despite their varied content and organizational structures. These categories include: roles assigned to music within the projects (such as central creative practice, interdisciplinary element, or social function), musical genres (classical, contemporary, popular, traditional, experimental), media and formats used for music production and circulation (festivals, live performances, digital platforms, workshops, educational programs), target audiences (youth, children, professionals, marginalized groups, general public), transnational components (artists' mobility, cross-border cooperation and circulation of musical content and knowledge), and the aesthetic regimes of music that the projects endorse (relational, participatory, interdisciplinary aesthetics). Each project is first outlined both descriptively and analytically within these six categories. Subsequently, a comparative analysis is developed iteratively, with continuous mutual comparison of project descriptions within the sample. This process reveals repetitions, differences, and particularities in the projects' musical practices. In the final phase, observations are summarized, thematic patterns are identified, and projects are grouped by the types of musical practices they exemplify. The typology of functions identified does not aim to be a normative classification but rather a practical analytical framework that helps understand how music functions as a phenomenon within the specific contemporary cultural policy of the EU and project-based modes of cooperation.

²⁵ "Creative Europe Project Results," Culture and Creativity, European Commission, accessed January 8, 2026, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/projects>.

Results

An examination of the research sample reveals that music in transnational cultural projects funded by the Creative Europe program is a heterogeneous cultural phenomenon whose characteristics and functions vary greatly based on project aims and partnership arrangements. Transnational cooperation in the projects studied follows established institutional patterns. Consortia comprise diverse actors from various national backgrounds, reflecting differences in institutional capacity and their positions within the European cultural landscape. Cooperation is mainly centered around cultural hubs in Western and Northern Europe. The consortium's geographic structure, therefore, mirrors the hierarchical nature of transnational collaboration. Institutions from Western and Northern Europe—particularly Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Nordic countries—are often the project leaders and coordinators. Meanwhile, partners from Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe, including countries in the Western Balkans, typically focus on implementing and adapting project activities locally. Additionally, including institutions from outside the EU broadens transnational collaboration, positioning music as a tool for cultural dialogue. Here, cross-border cooperation takes on a political dimension, emphasizing music as a medium for portraying Europe as a shared cultural space beyond its formal borders. Alongside prominent actors such as orchestras, opera houses, universities, festivals, and networks, which already have substantial international visibility, independent cultural organizations, associations, and foundations also play important roles, especially in projects addressing social inclusion, gender equality, and community engagement. Their involvement enhances the diversity of transnational cooperation and introduces work models rooted in local contexts and social responsibility.

This geographical and institutional diversity also reflects the diversification of the musical genres represented, revealing a notable variety. The landscape of musical activities includes classical, contemporary, popular, traditional, experimental, and participatory music, varying in terms of disciplinary autonomy and symbolic meaning. Classical music, in its historical and contemporary forms, remains a stable genre, represented through opera (YOUNG@OPERA, Opera Vision), orchestral music (EU. TERPE), and early music (The Hanseatic Way). Here, music is valued for artistic excellence and a well-defined curatorial approach, yet it is also transformed through digital media, educational programs, participatory models, and social narratives, expanding artistic genres from exclusive concert spaces to broader social and transnational contexts. The second genre group includes jazz and related improvisational and creative practices, seen in educational and participatory projects (KIDS CAN) and within professional networks (Europe Jazz Network). Jazz is used flexibly, often for community work with children, youth, marginalized groups, and audience development. The third group encompasses pop, rock, and electronic music, linked to artist mobility and market development efforts (EXCITE, INES, Keychange, Live Style

Europe). In these projects, genres are fluid, emerging from live scenes and industry ecosystems, aiding transnational circulation and market adaptation while promoting diversity and inclusion, especially regarding gender. Music folklore is less common, exemplified by the Polyphony project. Experimental, digital, and intermedial practices connect music with digital technology and contemporary arts (EASTN-DC, EuroNoize), where genre becomes less about tradition and more about sound, visual art, digital processes, and interactive systems. Some projects do not assign music a fixed genre but use it contextually in socially engaged, participatory efforts (Wom@rts, Voices of Solidarity). Here, genre is intentionally vague, allowing more creative and social freedom, with music manifesting as sound, rhythm, voice, community singing, or improvisation. Lastly, some network and meta-projects (EFA RISE 2, ENC-ATC, Live Style Europe) avoid genre labels altogether, viewing music structurally as part of the wider cultural ecosystem, professional practices, and policies. Overall, the Creative Europe's initiatives do not adhere to a single genre map but operate through multiple regimes. This diversity shows that these transnational projects aim not to standardize the musical landscape but to reconfigure its functions within the contemporary European cultural landscape. A typology of project-framed musical functions can therefore be derived as follows: music as a core cultural activity; as a tool for social emancipation and civil-sector intervention; as an element of cultural networks; as part of an interdisciplinary cultural space; and as cultural heritage. These six functions are often interconnected and frequently overlap across projects. Typically, one or more dominant types of music utilization can be observed in most projects.

Type 1: Music as a core cultural activity

This category includes projects in which music forms the foundation of the structure, guiding goal-setting, shaping activities, defining audiences, and engaging transnational collaborators. Examples include YOUNG@OPERA, Opera Vision, EuroNoize, KIDS CAN, EXCITE – Exchange of International Talent in Europe, Key-change, Swinging Europe, Eu.TERPE – A debut opera for an inclusive Europe, and Polyphony – Collection of the Disappearing European Heritage. Although these projects vary in genre, institutional context, and target audiences, they all share the common feature that music acts as both an organizing principle and a main outcome.

The aim of these projects is to enhance and make existing musical genres such as opera, contemporary popular music, jazz, and the DIY scene more accessible within the shared European context. For instance, the Opera Vision project centers its framework on the digital dissemination of opera as an art form, with partnerships, technology infrastructure, and audiences structured around opera itself. Similarly, KIDS CAN starts with jazz and develops an innovative educational and performance model in which children are not merely spectators but active performers and mediators of musical experience. Most activities focus directly on music creation, performance, and distribution. These include commissioning and producing new works (such as contemporary opera in YOUNG@OPERA), organizing tours and international

performances (Swinging Europe, EuroNoize), developing digital music distribution platforms (Opera Vision), and conducting research, archiving, and presenting musical heritage (Polyphony). The projects produce compositions, operas, concerts, albums, archives, and digital music recordings as primary outputs. Here, music is the primary material and core project outcome.

Projects like these are defined by specific musical genres or practices, such as opera (YOUNG@OPERA, Opera Vision), jazz (KIDS CAN), swing (Swinging Europe), alternative and DIY scenes (EuroNoize), and traditional folklore (Polyphony). In these initiatives, professionals, institutions, and audiences form transnational connections centered on the genre. Nonetheless, the genre is dynamic. There is ongoing tension between adherence to traditional aesthetic norms and their adaptation to contemporary presentation and circulation formats. For instance, the Polyphony project documents traditional Ukrainian vocal expression as an endangered heritage while also showcasing it through current concerts and digital formats. Similarly, opera in YOUNG@OPERA and Opera Vision extends beyond national theaters, incorporating young performers, new narratives, and digital media.

In this project type, transnationality is primarily achieved through the mobility of musical practices, including musicians' travel, international tours, co-productions, joint performances, and cross-border content distribution. For instance, initiatives such as Swinging Europe and EuroNoize emphasize the European music scene as a space of ongoing exchange, while Opera Vision exemplifies transnationality through digital distribution, blurring the line between local performances and a global audience. Consequently, this redefines music as a key medium through which Europe's cultural space expresses itself as a shared, transnational entity.

Several projects in this group, such as EXCITE, INES, Keychange, and Live Style Europe, clearly exemplify the view that music is a creative industry sector that needs infrastructure and a market foundation. These projects aim to strengthen the sector's capacity, professionalize participants, and boost international visibility. They emphasize work, mobility, sustainability, and the need to address structural inequalities within the industry. Music is seen as circulating through showcases, festivals, platforms, databases, mentoring, and professional networks. The genre-neutral approach of these projects serves an important purpose: it promotes broad inclusion within the European music ecosystem and supports transnational mobility for performers and professionals. EXCITE and INES particularly demonstrate this through their showcase festivals and talent exchanges, viewing musical performance as a form of professional presentation and a gateway to international markets. Keychange extends this idea further by explicitly framing music as a tool for political action. It focuses on gender equality and inclusion, using musical practice to challenge and alter structural issues in the music industry. Live Style Europe shifts attention even more toward the infrastructure of live music, moving away from an individual artistic work towards a performative practice connected to urban spaces, audiences, and local cultural policies. Consequently, these projects explore the conditions necessary for music to be a

sustainable profession, reaffirming its role as a public good and economic sector. In these initiatives, aesthetics and new creative outputs are secondary to organizational and market considerations.

All projects within this group exemplify the successful blending of musical-professional and cultural-political goals. Music serves as a core cultural practice and as a vehicle for transnational cooperation and sector professionalization. Type 1, therefore, provides a reference point for understanding the other types, in which music's role shifts from a central position to more relational, instrumental, or interdisciplinary ones.

Normatively, this type largely preserves music's status as an autonomous practice, serving both as the main material and the key outcome of the projects. Nevertheless, this independence is subtly reshaped by external pressures for accessibility, dissemination, and sectoral sustainability, which add functional criteria alongside aesthetic considerations. Consequently, the core aspects of music—such as genres, repertoires, and professional practices—remain largely unchanged, reinforcing the discipline's structure, while also being broadened and somewhat redirected toward infrastructural and policy goals. This results in a stable yet internally conflicted state, in which music maintains its disciplinary coherence while increasingly aligning with external cultural, social, and market demands.

Type 2: Music as a tool for cultural emancipation

Another type of musical practice involves using music to engage children, youth, and non-professional participants as new audiences, with the aim of enhancing individual and collective cultural capacities within the civil sector. These initiatives prioritize learning, collaborative creation, and cultural empowerment over final musical outcome and sector enhancement. Examples include projects like KIDS CAN, *The Hanseatic Way: A Musical Journey Through a Shared Past*, and *Sing Outside the Box*, along with parts of *I Will Be Everything...* and *Brave Kids Artistic Instructor Training and Practical Dissemination* project, where music functions as a means for participation, education, and engaging non-professional participants in music performance.

A key feature of this approach is to foster social emancipation through music, build audiences, and empower civil society, with an emphasis on participatory formats. In projects such as KIDS CAN and *Sing Outside the Box*, music develops through workshops, group performance, and innovative teaching methods. Here, the emphasis is on the experience of participation rather than on performance excellence. In this configuration, music operates as a space for learning, confidence-building, and creative expression, offering inclusive opportunities for those who lack access to formal music education. For instance, in *Sing Outside the Box*, collective singing and choir work explore new relationships among performers, audiences, and spaces. Participants are encouraged to actively shape musical performances, blurring traditional lines between professionals and amateurs, performers and listeners. This approach shifts hierarchies typical of professional music practice, transforming conductors and

musicians into facilitators, mentors, and collaborators who foster cultural empowerment. It redefines musical expertise not just as a professional skill but as the capacity to foster shared music experiences, dialogue, and creative risk-taking. This is particularly evident in projects for children and youth, which use music to nurture expression and a sense of belonging. Aesthetically, these projects favor flexible formats and participatory experiments that blend movement, musicking, space, and technology. Music becomes a dynamic process, adaptable to participants, locations, and social settings—opening pathways for new audience models, professional roles, and cultural emancipation.

These projects demonstrate how the Creative Europe program leverages music to bolster cultural capacities at both individual and collective levels. Unlike Type 1, which primarily showcases the excellence of music professionals in a transnational context, this group of projects demonstrates music practices that serve as platforms for cultural emancipation.

In this configuration, autonomy is redefined through prioritizing participatory, educational, and social goals. Consequently, the discipline undergoes partial deconstruction: traditional hierarchies, standards of excellence, and distinctions between professionals and amateurs are intentionally destabilized. While this promotes greater inclusivity and social significance, it also weakens music's internal coherence as a distinct practice, shifting its focus from aesthetic creation to a social process.

Type 3: Music as a tool for civil-sector intervention

Within this category of projects, music is approached both as a public and a relational activity that enhances the visibility of marginalized groups, particularly in contexts related to migration, refugees, and gender inequality. The examples are Meet the Neighbors, Keychange, Our Lives, Eu.TERPE – a debut opera for an inclusive Europe, Living Realities – Changing Perceptions (LRCP), Voices of Solidarity, Women Equal Share Presence in the Arts and Creative Industries (Wom@rts), and the DIS-OTHERING project.

Musical activities here are aligned with specific political goals, aiming to evoke participants' experiential and emotional responses from direct engagement with music. Projects such as Eu.TERPE and Voices of Solidarity exemplify this approach. For instance, Eu.TERPE features music for the members of the Syrian Expat Philharmonic Orchestra, symbolizing cultural continuity amidst forced migration. Music acts as a medium through which dispersed Syrian musicians are reconnected, transforming their refugee experiences into a shared European cultural narrative. Creating and performing together carries political significance by affirming refugee musicians as active cultural contributors. Likewise, the Voices of Solidarity project incorporates music into street performances, parades, and participatory events that address issues such as freedom, borders, integration, and hospitality. Here, music functions as a shared emotional catalyst for collective gathering, enabling the formation of temporary communities in public spaces.

A key aspect of this category is a focus on marginalized groups. The Keychange initiative, for example, uses music as a tool to combat gender inequality in the music industry. While maintaining a strong professional dimension—concerts, showcases, and creative labs—the main purpose is political intervention. Public pledges for gender equality transform musical events into spaces of collective responsibility, with music acting as a vehicle for sectoral reform and gender correction. The Living Realities project broadens this approach by integrating music into a multidisciplinary framework to support refugees through participatory formats such as children’s choirs and orchestras, thereby fostering social integration. In segments of the Wom@rts project, music highlights female authorship and acts as a tool for career empowerment and international outreach, connecting musical practices with broader themes of cultural politics, gender issues, and representation.

Through these projects, music frequently collaborates with other media and expressive forms. Voices of Solidarity and Living Realities combine music with dance, theater, visual arts, photography, and documentary techniques. This interdisciplinary approach makes complex political issues more accessible and understandable, while transforming music into a relational practice. Participation remains a core aesthetic aspect—for example, in Voices of Solidarity, the audience actively engages in parades, workshops, and public events rather than passively observing. Music is again, like in the case of Type 2, positioned as a community practice rather than solely a professional vocation. An especially notable feature of these projects is the use of public spaces for musical performances—on streets, in squares, in parades, or in flash mobs—rather than in conventional concert halls. This situates music as a public practice embedded within urban and social contexts, serving as a meeting point for diverse groups and a symbolic negotiation of belonging, borders, and solidarity. In this way, music serves as a ‘trigger’ for shared experiences, making political themes such as migration, refugees, and social equality tangible at both physical and emotional levels. Consequently, this type is important for understanding the EU policies, indicating that culture and its diverse expressions are tools for managing social relations and shaping community values.

Here, music’s autonomy becomes subordinated to political and social goals, framing it as a tool for social intervention. Autonomy is thus reinterpreted as being responsive to social issues and capable of functioning within public and civic contexts, rather than focusing solely on aesthetic self-regulation. As a result, the field of music becomes more unstable. Its traditional boundaries extend into interdisciplinary, participatory, and activist practices, with standard evaluation criteria losing their dominance. While this increases music’s social relevance and ethical involvement, it also risks eroding its distinctiveness as a professional creative domain.

Type 4: Music within cultural networks

These initiatives generally do not focus on producing new music or showcasing its aesthetic qualities. Instead, their goal is to connect musicians, enhance skills, and strengthen transnational cultural networks as new, sustainable institutional structures. Examples include EXCITE – Exchange of International Talent in Europe, Swinging Europe, EJN Europe Jazz Network, Live Style Europe, Innovation Network of European Showcases (INES), and EFA RISE 2. These are network- or semi-network-based projects in which music is approached as a professional practice that needs sector enhancement through new forms of transnational institutional structures.

For instance, in the EJN Europe Jazz Network, jazz serves as the common professional language, with a focus on developing the sector by strengthening transnational cooperation, exchanging best practices, developing digital tools, and shaping cultural policies, such as a gender-equality manifesto in jazz. Similarly, the Live Style Europe approaches music through the lens of live-event spaces such as clubs, concert halls, and festivals, emphasizing their social responsibility, local community roles, and the need for new models of public representation. These initiatives do not impose a single aesthetic standard but rather support the coexistence of music within a shared transnational institutional and professional framework. The media and formats used to circulate music—such as conferences, seminars, working groups, digital platforms, databases, communication tools, publications, reports, and policy documents—further illustrate the infrastructural focus and institutional orientation of these projects. For example, the ENCATC project features music within the broader context of cultural management through educational programs, research, and publications, but does not produce direct creative outputs.

This category clearly marks a shift from audience-focused projects to those centered on professional communities. The primary target groups are cultural professionals, managers, decision-makers, researchers, network coordinators, and organizations. In this view, music functions as a specific sector within the professional cultural field, shifting the focus from aesthetics to the organizational and discursive dimensions of musical practices. The activities are organized around networking, sector legitimacy, cultural advocacy, and the development of professional standards.

While transnationality is strongly emphasized in this category, its form is specific. It is characterized less by musicians' mobility and more by the exchange of knowledge, practices, and management models. Projects such as EJN and ENCATC connect numerous countries and hundreds of organizations, establishing stable, long-term transnational networks that extend beyond the duration of individual projects. Thus, Type 4 exemplifies the EU's transnational cultural approach, confirming models of cooperation, management, and professionalization aimed at ensuring the sector's sustainability across borders.

At this level, autonomy shifts from aesthetic pursuit to music as a sector to be managed, optimized, and maintained through networks, policies, and infrastructure. Although this enhances the sector's structural stability and sustainability over the long

term, it also risks diminishing music's identity as a unique creative practice by integrating it into broader cultural governance structures.

Type 5: Music within the interdisciplinary field of culture

The fifth category of projects involves cases in which music serves as an element of interdisciplinary creative endeavors, integrating with other spatial, performative, and digital practices. Its role is relational, contributing to the overall experience but rarely leading as the main medium. Projects such as Poetic Invasion of the Cities, the European Art-Science-Technology Network for Digital Creativity (EASTN-DC), Q.THEATRE, DIS-OTHERING (beyond labels such as Afropolitan), and Mind Your Step exemplify this view. Here, the music is set among many expressive elements—alongside theater, dance, visual arts, new media, performances, and urban interventions. For instance, in Q.THEATRE, music functions as a dramaturgical and staging element within adaptations of Don Quixote, shaping the narrative, linking text, body, and space, and reflecting on European cultural heritage. In all cases, the aesthetic value of music is judged by its contribution to the interdisciplinary experience, rather than by notions of autonomous musical excellence.

Music manifests in public spaces, digital environments, or combined with visual and bodily practices, depending on the context, space, or technological setup. For example, in Poetic Invasion of the Cities, music features in street performances, flash mobs, and site-specific events—activating urban space and engaging passersby with sound and rhythm, regardless of genre. Similarly, in DIS-OTHERING, music and sound contribute to a broader festival and discourse on identity, race, and cultural hegemony; musical segments function as expressive and symbolic layers that support socio-political themes rather than as standalone works. In the EASTN-DC project, music is part of hybrid digital practices—encompassing electronic sounds, interactive interfaces, and audiovisual acts—closely linked to software and research tools. In these contexts, music is classified more by contextual and media features than by conventional genres.

From a European cultural policy perspective, this group exemplifies the Creative Europe program's post-disciplinary approach. Music is viewed as context-dependent and can be flexibly integrated into diverse creative and social settings, aligned with project aims. This promotes innovative practices but also leads to the de-articulation of music, which loses its specific disciplinary identity and becomes embedded within broader expressive, spatial, or technologically mediated cultural frameworks.

This type most radically challenges the notion of autonomy by integrating music into broader interdisciplinary and context-dependent frameworks. Autonomy is no longer based on the internal logic of musical form or genre, but on music's ability to function relationally within hybrid artistic setups. As a result, the discipline of music is significantly deconstructed: its boundaries become more fluid while evaluation criteria shift towards contextual contribution. This fosters innovative and cross-disciplinary collaboration, but also hastens the erosion of music's coherence as a discipline, transforming it into an adaptable element within a larger cultural ecosystem.

Type 6: Music as cultural heritage

The sixth type highlights projects in which music primarily serves as a means of documenting, archiving, and preserving cultural heritage. Examples like Polyphony – Collection of the Disappearing European Heritage and *The Hanseatic Way: A Musical Journey Through a Shared Past* exemplify this approach.

Here, music is seen not only through its contemporary creative forms but also as a remnant of past social structures, rituals, and communal life. For instance, the Polyphony project documents traditional vocal expressions of rural Eastern European communities via field research, audiovisual recordings, and digital archiving. The performers—often elderly women from rural areas—are regarded as carriers of living knowledge rather than just interpreters of musical material. Similarly, *The Hanseatic Way* reconstructs early music practices, connecting them with contemporary educational and participatory formats. Music serves both as a means of narrating history and as an educational tool that connects younger generations to a shared European cultural heritage. The educational and intergenerational aspects are the key features of this type. In both projects, music facilitates knowledge transfer across generations—from elder tradition-bearers to younger performers, students, and audiences. This positions music as a means of cultural continuity and as a space for learning, reflection, and reinterpretation.

Importantly, archiving in these projects goes beyond passive storage. It involves active selection, interpretation, and presentation. This type often combines archival and contemporary presentation formats, using digital platforms, storytelling, online databases, video documentation, and concert formats to reach transnational audiences. This aligns with one of the main aims of the Creative Europe—circulating local cultural practices beyond their original contexts without fully transforming their aesthetic value. Moreover, transnationality in such projects is both organizational and epistemological, bringing together diverse knowledge, disciplines, media (ethnomusicology, history, new technologies), and cultural perspectives.

Within the broader Creative Europe framework, this type of project aligns with efforts to protect and promote intangible cultural heritage and diversity. Music is funded not primarily for innovation or market potential, but for its capacity to reflect the historical layers of European culture and to make them accessible today. This affirms that the Creative Europe program regards music as both a contemporary creative industry and a tradition with enduring cultural value. Music is thus neither a fully autonomous art nor merely a social tool but a medium that documents history and fosters new understandings of shared European cultural space.

In this case, autonomy is reframed through the perspective of historical continuity and cultural memory, rather than modern creative self-determination. Consequently, the discipline is both stabilized and redefined: it is bolstered by its foundation in tradition and ethnomusicology, while also expanding into archival, educational, and interpretative fields. This results in a hybrid form where music preserves disciplinary coherence, yet its autonomy is shaped by its role as cultural heritage.

Discussion

While the preceding analysis maps different types of project-based musical practices, this section shifts toward a more explicitly normative reflection on their implications for music as a discipline. These implications can be understood in relation to a broader shift in the EU cultural policy from supporting culture as a set of autonomous artistic disciplines toward promoting creativity as a cross-sectoral driver of innovation. In this framework, music is no longer primarily valued as a discipline with its own aesthetic criteria, but as capable of generating social, economic, and institutional innovation. As a result, disciplinary coherence is secondary to music's functional adaptability, which directly contributes to its de-articulation. The implications can be further broken down into three interconnected dimensions: what is lost, what is gained, and where the main tensions arise.

Initially, the analysis shows a gradual decline in music's aesthetic independence. Genre distinctions become more flexible, aesthetic hierarchies are relativized, and the standards of artistic value shift from internal, discipline-specific criteria to external, functional ones. This leads to a form of de-specialization in which musical expertise is partly reinterpreted as the ability to promote participation, collaboration, or social engagement. In this context, what is truly 'lost' is not music itself, but its autonomy as a self-contained field governed by its own aesthetic principles.

The analysis also highlights notable improvements. Music broadens its significance, serving as a versatile context-dependent practice that can tackle various societal, institutional, and political issues. Its inclusion in transnational collaborations, audience development efforts, digital platforms, and socially conscious practices enhances its visibility, accessibility, and functional adaptability. The policy framework positions music as more open to diverse audiences, more attuned to current social concerns, and more integrated into daily cultural life. This transformation fosters new participatory methods, interdisciplinary experiments, and institutional innovation, expanding music's reach beyond traditional concert venues and elite groups. In essence, the 'gain' is the enhanced societal relevance and operational flexibility of musical practices within a larger cultural framework.

These processes create a series of structural tensions shaping the state of music within the Creative Europe program. The primary tension is between aesthetic independence and practical instrumentalization. While projects broaden music's social impact and usability, they also risk placing aesthetic standards below external policy objectives. A second tension involves professional focus versus de-specialization: the push for new skills such as mobility, communication, and social engagement boosts adaptability but may weaken discipline-specific expertise. The third tension is between inclusion and hierarchy. Although many projects aim to democratize access and involvement, transnational partnerships can reproduce inequalities between central and peripheral players, as well as between big institutions and smaller groups. Lastly, there is a tension between stability and adaptability: project-based approaches

foster innovation and experimentation but can also threaten long-term sustainability, institutional memory, and ongoing creative growth.

Overall, these dynamics indicate that the transformation of music within the Creative Europe is not just about the decline or enrichment of the creative field. Instead, it involves a reconfiguration of the conditions that shape music, in which losses and gains are deeply connected, and tensions are fundamental to contemporary musical practices under European cultural policy.

Returning to the initial claim regarding the dissociation of music disciplinary coherence, the analysis demonstrates that this process is not merely a side effect of project-based collaboration, but a structurally embedded feature of the EU cultural policy. As outlined in the theoretical background, within the Creative Europe program, culture is viewed through an instrumental lens, aligning creative activities with political goals. Analyzing music-related projects reveals how this policy approach manifests in practice, notably through the de-articulation of music. This concept refers to the EU's redefinition of culture as a multifunctional sector rather than a standalone creative domain. Therefore, de-articulation is not merely a side effect but a necessary condition for transnational collaboration that allows music to flow across disciplinary boundaries. Even when music is a central cultural activity, it is heavily shaped by aims like audience development, digital distribution, professional mobility, inclusion, and visibility in the European music market. In other projects, music's role is further de-articulated and it serves as a tool for education, social intervention, political advocacy, or interdisciplinary experimentation. Therefore, its value lies less in aesthetic criteria and more in its social effects—fostering cooperation and building communities. This de-articulation is especially evident when the genre is intentionally left undefined or secondary. The lack of specific genre or disciplinary boundaries is not accidental but a strategic choice that facilitates integration into interdisciplinary, participatory, and politically motivated projects. In such contexts, music shifts from being a 'goal' to a 'trigger'—promoting social interaction, emotional bonds, public visibility, or symbolizing European values. This shift can be understood as a consequence of broader transformations in the EU cultural governance, where culture is increasingly positioned as a cross-sectoral resource aligned with objectives such as social cohesion, innovation, and competitiveness. The consequences of this shift are threefold: a redefinition of music's disciplinary status, a transformation of music professionalism into project-based operability, and a displacement of aesthetic evaluation by criteria of social relevance.

This can be further interpreted in light of the ongoing debate over intrinsic versus instrumental cultural value.²⁶ This distinction offers a useful theoretical perspective on how music functions within the Creative Europe framework. According to Behr et al., instrumental effects are not external to music but stem from qualities intrinsic to musical practice—its emotional power, embodied participation, and

²⁶ Behr, Brennan, and Cloonan, "Cultural Value and Cultural Policy: Some Evidence from the World of Live Music."

ability to create shared meaning.²⁷ Thus, the de-articulation of music within the Creative Europe does not mean that the intrinsic value disappears; instead, it shifts and is redistributed across different social contexts. Here, music's aesthetic independence becomes less central than its role in activating social ties and transnational collaboration. De-articulation, therefore, signifies not a loss of value but a transformation in how value is expressed, measured, and legitimized within the EU cultural policies. This shift also risks dismantling music as a distinct disciplinary field. Genre boundaries become flexible, aesthetic hierarchies are relativized, and music is frequently embedded in interdisciplinary and participatory settings.

De-articulation of music in the Creative Europe can be seen too through the paradigm of audience development. As highlighted in the European Commission's report reviewed by Hadley, cultural organizations are urged to adopt an audience-focused approach, with audiences central to their strategy. Audience development now extends beyond marketing and communication to include democratization, access, participation, co-creation, and organizational innovation. In this model, audiences are considered equal partners with artists and institutions.²⁸ This change is evident across various projects. Participatory and emancipatory initiatives see audiences act as co-creators, while in professional network projects audience strategies are integrated into infrastructure and policy planning. Even in projects where music remains a key artistic focus, digital dissemination and expanding audiences influence organizational goals. Audience-centered governance, therefore, redefines music's place within institutions, linking aesthetic independence with relational accountability. Thus, de-articulation involves not just embedding music into policies but shifting its focus toward audience relations as a key principle of practice organization.

Conclusion

The analysis indicates that de-articulation does not lead to the marginalization of music. Instead, music continues to be widely used and adaptable across aesthetic, social, political, and economic dimensions simultaneously. This versatility, however, blurs the boundaries between art, the culture industry, and social practice. Here, music is established as a cultural resource that links various actors and objectives at the European level. The findings support the initial research thesis that, within Creative Europe, music is treated as part of the cultural and creative sectors, with multifaceted roles. De-articulation occurs precisely where the intrinsic dimension of music is structurally subordinated to its socioeconomic mobilization. Music is framed less as a finished artwork and more as an innovation process embedded in experimentation and transnational prototyping. The de-articulation of music is, therefore, a fundamental feature of the program as it relates to music. A tension remains between

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 410.

²⁸ Steven Hadley, "European Commission Final Report: Study on Audience Development – How to place Audiences at the Centre of Cultural Organizations," *Cultural Trends* 26, 3 (2017): 1–2.

promoting music as an independent creative sector and acknowledging its broader social functions, which is a defining aspect of the EU cultural policy toward music.

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