

FINAL PROGRAMME REPORT

FM14-21

Portugal

Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation

Programme short name	PT-CULTURE
Programme Operator	Directorate General for Cultural Heritage (DGPC PT)
Host Programme Area	PA14 Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation
Financial Mechanisms	EEA Grants
Programme grant in EUR	€ 9,465,000.00
Programme co-financing in EUR	€ 1,670,294.12
Final incurred amount in EUR	€ 10,186,328.62
Final incurred rate %	91.48 %

PROGRAMME RESULTS

Programme Objective: Social and economic development strengthened through cultural cooperation, cultural entrepreneurship and cultural heritage management

Eligible expenditure: € 11,135,294.12 Amount incurred: € 10,186,328.62

Issues the programme aimed to address

The programme aimed to address two major challenges in Portugal's cultural landscape: the vulnerability of coastal cultural heritage and the asymmetric distribution of artistic and cultural offerings across the country.

Coastal cultural heritage faced significant risks due to both environmental and socioeconomic factors. Its proximity to the sea, strong winds, and adverse weather conditions accelerated degradation, while real estate pressure—driven by urban rehabilitation and tourism growth—threatened its preservation. Despite its cultural significance, this heritage lacked a cohesive strategy for sustainable protection and revitalization. Additionally, underwater cultural heritage suffered from low investment, leading to deteriorating research conditions and a decline in qualified conservation professionals.

The second major challenge was the uneven distribution of artistic and cultural activities, which was closely linked to Portugal's demographic imbalance. The population was highly concentrated along the coastline, particularly in the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto. Meanwhile, inland and less densely populated regions faced planning, governance, and budgetary constraints, resulting in limited cultural infrastructure and programming. While investments had been made in cultural venues and equipment, these regions struggled to attract arts professionals and consolidate high-quality artistic initiatives. This led to a lack of sustained cultural programming and limited opportunities for local communities to engage with the arts.

Film heritage was identified as a critical area requiring attention. Ensuring the accessibility and dissemination of audiovisual memory is essential to combating audiovisual illiteracy, decentralizing cinematographic culture, and fostering greater awareness of local and national identity.

Programme contribution to overall objectives

The Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation programme in Portugal played a significant role in addressing the overarching objectives of the EEA Grants: reducing social and economic disparities and strengthening bilateral cooperation.

The programme tackled cultural and economic inequalities by promoting cultural heritage revitalization, entrepreneurship, and artistic mobility, particularly in coastal and low-density regions. It supported the restoration and revitalization of cultural assets in coastal areas, which face environmental and socio-

economic pressures, transforming these sites into community and cultural spaces that fostered economic growth, and local job creation. Additionally, investment in the conservation of underwater heritage increased technical expertise and employment opportunities in this niche sector, while training professionals ensured long-term capacity-building and knowledge retention.

By decentralizing access to cultural resources, the *FILMar* project digitized Portuguese film heritage, thereby promoting cultural inclusion and reducing audiovisual illiteracy in underserved regions.

The “Connecting Dots” call further strengthened access to contemporary arts by supporting mobility for artists and cultural projects, enhancing artistic programming in low-density areas, and increasing opportunities for participation in the arts.

Furthermore, the programme encouraged cultural entrepreneurship by funding creative projects with economic sustainability in mind and strengthened partnerships between cultural organizations and local businesses, contributing to regional economic development.

In terms of strengthening bilateral cooperation, the programme encouraged international collaboration between Portugal and the Donor Countries (Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein) through partnerships, exchanges, and shared expertise. The Portuguese Culture Programme brought together over 50 Portuguese organizations, alongside 25 Norwegian partners (including both Donor Programme Partners), 7 Icelandic partners, and 1 from Liechtenstein.

The Portuguese Culture Programme has made significant progress in promoting strong bilateral relationships and cultural exchange between Portugal and the donor states. One of the predefined projects, *Water World*, conducted four field surveys in partnership with its Norwegian counterpart, resulting in a high level of bilateral trust and collaboration. Similarly, *FILMar* organised over 200 screening sessions in both Portugal and Norway, expanding access to film heritage and deepening cultural ties.

The *Coastal Cultural Centre*, through Call #1, promoted 10 bilateral exchanges, including study visits and joint exhibitions, which strengthened cultural cooperation. Furthermore, the *Nautical Arts Centre* promoted the exchange of traditional maritime heritage by sending a vessel built by Portuguese students to Norway, while a Norwegian ship, traditionally crafted, was sent to Vila do Conde, symbolizing the enduring cultural connection. These initiatives exemplified mutual learning, cultural appreciation, and long-term cooperation.

The *Terra Incógnita* project, part of Call #2, enriched the cultural exchange by encouraging Portuguese and Norwegian artists to collaborate on original compositions inspired by São Miguel Island. The participation of four Norwegian artists expanded the project's international reach, promoted cultural diversity and collaboration. Additionally, the *Campilhas Internacional* project strengthened bilateral ties with Iceland and Liechtenstein, extending its artistic network. Thorgerdur Sigurdardóttir from Iceland collaborated with local children to create a site-specific audiowalk, while Christiani Wetter from Liechtenstein worked on "Liechtenstein Blood Stories", a project set to premiere in 2025.

Sustainability

Infrastructure investments, such as the restoration of the *Coastal Cultural Centre* and *Nautical Arts Centre*, have transformed these sites into permanent cultural and educational hubs, ensuring long-term functionality. Community engagement has also been vital, with projects like *From Fenaís to Fenaís* and *Coastal Memory Fort* involving local residents in training and cultural activities, promoting a sense of ownership and continued local involvement.

The bilateral partnerships established ensure ongoing knowledge exchange and future activities. Innovative approaches like augmented reality at the *Coastal Memory Fort* and digital platforms at the

Coastal Cultural Centre enhance accessibility and relevance, particularly for younger audiences, modernizing heritage preservation.

Economic strategies, such as integrating tourism and entrepreneurship in projects like *Ciência Viva Salt Farm* and the *Shipyards-Museum of Porto Brandão*, will generate self-sustaining revenue streams. These projects attract visitors, support local businesses, and ensure financial viability while promoting cultural heritage.

Pre-Defined Projects also show strong sustainability potential. *FILMar*'s digitization efforts and screenings have created lasting resources for film preservation, establishing new audiences and partnerships. The creation of a digital laboratory ensures a permanent resource for ongoing film preservation, with digitization efforts continuing beyond the project's lifespan. Similarly, *Water World* has significantly strengthened Portugal's capacity to manage underwater archaeological heritage, creating a modern laboratory, acquiring advanced equipment, and providing staff training. New workflows for underwater archaeology, conservation, and site monitoring are now institutionalized, ensuring long-term improvements in managing maritime heritage.

The Connecting Dots call demonstrates sustainability, driven by community engagement, institutional partnerships, and innovative cultural practices. Projects like *Terra Incógnita* and *Malacate* amplified local ownership through sound trails and participatory councils, ensuring continued involvement. *ViViFiCAR* and *Fôlejo* established bilateral collaborations, guaranteeing long-term cooperation.

Outcome 1: Cultural heritage management enhanced

Amount incurred: € 5,957,977.03

Results

The Outcome 1 has enabled a diverse range of projects that have significantly contributed to the preservation, revitalization, and promotion of cultural heritage across Portugal. These projects have not only safeguarded tangible and intangible heritage but also fostered community engagement, economic development, and international collaboration. Below is an analysis of the most important results achieved, illustrated through specific project examples.

One of the standout achievements is the revitalization of traditional crafts and maritime heritage. The *Nautical Arts Centre* project exemplifies this, focusing on wooden shipbuilding and repair techniques listed in Portugal's National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The project created dedicated spaces for workshops, training, and exhibitions, including the restoration of a 16th-century ship replica and the construction of a traditional 'catraia' vessel. Educational activities, such as naval carpentry courses and international exchanges with Norwegian partners, were instrumental in training new craftsmen and revitalizing the sector. The project's impact extends beyond preservation, boosting local tourism and creating new services, thereby strengthening the economy and social cohesion. The collaboration with Norwegian partners enriched the project through knowledge exchange, ensuring the sustainability of these traditional techniques and fostering long-term bilateral ties.

Another notable success is the rehabilitation of historical sites, as demonstrated by the *Coastal Memory Fort* project. The Paimogo Fort, a 17th-century structure, was restored and transformed into a dynamic cultural hub. The project addressed structural decay, landscape instability, and community disengagement by implementing risk management measures and developing an augmented reality (AR) solution to bring the fort's history to life. Over 37 community sessions were held, far exceeding initial expectations, which strengthened local ties and increased public interest. The partnership with the University of Oslo and Museum Nord was pivotal, providing expertise in AR and heritage management. This collaboration not only enhanced the project's outcomes but also laid the groundwork for future initiatives, ensuring the fort's long-term viability as a tourist and educational resource.

The *Sesimbra Coastal Cultural Centre* project highlights the importance of integrating scientific research with cultural preservation. The project rehabilitated a building to house the Maritime Museum's collections and established research facilities, promoting knowledge about maritime traditions and sustainable fishing. Twelve exchange trips between Portugal and Norway facilitated the sharing of techniques in traditional shipbuilding and fish processing, while over 40 community initiatives, including the "Living with the Ocean" exhibition, raised awareness of coastal heritage. The project's influence extended to economic development, inspiring the creation of a new Artesanal Pesca factory that will generate 40 jobs. The collaboration with Norwegian institutions like the Norsk Maritime Museum and UiT Arctic University ensured the project's sustainability, further solidifying bilateral relations.

Innovative approaches to cultural preservation are evident in the *FILMar* project by the Cinemateca Portuguesa. This project revolutionized the digitization and promotion of film heritage, establishing a digital laboratory that exceeded its goals by digitizing 267 films (up from an initial target of 70) and organizing 502 public screenings in 45 cities. The project's success was amplified by its collaboration with the Norsk Film Institut, which facilitated the exchange of best practices in film preservation and mediation. Despite challenges like COVID-19 lockdowns, *FILMar* expanded its reach, engaging new audiences through television programs, exhibitions, and publications. The project's legacy lies in its transformative impact on how film heritage is accessed and appreciated, creating opportunities for historians, educators, and curators to integrate cinema into broader cultural and educational practices.

The *Ciência Viva Salt Farm* project in Figueira da Foz showcases the revitalization of traditional salt production, a practice at risk of disappearing. The project rehabilitated the Corredor da Cobra Saltpan, introducing new functions such as a creative space, open lab, and saline spa. Activities like boat tours, salt harvesting workshops, and interpretive walks engaged the community and tourists, reinforcing cultural appropriation and local identity. The collaboration with Norway's Bergen Science Centre brought innovative science dissemination methods, particularly for younger audiences, and highlighted historical ties between Portuguese salt and Norwegian cod trade. Although visitor numbers are yet to fully materialize, the project's focus on research and partnerships ensures its long-term sustainability, with potential for future cultural and educational exchanges.

The *Water World* project successfully revitalized Portugal's National Centre for Nautical and Underwater Archaeology (CNANS) by addressing years of underfunding and operational challenges. Key achievements included acquiring essential equipment, establishing a functional laboratory, and developing new methodologies for underwater archaeology. The collaboration with Norway's Norsk Maritime Museum was crucial, enabling knowledge exchange in advanced techniques like 3D documentation and freeze-drying of waterlogged materials. Despite the lack of formal plans for continued partnership, the project significantly enhanced CNANS' capabilities, ensuring better preservation and dissemination of Portugal's underwater cultural heritage.

Lastly, the *Shipyard-Museum of Porto Brandão* project restored a decaying shipyard, preserving traditional boatbuilding techniques and creating a museum and training academy. The project's tangible outcomes include the restoration of a traditional 'catraia' boat and the engagement of over 40 children in educational activities. The collaboration with Norwegian partners provided expertise in sustainable development and heritage preservation, enhancing the project's impact. The shipyard's transformation into a community space for training and cultural exchange underscores the project's success in fostering local pride and economic development. Plans for continued collaboration with Norwegian institutions promise further advancements in maritime heritage preservation.

These projects have achieved remarkable results in preserving cultural heritage, fostering community engagement, and promoting economic development. The collaborations with Donor Countries have been instrumental, providing expertise, innovative methodologies, and opportunities for long-term partnerships. The successes of these initiatives highlight the transformative power of cultural projects, ensuring the preservation of heritage for future generations while contributing to sustainable regional development.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The implementation of Outcome 1 revealed several common challenges and valuable lessons learned. One significant challenge was the revitalization of abandoned or degraded cultural heritage sites, such as the *Coastal Cultural Centre*. These projects faced structural issues, especially the need for extensive rehabilitation. The lack of prior community engagement and economic viability further complicated efforts. For instance, the *Coastal Memory Fort* project required not only physical restoration but also the development of augmented reality tools to reconnect the community with its history. Similarly, the *Shipyard-Museum of Porto Brandão* project highlighted the difficulty of preserving traditional boatbuilding techniques while fostering community involvement and creating sustainable employment opportunities.

Another challenge was ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes beyond the funding period. While projects like the *Nautical Arts Centre* and the *Coastal Cultural Centre* successfully established new facilities and programs, their long-term viability depended on continued community engagement, tourism revenue, and partnerships. Monitoring revealed that projects with strong bilateral collaboration, such as those involving Donor Countries' institutions, were more likely to secure future funding and maintain momentum. For example, the *Coastal Memory Fort* partnership with the University of Oslo and Museum Nord led to plans for future funding applications, demonstrating the importance of international networks for sustainability.

The *Water World* project underscored the challenges of capacity-building in specialized fields like underwater archaeology. Despite acquiring equipment and training staff, the project struggled with institutional constraints and the need for ongoing funding to maintain operations. The abrupt end to bilateral collaboration with Norwegian partners due to management changes also highlighted the fragility of such partnerships when not formally institutionalized.

Lessons learned emphasize the importance of integrating local communities from the outset. Projects like *From Fénais to Fénais* and the *Ciência Viva Salt Farm* showed that involving stakeholders in co-creation processes ensured deeper engagement and ownership. Additionally, flexibility in adapting to unforeseen circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the *FILMar* project's public screenings, was critical. The project's success in digitizing far more films than planned and expanding its reach demonstrated the value of adaptive strategies.

Finally, monitoring stressed the need for clear communication and realistic goal-setting. Projects that aligned their activities with local needs and leveraged bilateral expertise achieved more impactful and sustainable results. These insights highlight the importance of balancing ambition with practicality, fostering partnerships, and prioritizing community-centric approaches in cultural heritage projects.

Outcome 2: Improved access to contemporary arts in low-density municipalities

Amount incurred: € 3,402,723.10

Results

A total of 9 multidisciplinary artistic programming projects were supported under Outcome 2, distributed over six regions, both in low-density territories in mainland Portugal and the two autonomous regions of Azores and Madeira, actively contributing to reinforce arts provision, access and participation across Portugal.

The projects had a total of 38 partners, including 17 from the Donor Countries. The organizations involved were diverse, including artistic entities of different scales, artists, municipalities and

universities - both Portuguese and from the donor countries – increasing cultural dialogue and diversity in the context of contemporary arts participation and project making.

Connecting Dots promoted the mobility of artists and artistic productions in Portugal and on international territory, facilitating networking at local, regional, national and international levels - therefore allowing more opportunities for the exchange of artistic projects, knowledge transfer, value sharing and collective problem-solving. Terra Incógnita, for example, promoted 12 artistic residencies in which local and national artists worked along international peers in cocreating processes.

The supported projects strongly contributed to the decentralization of the artistic offer nationwide, with the involvement of more than 30 municipalities. Overall, almost 600 artistic productions were programmed and more than 45,000 people attended/participated in the supported activities, thus strengthening artistic and cultural access in regions where little or no offer was provided. This has also contributed to the economic development and dynamization of these regions, both through the job opportunities created, local services acquired, and the mobilization of new audiences to the territories.

Connecting Dots has also contributed to the pursuit of cross-cutting objectives, in terms of governance, environmental issues and sustainable development - both via the themes addressed in the activities (Campilhas Internacional, for example, promoted multiple workshops in local schools, focusing on racism and gender equality), as well as the working methodologies and project implementation strategies (namely, active participation, coordination with the various agents that make up the local ecosystems, fair remuneration for cultural work, entrepreneurship and training). More than 4,000 residents of the municipalities have been directly involved in creative processes, empowering local communities and bringing arts and culture closer to different sections of the population. Connecting Dots benefited multiple organizations, individual artists and local communities/residents of the municipalities, across various age groups, socio-economic and professional backgrounds. All projects worked with schools/youth groups/day care centers, impacting students at all stages of schooling, but also adults, seniors, cultural professionals, amateurs and people from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly young people. Dentes de Leão - a participatory arts project directed to young people - enabled groups from 3 different municipalities to work with each other and contact with various arts professionals.

However, how sustainable will the results be? It is important to consider the tangible results of the projects, which will live on beyond them – namely manuals (in the areas of sustainability or entrepreneurship in culture, produced by the Fôlego project) and collection devices for the artistic work developed, which also serve as creative mappings of the territories (the Particular Universal project, for example, developed a sound archive, collecting hundreds of sounds from the Municipality of Castro Marim. The archive is now in the hands of the municipality, serving as a tool for promoting the territory and raising awareness to its memory, identity and cultural and environmental heritage). It is equally important to mention that various activities developed within the scope of the projects will continue beyond the funding period, either through the renewal of partnerships with municipalities, the establishment of new partnerships (including with new municipalities) and/or national support. Although the scale changes, considering funding and available resources, dynamics promoted in the regions endure and multiply. The Vivificar project led to the creation of a new cultural association in one of the municipalities involved in the project – which, to this day continues to develop activities. The Malacate project, heading to its 2025 edition, gave origin to a local curatorship council, enabling local communities to actively participate in the regions cultural programming. Various collaborations continue between national organizations and artists and those from the donor countries, with multiple new activities under

development, including new artistic programming activities both in Portugal and in the donor countries.

During the projects' implementation, DGARTES also promoted a capacity building program, providing local agents participating in the implementation of the selected projects with skills relevant to conceptualise and implement professional arts projects. Participation was free of charge, with priority access to members of the close and extended teams of projects funded under the Connecting Dots / Culture Programme. The program consisted of 6 modules (Public Policies, Artistic Programming; Management of artistic projects; Sources of Funding; Law in Culture and cross-cutting Dimensions - such as diversity in the arts sector) and registered 134 individual participants, - furthermore strengthening long term impact and sustainability of local artistic interventions.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The implementation of Outcome 2 revealed several common challenges and valuable lessons learned.

World-wide events such as COVID impacted the arts projects: these projects were designed with and for local communities, depending widely on access by its audiences. Work with schools and community centres for the elderly was limited, as were public presentations destined to wider audiences. International travel was also impacted, with many projects depending on it to complete residency and exchange programs, but by adjusting planned timetables and activities, the promoters were able to overcome the challenges faced during the pandemic and successfully implement their projects.

Another commonly identified challenge relates directly to one of the main issues the Programme aimed to address: the uneven distribution of artistic and cultural activities across the country. The supported projects were implemented in regions less densely populated, with limited resources and infrastructures in comparison to bigger cities. When the necessary technical or human resources were not locally available, promoters had to import these resources from outside the municipalities, leading to increased costs. Price increase regarding to accommodation and travel costs were also common, given the time span of the implementation and increased inflation, leading to necessary budget adjustments.

As factors for success, lessons learned emphasize the importance of integrating local communities from the outset, and stressed the relevance of having municipalities as partners, providing resources - namely technical, financial and infrastructural, such as cultural venues, personnel - and connections with other local agents (in social, cultural and educational sectors). Implementation showed that involving stakeholders in co-creation processes ensured deeper engagement and ownership, leading to more impactful and sustainable results. Time to build relationships and trust is, therefore, key, as well as the ability to adjust.

Monitoring stressed the demanding and mutable nature of artistic and community-based projects. The flexibility to adapt, either due to unforeseen circumstances or specific needs identified through the course of implementation was essential. Having robust, multidisciplinary teams is key – as it is desirable to simplify administrative processes.

Bilateral Outcome: Enhanced cooperation between donor and beneficiary state entities involved in the programme

Results

Bilateral partnerships were instrumental in maximizing the impact of projects funded under the EEA Grants 2014–2021, resulting in cross-cultural collaboration, knowledge transfer, and sustainable outcomes. By connecting Portuguese institutions with partners from Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein, these initiatives transcended geographical boundaries to address shared challenges in cultural preservation, community engagement, and innovation.

The *Nautical Arts Centre* project exemplifies how bilateral cooperation can breathe new life into endangered traditions. Partnering with Norwegian organizations like Stiftelsen Engøyholmen Kystkultursenter and Hardanger og Voss, the project facilitated hands-on exchanges in wooden shipbuilding, a craft shared by both nations but at risk of disappearing. Norwegian experts introduced advanced preservation techniques, while Portuguese artisans contributed their own methods, resulting in the restoration of a 16th-century ship replica and the construction of a traditional catraia vessel. This collaboration extended beyond technical training, fostering cultural ties through joint regattas and exhibitions. The project's success lies not only in preserving intangible heritage but also in creating economic opportunities through tourism and education, ensuring its continuity beyond the funding period.

The *FILMar* project, led by Cinemateca Portuguesa, leveraged its partnership with Norway's Norsk Filminstitutt to revolutionize film preservation and public engagement. Despite pandemic disruptions, the collaboration enabled the digitization of 267 films, far exceeding the initial target of 70, and the creation of a digital laboratory. Norwegian archivists shared cutting-edge restoration techniques, while joint screenings, such as a curated program of Portuguese and Nordic films, introduced audiences to transnational narratives. The partnership also strengthened institutional ties under the International Federation of Film Archives, paving the way for future co-productions.

In *Campilhas Internacional*, the promotor collaborated with Norwegian and Liechtenstein partners to bring art to rural populations. Norwegian playwrights like Fredrik Brattberg created radio plays for Portuguese schoolchildren, while Liechtenstein artist Christiani Wetter co-produced *Blood Stories*, a performance exploring migration and identity. These partnerships democratized access to culture, especially for isolated seniors and youth, and established lasting networks. Norwegian artist Andrea Spreafico's residency led to a new project involving Portuguese performers, demonstrating how bilateral ties can spark ongoing creativity. Similarly, *INSUL'Arts* in Madeira partnered with Norway's dybwikdands to integrate inclusive dance methodologies. Workshops and performances like *OvO*, inspired by Madeira's landscapes, engaged children with disabilities, while a seminar in Stavanger showcased Portugal's inclusive practices to Nordic audiences. This exchange not only elevated local artists but also inspired a Lithuanian practitioner to study in Madeira, highlighting the project's ripple effects.

The *Coastal Memory Fort* combined history and technology through its partnership with Norway's University of Oslo and Museum Nord. Researchers used augmented reality to recreate the fort's 17th-century battles, allowing visitors to experience its past. Norwegian curators also helped design community programming, such as the workshop *Models of Cultural Innovation for Coastal Heritage*, which attracted regional stakeholders. These collaborations extended beyond the project's lifespan.

The *Shipyard-Museum of Porto Brandão* transformed a decayed site into a hub for maritime heritage, thanks to Norwegian input on sustainable tourism and craftsmanship. Partner institutions shared strategies for engaging youth in boatbuilding, leading to workshops where local apprentices restored a traditional catraio boat. This hands-on approach not only preserved skills but also strengthened community pride, a testament to how bilateral partnerships can align cultural preservation with economic revitalization.

The *Particular Universal* project partnered with Norway's nyMusikk to document the town's sonic heritage. Norwegian composers like Erik Dehlin created *Double Portrait of Oslo and Castro Marim*, blending field recordings from both countries. Portuguese artists' residencies in Norway resulted in exhibitions at Nitja Senter for Samtidskunst, expanding the project's reach. The collaboration also

produced two permanent sound archives, managed by Castro Marim's municipality, ensuring long-term access to these cultural narratives.

These projects illustrate how bilateral partnerships under the EEA Grants program achieved far more than isolated outcomes. By pooling expertise, they preserved endangered traditions such as shipbuilding and film archives, empowered marginalized groups like rural communities and people with disabilities, pioneered innovative tools such as augmented reality and sound mapping, and built sustainable networks through consortia and artist residencies. The partnerships' true success lies in their enduring impact, as Donor Countries' and Portuguese institutions continue to collaborate, local communities retain new skills, and cultural heritage gains global visibility. As the *Sesimbra Coastal Cultural Centre's* team noted, the bilateral exchanges didn't just enrich the project, they reshaped how heritage is perceived. This sentiment encapsulates the transformative power of cross-border cooperation in fostering cultural resilience and mutual understanding.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

During the implementation of bilateral projects, several challenges emerged, including logistical difficulties due to geographical distances, cultural and methodological differences between partner institutions, and disruptions caused by external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited in-person exchanges and delayed activities. Projects like *FILMar* and *Terra Incógnita* successfully adapted by shifting to digital platforms for collaboration, maintaining momentum despite requiring additional technical support.

A key lesson learned was the importance of establishing formal cooperation frameworks early on, ensuring project continuity beyond the funding period. The successful partnerships between the University of Oslo and the Municipality of Lourinhã, as well as Museum Nord, demonstrated how structured agreements facilitated sustained collaboration. Community engagement also played a crucial role in ensuring long-term impact. In the *From Fénais to Fénais*, the active involvement of local and Donor Countries' stakeholders led to increased heritage awareness and positive outcomes, reinforcing the value of local participation.

Flexibility and adaptability were essential, particularly when aligning project goals with the expertise of donor partners. Collaborations with Norway's maritime museums enhanced capacity-building and innovation, as seen in initiatives that preserved shipbuilding traditions and modernized cultural heritage management. Similarly, sustainability planning was critical, as evidenced by the *Malacate* project, which established the *Malacate* Council to ensure community-driven initiatives would continue beyond the project's formal conclusion.

IRREGULARITIES

No irregularities are reported.

SUMMARY OF PROJECTS

		Number of projects contracted	Number of projects completed	Project grant contracted (EEA Grant + national co-financing)	Project grant incurred (EEA Grant + national co-financing)	Project Eligible Expenditure contracted (Includes project co-financing)	Project Eligible Expenditure incurred (Includes project co-financing)
Outcome 1: Cultural heritage management enhanced	Pre-defined	2	1	€ 1,976,324.81	€ 1,502,966.20	€ 1,502,966.20	€ 1,502,966.20
	Contracted through open calls	6	6	€ 4,775,147.23	€ 4,455,010.83	€ 5,241,188.92	€ 5,241,188.93
	Contracted through small grants scheme	0	0	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
	Total Outcome 1	8	7	€ 6,751,472.04	€ 5,957,977.03	€ 6,744,155.12	€ 6,744,155.13
Outcome 2: Improved access to contemporary arts in low-density municipalities	Pre-defined	0	0	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
	Contracted through open calls	9	9	€ 3,441,463.76	€ 3,402,723.10	€ 4,070,525.38	€ 4,070,525.37
	Contracted through small grants scheme	0	0	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
	Total Outcome 2	9	9	€ 3,441,463.76	€ 3,402,723.10	€ 4,070,525.38	€ 4,070,525.37
Total programme costs (Excluding programme management costs)		17	16	€ 10,192,935.80	€ 9,360,700.13	€ 10,814,680.50	€ 10,814,680.50

FINAL BALANCE

Overview of programme expenditure

Programme area (PA)	Budget Heading	EEA Grants	Total grant	Programme eligible expenditure	EEA Grants contribution incurred	Total grant contribution incurred	Programme co-financing incurred	Total eligible expenditure incurred
PA14	Programme management	€ 801,004.58	€ 801,004.58	€ 942,358.33	€ 701,784.22	€ 701,784.22	€ 123,844.27	€ 825,628.49
PA14	Outcome 1: Cultural heritage management enhanced (EEA Grants)	€ 5,738,751.23	€ 5,738,751.23	€ 6,751,472.03	€ 5,064,280.48	€ 5,064,280.48	€ 893,696.55	€ 5,957,977.03
PA14	Outcome 2: Improved access to contemporary arts in low-density municipalities (EEA Grants)	€ 2,925,244.20	€ 2,925,244.20	€ 3,441,463.76	€ 2,892,314.64	€ 2,892,314.64	€ 510,408.46	€ 3,402,723.10
	Total	€ 9,465,000.01	€ 9,465,000.01	€ 11,135,294.12	€ 8,658,379.34	€ 8,658,379.34	€ 1,527,949.28	€ 10,186,328.62

Description of budget spending

Programme management

The Programme Operator and Programme Partner ensured that all activities related to management, finance, and communication, as well as travel costs, participation in key workshops on Programme management, meeting arrangements, the evaluation process, and administrative verification of financed projects, were carried out in accordance with their respective responsibilities. However, the programme management budget was not fully utilised. In a future mechanism, the Programme Operator and Programme Partner plan to expand the scope of activities to achieve even stronger results.

Outcome 1: Cultural heritage management enhanced (EEA Grants)

Underspending in some projects was primarily due to implementation delays, reporting challenges faced by promoters, and difficulties in aligning expenses with eligibility criteria. For example, Water World encountered obstacles in executing its planned activities, resulting in only 54.11% of its budget being utilised. Similarly, Nautical Arts Centre had to exclude €66,235.77 due to some expenses being unsupported by the project's partner and misaligned budget categories. Despite these challenges, most projects maintained strong alignment with reporting expectations, achieving execution rates above 90%, reflecting effective programme management.

Outcome 2: Improved access to contemporary arts in low-density municipalities (EEA Grants)

Budget execution across these projects was generally high, with most achieving near-full or full spending. For instance, "Terra Incógnita," "Campilhas Internacional," "Malacate," and "Vivificar" reported 100% budget execution, indicating efficient utilisation of funds. However, some projects showed minor underspending, often due to excluded expenses like unsupported documentation or duplications. Underspending in certain cases stemmed from administrative challenges, such as delays in submitting required documentation or discrepancies in expense reporting. Despite these issues, the overall execution rate for the contemporary arts projects was robust

Calculation of the final balance

	EEA Grants
Total reported eligible expenditure of the programme	
Total eligible expenditure incurred	€ 10,186,328.62
(-) Total (national) programme co-financing incurred (15.00 % rate)	€ 1,527,949.28
(=) Total grant contribution incurred (85.00 % grant rate)	€ 8,658,379.34
Amounts to be deducted from the total grant contribution¹	
(-) Total advance and interim payments to the programme from the Donors	€ 9,366,795.37
(-) Any co-financing from sources other than the Donors/national ²	€ 0.00
(-) Total interest earned reported	€ 0.00
Final balance	
(=) Final balance payable to the Programme Operator	€ 0.00
(=) Final balance payable to the Donors	€ 708,416.03

¹ Any funds reimbursed from Project Promoters to the Programme Operator, not paid to other projects or reimbursed to the FMO (ref. Article 9.4.1(b)(iv) of the Regulation should be reported as negative adjustments in the Financial report for the last reporting period (Annex 1). In this case, such funds will be subtracted from the "Total eligible expenditure incurred" of the programme.

² For example, financing from EU structural funds or other EU sources, from the Swiss contribution, etc. This row includes only the financing incurred during the programme eligibility period.

ANNEXES

*The Annexes are intended **for internal use only** and will not be published.*