

FINAL PROGRAMME REPORT
CULTURE
European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2014–2021
EEA FM 2014–2021

Executive Summary

Programme Objective

The Culture Programme, funded by the EEA Grants under the EEA FM 2014–2021, aimed to strengthen cultural cooperation in Portugal by supporting projects that fostered social and economic development through cooperation, entrepreneurship, and management.

The programme had a financial allocation of over €9 million and was managed by Património Cultural, I.P. (PC, I.P.) as Programme Operator (PO), with the Directorate-General for the Arts (DGARTES) as the national partner.

Overall Results

The Culture Programme played a key role in contributing to the objectives of the EEA Grants by reducing economic and social disparities and strengthening bilateral relations between Portugal and the donor countries. It promoted the revitalisation of cultural heritage, entrepreneurship, and artistic mobility, reducing cultural and economic inequalities, particularly in coastal and low-density regions.

The programme restored and repurposed heritage assets into community and cultural spaces, creating jobs and fostering local growth, and invested in the conservation of underwater heritage, strengthening technical expertise.

In terms of bilateral cooperation, it established strong collaborations with Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein, involving more than 50 Portuguese entities and around 30 from the donor countries. Projects such as Water World, FILMar, the Coastal Cultural Centre, and the Nautical Arts Centre strengthened ties through exchanges, exhibitions, and the sharing of maritime heritage. Other initiatives, such as Terra Incógnita and Campilhas Internacional, fostered joint artistic creation between Portuguese and donor-country artists, promoting cultural diversity and expanding international networks. These actions consolidated trust-based relationships, mutual learning, and lasting cultural cooperation.

Final financial execution reached 91% of the total allocation (EEA Grants + national contribution), demonstrating efficient use of available funds and contributing to the achievement of the Programme's strategic objectives.

Results Achieved

Cultural Heritage Management Enhanced (Outcome 1)

- Funding: €5.9 million
- No. of projects: 8 projects across the country, covering tangible and intangible heritage in areas such as shipbuilding, underwater archaeology, cinema, salt production, coastal cultural centres, and museums.
- Objectives: To preserve, revitalise, and promote cultural heritage; strengthen community participation; foster economic development; and encourage international cooperation.
- Results: Preservation and rehabilitation of coastal cultural heritage; safeguarding of traditional techniques (shipbuilding, salt production, naval carpentry, artisanal fishing); improved access to audiovisual heritage (digitisation of 267 films, 502 screenings in 45 cities); and economic stimulation through tourism, educational services, and new cultural offerings.
- Examples of projects:
 - De Fenais a Fenais
 - Centro Cultural Costeiro | Sesimbra
 - FILMar
 - Quinta do Sal Ciência Viva
 - Water World
- Lessons learned: Active participation and community engagement from the outset and flexibility in adapting to unforeseen circumstances are crucial; clear and transparent communication and setting realistic goals are essential.

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

- Funding: €3.4 million
- No. of projects: 9 multidisciplinary artistic programming projects across six regions of the country (including the Azores and Madeira).
- Objectives: To enhance artistic offerings, access, and participation in low-density territories; promote artistic mobility, international cooperation, and cultural diversity; and build the capacity of local actors to implement sustainable artistic projects.
- Results: 12 artistic residencies, participation of over 30 municipalities and direct involvement of 4,000 residents in creative processes; approximately 600 artistic productions; 45,000 participants in programme activities. The implementation of the nine projects involved 38 partners, including 17 from donor countries; 134 professionals received training in project design and implementation in the arts sector.
- Examples of projects:
 - Terra Incógnita
 - Campilhas Internacional
 - Dentes de Leão

- Lessons learned: Integrating local communities from the outset and involving municipalities as partners increase impact and sustainability; community-based artistic projects are demanding and require strong multidisciplinary teams; adaptability and flexibility in responding to unforeseen circumstances during project implementation are essential.

Bilateral Cooperation

Bilateral partnerships were crucial to maximising the impact of funded projects, resulting in intercultural collaboration, knowledge transfer, and sustainable outcomes. By bringing together Portuguese institutions and partners from Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein, these initiatives transcended geographic boundaries to address common challenges in cultural preservation, community engagement, and innovation.

Key results achieved:

- Nautical Arts Centre: Portuguese Norwegian cooperation to restore a replica of a 16th-century ship and build a *catraia* (traditional boat).
- FILMar: Digitisation of 267 films, creation of a digital laboratory, and joint screenings.
- Campilhas Internacional: Involvement of Norwegian and Liechtenstein artists in creations for rural and school audiences.
- INSUL'Arts: Integration of inclusive dance methodologies with Norwegian partners.
- Coastal Memory Fort: Re-enactment of 17th-century battles in augmented reality with the University of Oslo and the Nord Museum.

Lessons learned: Engaging local communities and municipalities from the start increases impact and sustainability; bilateral cooperation requires adaptation to cultural and methodological differences, as well as overcoming logistical barriers; formalising cooperation agreements early is essential to ensuring continuity; flexibility and the ability to align objectives with partners expertise strengthen results.

Sustainability and Future Impact

The programme's legacy includes stronger international cooperation networks, modernised cultural infrastructures, cultural literacy tools for young and diverse audiences, and a set of replicable best practices for future programmes.

Recommendations

- Involve local communities from the start of projects;
- Formalise bilateral cooperation agreements early on;
- Strengthen the financial and institutional sustainability of projects;
- Promote multidisciplinary and flexible teams to manage unforeseen circumstances.