



Long Profile

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POLAND

Long Cultural Policy Profile

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1. Cultural policy system

1.1. Objectives, main features and background

The contemporary cultural policy of the Republic of Poland is an intentional and systematic intervention of central and local governments in the field of culture and its industries. Cultural policy is based on the welfare state model and combines the state's responsibility for fostering cultural development and preserving national heritage with market reality, digital transformation and the growing importance of creative industries, technological innovation and sustainable development. It can be characterised by a high degree of decentralisation, in which a substantial amount of responsibility for supporting and financing culture lies with local authorities. The whole system provides a guarantee for a relatively stable operation of a high number of public cultural institutions.

Both the goals and principles of the cultural policy in Poland are formulated in accordance with standards established by democratic European states. As the other EU member states, Poland is free to develop cultural policies in its own way, without the unification of cultural institutions, setting their own goals and determining priorities. Poland implements this autonomy to the full extent, which can be especially observed in case of assigning new priorities to cultural policies, whose characteristics are strongly determined by the political programme of a ruling party in a given period.

The current goals of Polish cultural policy are:

- Preservation of national and cultural identity;
- Assurance of equal access to culture;
- Promotion of creative output and high-quality cultural goods and services;
- Diversification of cultural offer, taking into account the variety of social groups;
- Strengthening the social and economic sustainability of artistic and cultural work;
- Supporting digital transformation, media literacy and innovation in the cultural and creative sectors;
- Increasing territorial accessibility to culture and support for local cultural institutions;
- Strengthening international cultural cooperation, including within the framework of the European Union.

The current principles of Polish cultural policy:

- Decentralisation of decision-making processes regarding the organisation and financing of cultural activities;
- Fostering community participation in decision-making processes by organising expert panels and initiating public discussions regarding possible solutions for key problems;
- Ensuring the transparency of decision-making processes;
- Applying the principle of subsidiarity: decisions concerning culture are made by those, to whom they pertain. Central authorities cannot make decisions concerning local affairs instead of local governments, unless they have been specifically authorised to do so;
- Supporting evidence-based cultural policy through research, data collection and long-term strategic planning;
- Strengthening institutional pluralism and the autonomy of public cultural institutions.

Following the parliamentary elections of 15 October 2023 and the formation of Donald Tusk's coalition government in December 2023, national cultural policy entered a period of institutional and strategic reorientation. The new government declared a shift toward rebuilding dialogue with the cultural sector, strengthening transparency in the governance of public institutions, supporting broader access to culture, improving social protection mechanisms for artists and creators, and developing a long-term strategic framework through work on the Strategy for Culture 2050. At the same time, the reform of public media governance, the implementation of copyright reforms related to the Digital Single Market Directive, the development of creative industries and debates concerning artificial intelligence, sustainability and cultural labour became central topics of contemporary cultural policy in Poland.

Background

We can identify two basic periods that characterise the development of Polish cultural policy in the last 75 years.

Both are directly linked to the political system implemented in Poland during each period, i.e., the period 1945-1989 was characterised by real socialism and the period from 1989 onwards is characterised by parliamentary democracy and a market economy.

Distinguishing features of the first period include limited sovereignty, a one-party system and a planned economy. Cultural activities were organised under a system characterised by a high level of centralisation, institutionalisation and a monopoly of state property. The decision-making process regarding the development of cultural activities was strongly politicised and the creative arts were subject to political censorship. The principles of cultural policy were created by both the Ministry of Culture and Arts, and the Cultural Division of the Central Committee of the PZPR (Polish Communist Party). At the same time, the growth rate of public cultural expenditure was higher than the growth rate of the GDP, which gave the state legitimacy to act in this field. The "Fund of Development for Culture" was established in 1982 as a means to secure this position. Between 1982 and 1989, expenditure on culture within the overall state budget rose from 1.25% to 1.81%. This relatively high level of public funding for culture enabled wider access to cultural goods and services and a feeling that professional stabilisation for artists' working conditions was being achieved.

In the beginning of the second period – since 1989 – Poland has undergone a process of political and economic transformations, while the state re-established its new responsibilities of a social nature. Those responsibilities were formulated in the preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland.

The major changes which have taken place in the cultural sector since 1989 revolve around the following principles:

The implementation of the right of freedom of artistic creation, education and use of cultural assets, as well as to conduct scientific research and announce their results, granted by the Constitution (1997).

The creation of a new legal framework, allowing to organise and conduct cultural activities within a market economy (Act on Organising and Conducting Cultural Activity of 25 October 1991, with later

amendments and annexes; Act of Law on Associations of 7 April 1989, with later amendments and annexes; and a number of other legal solutions).

Changes in the public responsibilities for culture came in the wake of a more general process of decentralisation of state powers and the subsequent reform of several laws.

The decentralisation of power of the public administration concerning culture – transferring the majority of cultural institutions from the central government to local governments, operating at three levels: provincial (Voivodeship), district (Poviat) and municipal/communal (Gmina). The responsibility for local cultural activities and the establishment of local cultural institutions is shared between the provincial, district and municipal administrations.

The privatisation of the majority of cultural industries, previously owned by the central (socialist) state.

A true eruption of civic organisations in the cultural sector – in the 1990s, foundations and associations started to be formed. Although for many years non-governmental organisations were not treated as fully equal partners of the state and local governments in the field of culture, their role gradually increased after Poland's accession to the European Union and further strengthened after 2023. The coalition government formed after the parliamentary elections of October 2023 declared a stronger emphasis on dialogue with civil society organisations, participatory governance and the inclusion of NGOs in strategic cultural policymaking, grant programmes and local cultural development.

In 2003-2004 efforts were made to prepare Poland for gaining access to EU funds, especially the EU's Structural Funds. In this context, emphasis has been placed on developing regional approaches to the development of culture. The awareness of the significance of culture as a development factor is increasing in the face of dynamic socio-economic and technological transformations. Categories such as cultural industries and creative industries appear. The concept of the creative economy is being defined, in order to highlight the creative component in production, not only for symbolic goods, i.e. cultural goods. The scope of public funding has been expanded. Currently, it refers to the main cultural domains together with cultural and creative industries. This can be seen, for example, in the subsidy programs of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. In the 2020s, the role of cultural and creative industries expanded further in Polish cultural policy. Increasing attention has been devoted to digital transformation, video games, design, audiovisual production, fashion and innovation-oriented creative sectors. Public policies increasingly combine cultural goals with economic development, technological innovation, international competitiveness and sustainability.

Since 2018, after years of absence in both government policy and public debate, the topic of developing a support system for artists, creators and performers has been back on the agenda. Currently, government research-based work on a new law on professional artist rights is pending. It is worth noting the participatory nature, which means that artistic circles are broadly included in its development. In January 2026 the Ministry presented in the Sejm a draft act on social security for professional artists. The draft introduces the status of a professional artist and temporary co-financing of social and health insurance contributions for artists with low and irregular income.

Main features of the current cultural policy model (in the profile authors' opinion)

After 1989, culture and its management in Poland underwent substantial changes, as already touched upon above. In the 1990s, the transformation from planned to market economy, as well as administrative reforms, have extorted a series of adaptation processes within the cultural sector, many of which could be described as radical in their nature. Even though those processes could not be considered as the result of strategic thinking regarding cultural development, but rather as by-products of the administrative changes that Poland had undergone, they still brought many positive effects.

On the one hand, cultural stakeholders, such as artists, creators, performers and producers or managers, engage freely in the discussion regarding innovative methods of cultural management, cross-sectoral partnerships or the economic importance of culture. They operate and create within various cultural fields and industries, expressing their passion through civic engagement and activities, applying new technologies and constantly developing the third sector in Poland. Drawing examples from international models, they actively search for and utilise diverse financial resources, including EU funding and private donations. On the other hand, the decentralisation of cultural administration allowed all levels of local governments to focus on strategic planning in the area of cultural development.

In the 2020s, the cultural policy model in Poland became increasingly shaped by issues related to digital transformation, sustainability, social security of artists, public media governance and the growing role of cultural and creative industries in economic development. Public debate concerning culture increasingly extends beyond traditional artistic fields and includes questions related to artificial intelligence, platform economies, copyright reform, media literacy and the regulation of digital environments.

The post-pandemic period also intensified discussions on structural precarity in the cultural sector, especially among freelance artists, creators and cultural workers operating within project-based and unstable employment systems. In response, public authorities initiated legislative work on new mechanisms of social and health insurance support for professional artists, while local governments and cultural institutions increasingly focused on resilience, accessibility and long-term institutional sustainability.

At the same time, tensions concerning the governance of public institutions and public media revealed the continuing political significance of culture in Poland. Debates regarding transparency, institutional autonomy, pluralism and participation became central elements of cultural policy discussions after the parliamentary elections of 2023.

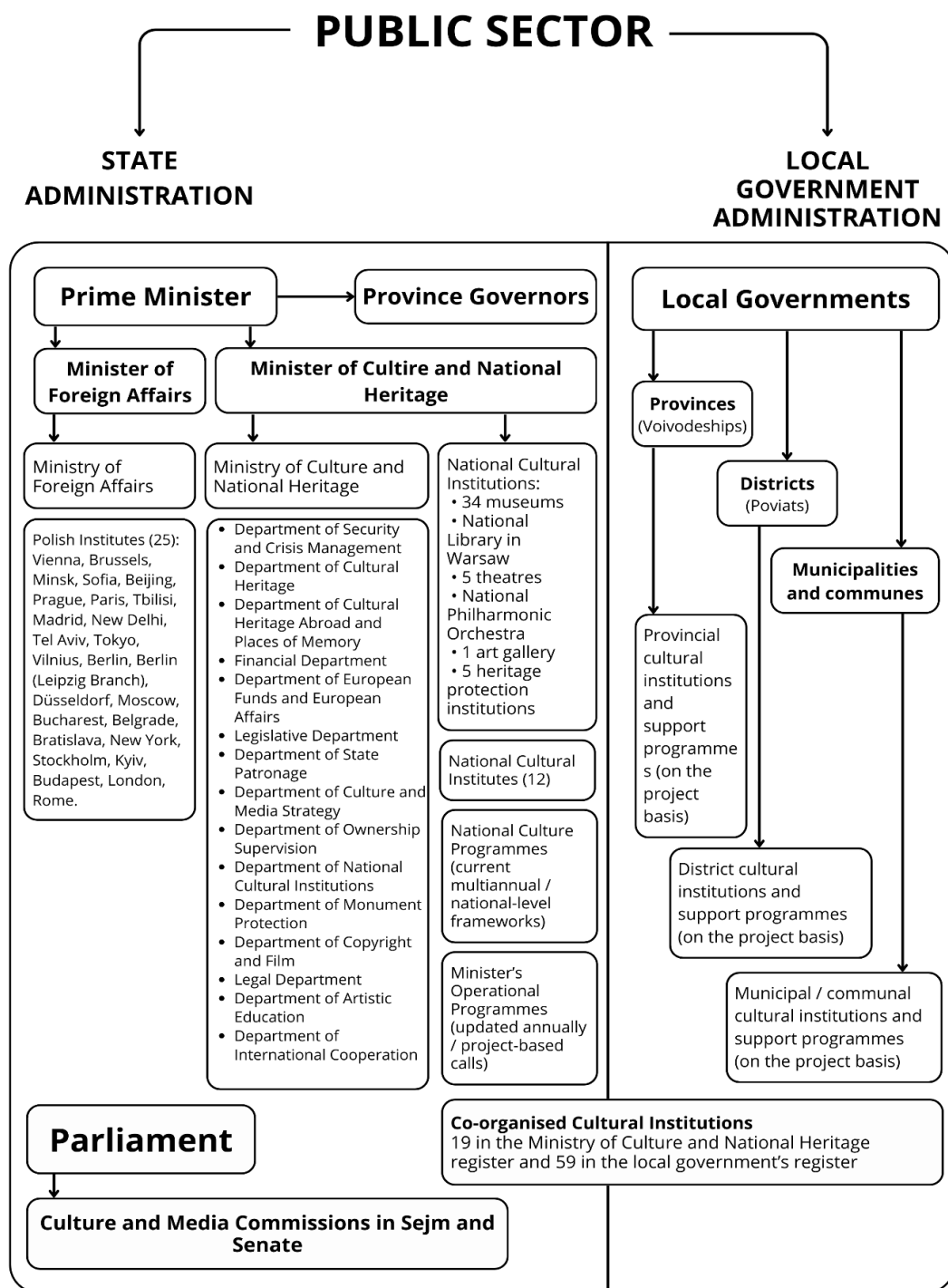
Overall, Poland and its cultural sector have demonstrated a strong capacity to adapt to changing political, economic and technological conditions. Cultural institutions, NGOs, artists and creative entrepreneurs actively seek new organisational models, international partnerships and innovative forms of cultural participation. However, contemporary challenges increasingly concern not only adaptation to globalisation and economic crises, but also the long-term sustainability of cultural labour, digital transformation, demographic change, climate policy and the growing influence of artificial intelligence on cultural production and distribution.

When viewed from the perspective of 2026, many structural reforms in the cultural sector still remain incomplete. This concerns in particular the stability of cultural financing, the social protection of artists, public media governance, equal territorial access to culture and the creation of coherent long-term strategic frameworks for cultural development. At the same time, recent years brought a visible strengthening of evidence-based policymaking, strategic planning and broader participation of cultural stakeholders in public debate.

The rapid development of generative artificial intelligence has become one of the most important contemporary challenges for cultural policy and the cultural and creative sectors (CCS). Public institutions, academic centres and professional organisations increasingly debate the implications of AI for copyright, artistic labour, cultural production, education and creative autonomy. At the same time, cultural institutions and creative enterprises are gradually incorporating AI-based tools into their everyday operational and artistic practices, making digital transformation one of the defining characteristics of the contemporary Polish cultural policy landscape.

1.2. Domestic governance system

1.2.1. ORGANISATIONAL ORGANIGRAM



1.2.2. NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

The central state administration is the main actor which sets cultural policy objectives and funding principles. The main policy-maker is the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. Nevertheless, other ministers also have the authority to establish cultural institutions (for example, the Polish Army Museum is subordinated to the Ministry of National Defence).

The main tasks of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage include:

- The preparation of the draft state budget in part at the Minister's disposal;
- Taking care of the national fields of theatre, music, ballet, opera, stage art, fine arts, literature, museology, folk culture, cultural education, and the amateur art movement, and of the cultural exchange with foreign countries;
- Issuing opinions on draft legal acts and developing them in terms of formal and legal matters;
- The execution and coordination of the implementation of tasks resulting from government policy on the protection of monuments; Initiating activities to maintain and popularise the national and state traditions;
- The care and supervision of artistic education;
- Carrying out tasks in the field of audiovisual policy;
- Developing strategic cultural policy frameworks related to digital transformation, creative industries, sustainability and international cultural cooperation;
- Coordinating activities connected with copyright reform, artificial intelligence and social security mechanisms for artists and cultural professionals.

The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage includes the Minister's Political Cabinet and the 21 organisational units.

The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage is the founding body and co-owner (with local government units) of 81 cultural institutions. These institutions are located in all sixteen voivodeships (provinces) and consist of theatres, operas, philharmonics, orchestras, museums, as well as cultural and art centres. Among them are institutions of special importance for the Polish heritage, culture and art, such as the Grand Theatre, the National Opera, the National Museum and the National Library (see 1.3.3 for more information).

The Minister of Culture and National Heritage also appoints specific cultural institutions that support a given field of culture. These are, for example: the Institute of Music and Dance, the Book Institute, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute (responsible for the promotion of Polish culture abroad), the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, the National Heritage Board of Poland and the Fryderyk Chopin Institute. These institutes conduct regranting and research activities, organise festivals and competitions, cooperate with different stakeholders and international partners, etc.

In recent years, the institutional system supporting culture has expanded to include stronger support for cultural and creative industries, digital transformation and international cultural promotion. The growing role of institutions such as the Institute of Creative Industries reflects the increasing importance of sectors including video games, design, fashion and audiovisual production in contemporary cultural policy.

The Minister's programmes are aimed at co-financing project-related tasks in the field of culture, excluding the permanent cultural activity of entities. These programmes are meant for cultural institutions, non-governmental organisations, film institutions, schools and universities, local government units, business entities, churches and religious associations. Natural persons are not entitled to submit applications, except for the Monument Protection programme.

In 2025 the Ministry announced reforms of the Minister's Programmes, including clearer assessment criteria, simplified procedures and greater accessibility for smaller entities. In 2026, the Ministry planned 30 Ministerial Programmes with a total budget of PLN 562 million (EUR 132.24 million¹), representing an increase of PLN 38 million (EUR 8.94 million). The programmes continued to cover heritage, books and reading, artistic fields, cultural education, infrastructure, international promotion and creative sectors.

Together with the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage is responsible for arts education at all levels of education.

The Cultural Commissions that are located in two houses/chambers of the Parliament of the Republic of Poland (Sejm and Senat) are responsible for legislation in the field of culture. Their role is to:

- Propose candidates for positions in the state cultural policy administration;
- Amend, consider and present opinions for legalisation or legal acts;
- Consider reports and communications of the Minister of Culture;
- Analyse activities in the cultural field; and
- Prepare responses on budget related requests.

The Commission of Culture and Mass Media of the Sejm specifically deals with issues arising in the following fields: creativity, dissemination of culture, protection of cultural heritage, press, radio and television, publishing houses, socio-cultural movement and cultural co-operation on the international forum/foreign cultural cooperation.

1.2.3. REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

There are cultural administration bodies located at the voivodeship (regional), poviast (district) and municipal levels.

Each level of local government has a statutory obligation to undertake activities in the area of culture and the protection and care of monuments. The most important element of this obligation is the financing of local government cultural institutions and defining their own cultural policy.

In recent years, the role of local governments in cultural policy has become even more important due to the high level of decentralisation of the Polish cultural system. Local authorities increasingly shape not only the financing of culture, but also strategic priorities connected with accessibility, local identity, social inclusion, sustainability and digital transformation. Many municipalities and regions have developed their own cultural development strategies, often linked with broader social, educational and climate-related policies.

The catalog of initiatives implemented by local governments is wide, including:

- Carrying out tasks and projects supporting cultural phenomena, supporting creativity and cultural potentials, and promoting the culture and national heritage sector;

¹ The amounts were converted using the National Bank of Poland exchange rate for April 2026, which was 4.25 PLN/EUR.

- Coordinating and organising cultural exchange in cooperation with domestic and foreign regions;
- Supporting tasks carried out by institutions and organisations of the cultural sector and entities acting for the protection of monuments;
- Organising various events, competitions (including grant and prize competitions) and projects;
- Supporting local cultural centres, NGOs and grassroots cultural initiatives;
- Implementing projects related to digital culture, media education and social participation;
- Developing sustainable cultural infrastructure and improving accessibility for people with disabilities and residents of smaller towns and rural areas.

The most common forms of financing culture by local government units include: subsidies; grants; material or financial assistance; granting patronage; organisation of competitions; public procurement; civic budgets; village council funds; and district funds.

After 2023 elections, increasing attention has also been devoted to transparent grant procedures, participatory budgeting and cooperation with civil society organisations. Local governments increasingly use European Union funds, including FENKS and National Recovery and Resilience Plan (KPO) resources, to modernise cultural infrastructure, improve energy efficiency and support the digital transformation of local cultural institutions. At the same time, local cultural policy in Poland continues to face important challenges related to financial inequalities between regions, rising operational costs of cultural institutions and uneven access to cultural services between large urban centres and peripheral areas.

1.2.4. LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Please find the available information on this subject in 1.2.3.

1.2.5. MAIN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS

Although Poland does not have a fully developed QUANGO-type model in the field of culture, non-governmental organisations, professional associations and expert communities increasingly participate in cultural policymaking processes through consultations, advisory bodies, public debates and grant mechanisms. Their role became more visible after the parliamentary elections of 2023, when the new government declared the rebuilding of dialogue with artists, NGOs, local governments and cultural audiences as one of the priorities of cultural policy.

After 2023, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage increasingly emphasised consultation-based legislative work and participatory governance. Public consultations and expert dialogue accompanied proposed reforms concerning cultural activity, museums, heritage protection, public media governance, reprographic fees, copyright reform and the social security system for artists and creators.

The Council of Non-governmental Culture Organisations

The Minister of Culture and National Heritage established the Council of Non-governmental Culture Organisations in march 2007. The Council is a consultative and advisory body for the Minister. The main aims of the Council are to submit proposals and opinions on collaboration forms between the Ministry and the NGOs as well as judgement of legal acts important for NGOs operating in the cultural

sector. The Council also prepares the proposals for the use of European Funds in the culture sector. The representativeness and transparency of the Council have nevertheless remained subjects of criticism among parts of the NGO sector and independent cultural communities. Debates continue regarding the need for broader representation of smaller organisations, interdisciplinary initiatives, research institutions and grassroots cultural actors in advisory and consultation processes. Questions concerning transparency, accessibility of decision-making and equal participation remain important issues in discussions on cultural governance in Poland.

Many non-governmental organisations and institutions act for the benefit of local societies. They aim at increasing the level of participation in culture and activation of citizens through raising awareness and knowledge as well as supporting creativity. The examples below show the diversity of the actions.

Advocacy groups

There are multiple advocacy groups functioning in Poland, e.g.: Polish Filmmakers' Association; Polish Music

Council; Polish Composers' Union; Polish Performing Artists' Union; Polish Visual Artists' Union; Polish Folk

Artists' Association; Polish Writers' Union; The Authors' Society; Music Export Poland; and the Coalition of the Summer Literary Festivals. Their main purpose is to associate artists, authors and creators of different professions, to take care of their interests, promote their branches and manage copyright issues.

In the 2020s, advocacy organisations increasingly engaged in debates concerning copyright reform, artificial intelligence, streaming platforms, reprographic fees and the social protection of artists and creators. Professional associations and collective management organisations became important participants in legislative discussions related to the implementation of the EU Digital Single Market Directive and the development of the new social security system for artists.

Social Dialogue Commissions for Culture at the municipal/communal (gmina) levels

The Social Dialogue or Culture Commissions are created by non-governmental organisations and the local authorities as part of the "Cooperation Programme". The role of the Commissions is to act as an initiating and advisory body for local authorities as well as opinion making for major legal acts considering the functioning of NGOs, setting up action programme priorities of collaboration between the NGOs and the local authorities and nomination of councils' experts responsible for decisions of grants giving bodies on the local level.

At the local level, social dialogue mechanisms increasingly support participatory cultural governance, cooperation between public institutions and NGOs, and the co-creation of local cultural development strategies. In many cities, these structures also became platforms for discussions concerning accessibility, sustainability, cultural inclusion and the role of culture in local democratic participation.

1.2.6. TRANSVERSAL CO-OPERATION

From 1998 until Poland's accession into the EU in 2004, inter-ministerial co-operation in the field of culture has been extensively organised around the programmes devoted to the preparation of Poland for its membership. The European Committee of the Council of Ministers was formed in

March 2004 to operate as a decision-making forum and is responsible for drafting EU integration policy. Afterwards, the transversal co-operation was devoted to the preparation of a few cities in Poland for the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture 2016, which was eventually won by Wrocław. In recent years, cooperation between ministries has intensified, particularly in connection with Poland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2025, the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (KPO), European Funds for Infrastructure, Climate and Environment (FEnIKS), and the development of long-term strategic frameworks such as the Strategy for Culture 2050.

Other types of cooperation include the International Centre for Training and Research on Cultural Heritage in danger, which is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the Ministry of National Defence. This cooperation was initiated by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage in 2017. In the second quarter of 2020, a specialised military centre was launched in Garrison Wrocław, providing training for civilians and military personnel involved in the protection of cultural heritage in an armed conflict. The centre follows the traditions of Poland's involvement in multinational missions, carried out under the patronage of international organisations for the sake of endangered cultural heritage.

After 2022, questions concerning the protection of cultural heritage in situations of armed conflict gained additional importance due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Cooperation between cultural institutions, security structures and international partners increasingly includes issues related to emergency protection of cultural heritage, documentation of losses and training activities concerning cultural heritage protection in crisis situations.

Agreements on cooperation in the promotion of Polish culture abroad between the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs entered into force at the beginning of 2019. In the first year of its operation, over PLN 6 million was allocated to the creation of a new programme addressed to national and co-led cultural institutions. Under the programme, projects will be implemented in key countries from the point of view of Polish foreign policy. Under the agreement, both ministries will also coordinate activities under their own financial support mechanisms, as well as strengthen joint communication activities. Moreover, both ministries will conduct training together and ensure the best possible flow of information between their subordinate units.

International cultural cooperation intensified further during the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2025. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute and the National Centre for Culture jointly coordinated an extensive cultural programme organised in Poland and abroad under the slogan "Culture Sparks Unity". The Presidency programme included hundreds of cultural events, exhibitions, concerts, performances and educational initiatives aimed at strengthening European cultural cooperation and promoting contemporary Polish culture internationally.

Cooperation between the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and institutions responsible for digital policy increasingly focuses on digital accessibility, media literacy, artificial intelligence and the digital transformation of cultural institutions. Recent programmes supported the development of digital infrastructure, digitisation of collections, digital competences and access to online cultural services, especially in local cultural centres and smaller municipalities.

In recent years, inter-ministerial cooperation has also increasingly included activities related to sustainability, energy modernisation of cultural infrastructure, accessibility for people with disabilities and support for local cultural institutions financed through European Union mechanisms and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

1.3. Cultural institutions

1.3.1. OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

In Poland, cultural institutions are functioning as public, private and non-profit entities. Non-profit organisations in culture are foundations, associations and trade unions. Private cultural institutions operate most often in the cultural and creative sectors. The prevailing majority of Polish cultural institutions are public. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, as well as other ministries (e.g. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of National Defence) and local government units have the right to establish cultural institutions. In most cases, the responsibility to maintain funds for cultural institutions rests with local authorities. Cultural institutions, in accordance with the relevant law, create, popularise and protect culture, i.e. a cultural institution supports and promotes creativity, education and cultural education, cultural activities and initiatives, and finally implements tasks for the protection of monuments. For many (often the most well-known) cultural institutions, state subsidies are the most important or one of the most important sources of funds for statutory purposes and the maintenance of the institution.

At present, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage is responsible for co-leading with local government units 81 cultural institutions. These institutions are located in all sixteen voivodeships and include theatres, operas, philharmonics, orchestras, museums, as well as cultural and art centres. These are institutions of special importance for Polish heritage, culture and art such as the Grand Theatre - National Opera, the National Museum and the National Library. Among these institutions are cultural institutes that support a given field of culture. Examples are: the Institute of Music and Dance, the Book Institute, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute (responsible for the promotion of Polish culture abroad), the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, the National Heritage Board of Poland or the Fryderyk Chopin Institute. These institutes conduct research activities, often award grants or organise competitions.

Among public institutions, units for which the local government is the founding body are the majority, hence the dominant position of local government expenditure on culture in this type of expenditure on the national scale (see also 7.1.2).

In Poland, there is an uneven geographical distribution of cultural institutions, and thus uneven access to culture. Almost one third of all cultural institutions are located in three voivodeships (Mazowieckie, Małopolskie and Śląskie). Theatres and music institutions, multiplexes and most museums, galleries and art salons are located in cities, and residents of rural areas have at their disposal, above all, common rooms and cultural centres and public libraries.

1.3.2. DATA ON SELECTED PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Table 1: Cultural institutions, by sector and domain (2024)

Domain	Cultural Institution (Subdomain)	Public Sector — Number (2024)	Trend last 5 years (ln %)	Private Sector — Number (2024)	Trend last 5 years (ln %)
<i>Cultural Heritage</i>	<i>Cultural heritage sites (recognised)</i>	79 935	+2,47%	–	–
<i>Cultural Heritage</i>	<i>Archaeological sites</i>	7 830	+0,45%	–	–
<i>Museums</i>	<i>Museum institutions</i>	705	-4,6%	277	+25,91%
<i>Archives</i>	<i>Archive institutions</i>	32	-3,03%	–	–
<i>Visual arts</i>	<i>Art galleries / exhibition halls</i>	205	+5,13%	105	-20,45%
<i>Performing arts</i>	<i>Scenic and stable spaces for theatre (theatres & music institutions)</i>	174	-7,45%	32	–
<i>Libraries</i>	<i>Libraries</i>	7 541	-4,31%	1 281	+7,83%
<i>Audiovisual</i>	<i>Cinemas</i>	347	+7,10%	192	-5,88%
<i>Interdisciplinary</i>	<i>Socio-cultural centres / cultural houses</i>	3 637	-7,9%	274	-10,46%
<i>Others</i>	<i>Paramuseum institutions</i>	230	+91,67%	129	+248,65%

Source: Central Statistical Office

1.3.3. PUBLIC CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS: TRENDS AND STRATEGIES

The state is the founding body of national cultural institutions and the local government administration (voivodeship, districts and municipalities) of local cultural institutions.

In 2026, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage remains the organiser or co-organiser of a broad network of national cultural institutions, including museums, theatres, operas, philharmonics, libraries, heritage institutions and specialised institutes responsible for research, education and

international cultural promotion. The exact number of institutions changes over time due to organisational reforms and co-management agreements with local governments.

It is clearly visible that local government entities are the dominant founder of cultural institutions in Poland. The state runs a relatively small number of units, focusing primarily on the activities of museums. When it comes to theatres, the overwhelming majority is owned by local governments, mainly cities with poviatic rights and voivodships. Libraries are almost exclusively run by local governments, mainly municipal governments. The ownership of galleries and exhibition institutions is distributed among local governments, in particular cities with poviatic status, and private ownership. Galleries, next to cinemas, are the most privatized cultural institutions. Local government cinemas are mostly run by municipalities; the same is the case for community centers and related institutions.

The long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to influence the functioning of cultural institutions, particularly in the context of financial stability, audience rebuilding and digital transformation. However, by 2026 the central challenges concern rising operational and energy costs, uneven territorial access to culture, sustainability of financing models and the growing need for institutional adaptation to technological and social change. Cultural institutions increasingly combine on-site and digital activities and are expected to respond to challenges connected with accessibility, climate policy, demographic change and artificial intelligence.

Apart from the current problems, there are systemic issues as well. The financing system of cultural institutions focuses on public expenditure on culture and treats financing from private sources as complementary. The implemented forms of support for culture under this model led to an increase in its structural disease, i.e. the dependence of the functioning of the cultural sector on short-term subsidies and grants, which results in the lack of stability and the possibility of long-term planning in culture.

Since 2024 the Ministry has also declared a change in the financing model of institutions led and co-led by the state, with a gradual limitation of earmarked subsidies in favour of subject subsidies. The stated aim is to improve stability, planning and efficiency of public spending in culture.

Questions concerning institutional autonomy, transparency of governance and the stability of public financing became particularly important after the political changes of 2023 and the public debate surrounding public media and cultural institutions. In recent years, discussions on cultural governance increasingly emphasise the importance of transparent appointment procedures, long-term strategic planning, evidence-based policymaking and stronger participation of cultural communities in decision-making processes.

1.4. International cooperation

1.4.1. PUBLIC ACTORS AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

The main institutional actors in the promotion of Polish culture abroad are the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other ministries and agencies that also play an important role in this field are the Ministry of Education and other public or private institutions and organisations such as the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, the Book Institute, the Polish

National Tourist Office, the Polish Film Institute, and the Polish Information and Foreign Investments Agency.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs realises its tasks in the field of international cultural cooperation chiefly through the Polish Institutes based in other countries. Co-operation is also undertaken through Polish embassies and (cultural and science) attachés, and the departments of the Polish Academy of Science in Berlin, Paris, Rome and Vienna.

The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are responsible for working out the priorities of foreign state cultural policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs ratifies the cultural agreements on the government level. Poland has many bilateral agreements with countries from all over the world. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage supervises the application of these agreements and the implementation of cultural cooperation programmes.

In the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, international cultural cooperation is the responsibility of the Department of International Cooperation. The main task of the Department is to coordinate international cooperation in the field of culture. It also has the role of cooperating with Polish organisations abroad and of realising international agreements. The Department also supervises the work of the Adam Mickiewicz Institute and the International Cultural Centre in Krakow.

The Adam Mickiewicz Institute is a state cultural institution which aims to popularise Polish culture around the world and cooperate on cultural projects with other countries. The Institute was founded on 1 March 2000 on the basis of a directive issued by the then Minister of Culture and Art. The goal of the Institute's activity is to promote Poland abroad by popularising the historical and contemporary achievements of Polish culture, in accordance with the fundamental guidelines of Poland's foreign policy and cultural policy.

After 2023, international cultural policy increasingly emphasised cultural diplomacy within the European Union framework, support for democratic resilience, cooperation with Ukraine and the promotion of contemporary creative sectors as instruments of international visibility and soft power. Greater importance has also been attached to interdisciplinary projects combining culture, technology, design, digital media and international mobility of artists and cultural professionals.

In recent years, an increasing role in cultural relations has been carried out by cultural institutions founded by local government administrations as well as NGOs. Many of these institutions help to influence and shape Polish cultural relations with other countries.

In the first half of 2025, Poland held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the second time since joining the EU. The Presidency's programme was organised around the broader theme of security and European resilience, while cultural policy formed an important element of activities within the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS). In the field of culture, the Polish Presidency focused on supporting young creators and artists entering the labour market, discussing the future of the Creative Europe programme after 2027 and strengthening the role of culture in building European identity and social cohesion.

International cultural cooperation in 2025 was strongly shaped by the cultural programme accompanying the Presidency, coordinated by the National Centre for Culture and the Adam Mickiewicz Institute under the slogan "Culture Sparks Unity". According to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the programme comprised more than 550 cultural events organised both in

Poland and abroad between January and June 2025, including exhibitions, concerts, theatre performances, film screenings, literary projects and educational activities. The Presidency programme was implemented through dedicated initiatives and grant schemes, including Synergies, Artistic Education, Promotion of Polish Culture Abroad and Inspiring Culture. The programme aimed to strengthen cultural cooperation within the European Union, promote contemporary Polish culture internationally and emphasise the role of culture in democratic resilience and intercultural dialogue.

As part of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Ministry of Culture identified the situation of young artists as one of its leading cultural priorities.

The main events dedicated to this topic included:

- Conference “Young Artists – Challenges and Reality” 9–10 April 2025, Warsaw, Zachęta – National Gallery of Art. This was the flagship Presidency event devoted to the situation of emerging artists in Europe. It gathered artists, cultural institutions, policymakers, academics, and representatives of the creative industries.
- Expert Forum on the Future of Culture and Creative Sectors in the EU 4 December 2025, International Cultural Centre (MCK), Kraków. This international expert forum focused on the future of culture and creative sectors within the EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034. One of panels was dedicated to situation of artists. Recommendations from the forum were intended to contribute to future EU cultural funding frameworks and policy priorities.

At the same time, Poland continued its cultural promotion activities during Expo 2025 in Osaka, presenting projects related to contemporary culture, design, visual arts and creative industries. Recent international cultural policy has increasingly emphasised the role of creative sectors, new technologies and interdisciplinary artistic practices in the international promotion of Polish culture.

1.4.2. EUROPEAN / INTERNATIONAL ACTORS AND PROGRAMMES

Poland became a party to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1976. Since then, it has been involved in the work of the World Heritage Committee aimed at the preservation and conservation of cultural properties.

In recent years, Poland’s international heritage policy increasingly focused not only on the protection of monuments and World Heritage sites, but also on issues related to the protection of cultural heritage during armed conflicts, climate-related risks and digital documentation of heritage resources. After 2022, particular importance was attached to international cooperation concerning the protection of Ukrainian cultural heritage endangered by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In the framework of co-operation with the Council of Europe, the Polish activity is aimed at the enhancement of the protection of monuments on the international level. This means comprehensive Polish involvement in some important Council of Europe projects: European Heritage Days (since 1999) and HEREIN (since 2000).

Poland also participates in broader European discussions concerning cultural democracy, media literacy, digital culture and sustainable heritage management within the frameworks of the Council of Europe and the European Union. Poland actively participates in the European Union’s Creative Europe programme and other EU cultural initiatives supporting international mobility, cultural

cooperation, audiovisual sectors and cultural innovation. In recent years, particular attention has been devoted to strengthening the international competitiveness of Polish cultural and creative sectors, including design, audiovisual production, gaming and digital culture.

Poland is a member of Visegrad Group (V4), which reflects the efforts of the countries of the Central European region to work together in a number of fields of common interest relating to European integration. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia have historically been part of one civilisation. They share cultural and intellectual values and common roots of religious traditions which they wish to preserve and further strengthen.

Poland is also a member of Ars Baltica, which was created in 1989 as a forum for multilateral cultural cooperation with an emphasis on common projects within the Baltic Sea Region. It gives priority to art, culture and cultural history. The intention of Ars Baltica is to enhance cultural identity in the Baltic Sea Region and also to realise projects of European significance. Its goal is to implement common projects, with the intention that they will become regular networks of individuals and organisations. Co-operation between the members is carried out by meetings, exchanges of information and joint projects. There are ten member countries: Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden.

1.4.3. NGO'S AND DIRECT PROFESSIONAL COOPERATION

Non-governmental organisations continue to play a key role in the development of intercultural dialogue, cultural participation and international cultural cooperation in Poland. In recent years, NGOs have increasingly engaged in projects related to migration, minority rights, democratic resilience, media literacy and support for refugees, particularly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Intercultural dialogue activities are often implemented through partnerships with local governments, European institutions and international cultural networks.

The Foundation Pogranicze (Borderland), situated in Sejny, provides various programmes (together with the Centre Borderland of Arts, Cultures and Nations) for students, artists, cultural activists etc. Sejny is a small town near the Lithuanian border where the atmosphere of multiculturalism is still vibrant. (In the past it was a village inhabited by Jews, Poles, Lithuanians, Russians and Germans - a perfect example of the cultural blend that was characteristic of Poland before World War II). The Foundation is very interested in extending its projects that result in co-operation with European and world organisations involved in intercultural and trans-national issues. Sejny-based institutions are very active and give support to many initiatives aimed at promoting tolerance and peaceful co-existence of many ethnic and national groups.

Since Poland's accession to the European Union, international cultural cooperation has become increasingly diversified and institutionalised. In recent years, particular importance has been attached to cooperation with Ukraine, Eastern Partnership countries and European Union member states. After 2022, many cultural institutions and NGOs became actively involved in supporting Ukrainian artists, cultural workers and refugees through residency programmes, joint artistic projects and emergency cultural assistance initiatives. Cultural cooperation with non-EU European countries is supported via Swiss Grants and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, which are an important source of co-financing of activities based on bilateral cooperation with Switzerland,

Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland. EEA and Norwegian Funds continue to play an important role in financing international cultural cooperation, heritage protection, cultural accessibility and local cultural development projects in Poland. In recent years, these mechanisms increasingly supported initiatives related to sustainability, social inclusion, digital transformation and strengthening the resilience of cultural institutions and civil society.

2. Current cultural affairs

2.1. Key developments

Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004 and the growing availability of EU structural funds significantly accelerated the development of cultural infrastructure. During the years of the Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska) and Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe) coalition government (2007–2015), substantial investments were made in new cultural institutions and facilities, often co-financed by European funds. This period saw the construction of landmark buildings such as the new Mieczysław Karłowicz Philharmonic in Szczecin, alongside numerous museums, concert halls, and cultural centres across the country. The focus of cultural policy was placed on infrastructure development, cultural education, digitalisation programmes, and widening access to culture. At the same time, public debate increasingly addressed the socio-economic role of culture and cultural industries. However, despite large-scale investments, the government was criticised for insufficient attention to the precarious financial and professional situation of artists, which culminated in the first artists' strike organised in 2012 under the slogan "A Day Without Art."

Between 2015 and 2023, the parliamentary majority in Poland was held by the right-wing alliance "The United Right" (Zjednoczona Prawica), led by the political party Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość). Piotr Gliński served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Culture and National Heritage, and after 2020 as Minister of Culture, National Heritage and Sport. The priority framework of cultural policy during this period focused strongly on historically-oriented policies, including the preservation of monuments and the promotion of Polish history and identity, for example through the long-term programme commemorating the 100th anniversary of Polish independence. At the same time, the scope of state intervention in culture expanded to include cultural and creative industries such as video games, design and architecture.

During the public debate, representatives of the cultural sector accused the Minister of Culture of the interference in the internal affairs of public institutions, such as recruitment decisions and programming (conflicts arose surrounding such institutions as the Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk or the Polish Film Institute). Another strong criticism concerned the politicisation of the news broadcasted by public television.

Following the parliamentary elections of 15 October 2023, the United Right lost its parliamentary majority and a new coalition government led by Donald Tusk took office in December 2023. Since December 2023, the position of Minister of Culture and National Heritage has been held successively by Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz — a politician and former Minister of the Interior, Hanna Wróblewska — a cultural manager and art gallery director, and currently Marta Cienkowska — a public official involved in cultural development and cooperation with creative institutions.

In the field of culture, the new government declared a shift toward depoliticisation, greater transparency of decision-making processes, open competitions for directors of public cultural institutions, reform of ministerial grant programmes, broader dialogue with the cultural sector and renewed legislative work concerning the social security system for artists and cultural professionals.

After December 2023, the debate on public media intensified further. The new Minister of Culture replaced the management boards of public television, public radio and the Polish Press Agency (PAP), and placed public media companies into liquidation (see 2.4.3).

Since 2023, current cultural policy debates have focused on governance reforms, transparent recruitment procedures in public institutions, reform of the Minister's grant programmes, legislative work concerning artists' social security, implementation of internet royalties under the EU DSM framework, and the preparation of long-term strategic documents such as the Strategy for Culture 2050. Public support for cultural infrastructure has also continued through European Union funds as well as EEA and Norwegian financial. Since the end of 2023, there has been a broad replacement of directors of cultural institutions at both the national and local-government levels, while the government has more often than before declared and applied competitive selection procedures as a method for appointing new directors.

In 2025, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage announced work on a long-term "Strategy for Culture 2050", intended to become the first comprehensive strategic framework for the development of culture in Poland in several decades. According to the Ministry, the strategy is expected to address the long-term social, technological, territorial and economic challenges affecting the cultural sector, including demographic change, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, regional inequalities and sustainable development. As part of this process, the Ministry announced the establishment of a new Department of Analysis and Strategy responsible for coordinating strategic planning, cooperation with local governments and evidence-based cultural policy development.

The priorities presented by the Ministry after 2023 emphasise strengthening local and regional cultural institutions, improving access to culture outside major urban centres, supporting non-governmental organisations and continuing systemic legislative reforms concerning the status and social protection of artists and cultural professionals. The strategy also links culture more strongly with social cohesion, territorial development, media pluralism and democratic participation.

2.2. Cultural rights and ethics

The article 6 of the Polish Constitution imposes an obligation on the State to provide all Polish citizens with equal access to cultural goods, as well as to provide its citizens abroad with help to maintain their relations with national cultural heritage. Furthermore, the article 73 of the Constitution guarantees Polish citizens the right to freedom of artistic expression, to conduct scientific research and publish its results, freedom of education and freedom to use cultural goods. The Constitution also guarantees freedom of conscience and freedom of speech.

After 2023, debates on cultural rights and ethics increasingly concerned not only artistic freedom and minority rights, but also institutional pluralism and the independence of public media. The reform of public media became one of the central cultural and political issues under the new government. Issues related to discrimination, representation of minorities and inclusiveness in public media and cultural institutions continue to remain an important part of debates concerning cultural rights and ethics in Poland.

There are several bodies involved in the protection of the freedom of artistic expression and more broadly the right to freedom of speech. The main one responsible for monitoring, diagnosing and preventing the abuse of these rights is the Polish Ombudsman – an independent central office of the Republic of Poland. The office is elected for the term of five years by an act of Sejm and accepted by the Senate. The ombudsman can serve up to two terms. Others include non-governmental organisations, such as the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Amnesty International Poland, Stefan Batory Foundation or Press Freedom Monitoring Center.

The right to equal access to cultural goods in many cases is being exercised by local governments. According to Polish law, local authorities are obliged to organise and manage cultural activities in the form of creation of public cultural institutions, such as libraries and cultural centres.

2.3. Role of artists and cultural professionals

The right to protect the intellectual and material benefits accruing from scientific, literary and artistic production is guaranteed by the Act of 4 February 1994 on copyright and related rights. The exercise of these rights are entrusted to the collective management organisations, which in turn are regulated by the Act of 15 June 2018 on collective management of copyright and related rights. According to the information provided by the central government, currently there are 12 collective management organisations in Poland authorized by the Minister of Culture:

- KOPIPOL (creators of scientific and technical works)
- REPROPOL (press publishers)
- SAIW Copyright Polska (book publishers)
- SAWP (performers)
- SFP (filmmakers and audiovisual producers)
- STL (folklore creators)
- STOART (performers)
- ZAiKS (authors)
- ZASP (theater artists)
- ZPAF (photographers)
- ZPAP (visual artists)
- ZPAV (music and audiovisual producers)

A team of Creative Economy Research Centre of SWPS University led by prof. Dorota Ilczuk has been studying the situation of artists in Poland since 2012. These studies were aimed at diagnosing the specificity of the artists' labor market, analysing the professional situation of artists in Poland, exploring international experiences both in monitoring and analysing this area, and various forms of support provided to artists. It also was the first successful attempts in the history of post-war Poland to estimate the number of professionally active artists in Poland. Without knowing the size of the artistic milieu, it was impossible to calculate the costs of the planned support system for artists, and thus to introduce systemic changes in the cultural policy in Poland.

The research project was continued in subsequent years. In 2024, a second large-scale study entitled "Policzone i Policzeni 2024! Artyści, twórcy i wykonawcy w Polsce" ("Counted 2024! Artists, Creators and Performers in Poland") provided updated data on the size, socio-economic situation and

professional conditions of artists and creators in Poland. There are around 62 thousand people working in the following industries: music, architecture, visual arts, theatre, film, literature, dance, folk art, and interdisciplinary arts. The study confirmed the persistence of irregular income patterns, unstable employment conditions and limited access to social security mechanisms within the artistic sector. The updated research also reflected changes resulting from the post-pandemic cultural labour market and the growing diversification of artistic professions.

This state of affairs has been ignored in the public debate for many years, despite the artistic community's attempt to draw attention to it (with for example the artists' protest 'A Day Without Art' in 2012). In 2017, at the National Conference for Culture (OKK), the debate about artist's support began. The OKK Group of Experts was formed and they started to work on an *Act on the Rights of the Professional Artist*.

After 2023 elections, the government returned to legislative work on the social protection of artists and creators. However, the concept of the planned legislation has significantly changed in comparison with earlier proposals concerning the "status of the professional artist". The new draft Act on Professional Artists, presented in 2026, focuses primarily on social and health insurance mechanisms rather than on establishing a broad artists support scheme. The proposed system introduces a formal status of a professional artist and provides temporary subsidies to social and health insurance contributions for artists with low and irregular income. According to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the support mechanism is intended to supplement artists' contributions up to the minimum threshold required for social insurance coverage in the national Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) system. The subsidy mechanism is addressed mainly to artists whose income remains below a specified percentage of the minimum wage and is intended to reduce structural barriers in access to pension, health and sickness insurance.

2.4. Digital policy and developments

According to the Report on Digitisation of Polish Cultural Resources (prepared for the Congress of Polish Culture 2009), the digital resources of state archives are calculated at approximately 3 million scans; libraries at 300 thousand library units (ca. 1915-1917 million scans); and museums at about 300 thousand reproductions.

After 2023, digital cultural policy increasingly focused on copyright regulation, online distribution of cultural content and the impact of artificial intelligence on the cultural and creative sectors. In 2025, provisions implementing the EU Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market (DSM Directive) entered into force in Poland, including mechanisms concerning internet royalties for creators and publishers. The reform aimed to strengthen the bargaining position of creators and media entities in relation to digital platforms and online content distributors.

At the same time, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage restored the Copyright Law Forum as a platform for dialogue between public authorities, creators, collective management organisations and digital market actors. The Ministry also reactivated a specialised team for combating infringements of copyright and related rights. These activities increasingly address challenges connected with generative artificial intelligence, unauthorised online distribution of cultural content and the protection of creators' income in the digital environment.

An important development in Polish digital and copyright policy was the long-awaited reform of the reprographic fee system ("blank media levy"). In 2025 and 2026, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage initiated and finalised the process of updating the list of devices covered by reprographic fees for the first time in more than fifteen years. The reform replaced outdated devices such as VHS recorders, cassette tapes and fax machines with contemporary digital devices actually used for storing and copying cultural content, including smartphones, tablets, laptops and smart televisions. According to the Ministry and organisations representing creators, the reform was intended to adapt Polish copyright law to contemporary technological realities and strengthen compensation mechanisms for creators, performers and producers in connection with private copying. The updated system is also expected to increase revenues distributed through collective management organisations and improve the economic protection of creators in the digital environment.

2.5. Cultural and social diversity

2.5.1. NATIONAL / INTERNATIONAL INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Intercultural dialogue has become increasingly visible within cultural, educational and social policies in Poland, particularly in connection with migration processes, the growing cultural diversity of Polish cities and the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Although Poland still does not have a single comprehensive national strategy devoted exclusively to intercultural dialogue, many activities in this field are implemented through cultural, educational, integration and international cooperation programmes supported by public institutions, local governments and NGOs. Some of the activities in this field are covered by the 16 Euroregions.

The geopolitical situation after 2022 significantly affected some forms of cross-border and intercultural cooperation, especially those involving Belarusian and Russian partners. Contemporary intercultural cooperation frameworks increasingly emphasise democratic values, social resilience, support for refugees and cooperation within the European Union and Eastern Partnership contexts.

The activities in the scope of trans-national intercultural dialogue on the local level are partially covered by the Town-twinning programmes and municipality networks such as Eurocities or BaltMet.

Non-governmental organisations continue to play an important role in intercultural dialogue and integration activities, particularly at the local level. In recent years, NGOs and cultural institutions have increasingly organised projects supporting migrants, refugees, minorities and international cultural cooperation. Particular importance has been attached to initiatives supporting people displaced from Ukraine after 2022.

Various grant programmes are available to support cooperation with other countries (e.g. grants from the Polish-American Freedom Foundation or the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation) and events promoting their culture. There are also events to support the social integration of migrants and festivals held to promote minority culture (e.g. Festival of Jewish Culture in Warsaw "Singer's Warsaw").

Wrocław became one of the most visible examples of local intercultural policy in Poland through the implementation of the Strategy for Intercultural Dialogue (2018-2022). In recent years, similar

discussions concerning migration, integration and intercultural coexistence increasingly appeared in other large Polish cities, especially those experiencing significant demographic changes and increased international migration. The planned results of the implementation of this programme relate to the following areas:

- Education – increasing the level of knowledge and strengthening intercultural competences; Integration – building a sense of social belonging;
- Security – strengthening the safety of residents;
- Cooperation and communication – creation of cooperation platforms and strengthening of the communication process.

In contemporary Polish cultural policy debates, intercultural dialogue is increasingly linked with questions of migration, minority rights, democratic resilience, media literacy and social cohesion. Cultural institutions, schools and NGOs play an important role in creating spaces for dialogue, inclusion and participation in an increasingly diverse social environment.

2.5.2. DIVERSITY EDUCATION

Issues related to intercultural dialogue, diversity, migration and anti-discrimination education have become increasingly visible in Polish educational and cultural activities, although they are still implemented unevenly across the country. Such topics are addressed mainly through civic education, cultural education projects, NGO initiatives and local educational programmes rather than through a comprehensive national intercultural education policy.

In recent years, Polish society has become significantly more diverse due to increased international migration, especially following the large-scale arrival of refugees from Ukraine after 2022. As a result, questions related to intercultural competences, integration and cultural diversity became more important in schools, cultural institutions and local educational policies. Public debate increasingly emphasises the need to strengthen intercultural competences, media literacy, anti-discrimination education and critical thinking skills within the educational system, particularly in the context of migration, disinformation and digital communication environments. Some elements of intercultural education have been introduced into teaching programmes in the regions which have a significant number of students with origins other than Polish.

The question of interculturalism in arts and cultural education is pointedly connected with the issue of mobility. Schools and universities which participate in European programmes like Socrates, have made a notable contribution to the process of modernisation of Polish education. Activities concerning multilingualism, tolerance etc., as well as creative actions related to such issues become more and more popular among both students and teachers from all types of educational institutions.

2.5.3. MEDIA PLURALISM AND CONTENT DIVERSITY

The Polish audiovisual market model is based on three categories of broadcasting: public service broadcasters, licensing - social broadcasters, and licensing - commercial broadcasters.

The television market is divided between the public broadcaster TVP and two commercial television stations:

Polsat and TVN. Public television offers nationwide and regional programmes operating under the name TVP INFO (sixteen regional centres). Additionally, TVP offers five satellite channels: TVP Polonia (for Poles living abroad), TVP Kultura (culture channel), TVP Historia (history channel), TVP Sport (sports channel) and TVP HD. Other channels can be viewed only via the digital platforms and cable networks, so their range and influence is limited.

TVP Kultura was launched on 24th April 2005. It is aimed at the promotion of various cultural activities, including non-commercial artistic projects. The half of the channel's broadcast material is based on Polish Public Television's (TVP) archival programmes. The rest consists of programmes bought from foreign broadcasting companies.

Public radio and television are mainly financed from public funds (licence fees) and budget subsidies.

Advertising is an additional source of financing although some restrictions regarding public media are present.

The major responsibilities of the National Broadcasting Council are set out in the *Broadcasting Act* and are twofold: to award broadcasting frequencies to public radio and television stations and to share income from the license fees between different public broadcasters. The National Broadcasting Council is also obliged to design, in consultation with the Prime Minister, state policy in the field of broadcasting.

The issue of politicisation of public media became one of the central topics of public debate after the parliamentary elections of 2023. In December 2023, the new government replaced the management boards of Telewizja Polska (TVP), Polish Radio and the Polish Press Agency (PAP). Subsequently, the Minister of Culture, Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz, placed the public media companies into liquidation. According to the government, these actions were necessary to restore impartiality, pluralism, objectivity and professional standards in public broadcasting after years of political influence. However, the process triggered a major legal and political conflict with opposition parties and the National Broadcasting Council, which questioned the legality of the reforms and accused the government of exceeding its competences. The replacement of management boards and the liquidation of public media companies sparked a broader debate on the fragility of governance mechanisms designed to protect public media from political influence. The ongoing institutional and legal conflict also revealed deep political divisions concerning the understanding of media independence, public accountability and the role of the state in shaping the public sphere. As a result, the governance and future institutional model of public media remain subjects of ongoing political and legal dispute.

Despite the dynamic development of broadband infrastructure and Internet accessibility in recent years, Poland still faces the problem of digital exclusion, especially among elderly people, inhabitants of rural areas and groups with lower digital competences. Regional inequalities in access to high-quality digital infrastructure persist, although the gap between Poland and the EU average has significantly decreased due to large-scale investments supported by European funds and national digitalisation programmes. Current challenges concern not only infrastructure, but also the development of digital skills, media literacy and critical competences necessary for conscious and

creative participation in digital culture and online communication. Media education remains an important issue, particularly in the context of disinformation, artificial intelligence and the growing role of digital platforms in cultural participation.

2.5.4. LANGUAGE

The official national language is Polish. The national interest in protecting the Polish language was expressed through the adoption of *The Polish Language Act in 1999* (see also chapter 4.1.8).

The Polish education system guarantees the right to learn minority languages as mother tongues, since a *Decree of the Ministry of National Education and Sport* on 3 December 2002. Learning a minority language or being taught in a minority language is available at all levels of education and is organised by school directors at the request of parents or legal guardians of a pupil (for older youth - at the request of the student). A minimum of seven pupils is required at primary level to hold a class in a minority language, and fourteen students at secondary level. Minority language teaching is financed from the state budget. National and ethnic minorities and the Kashubian community benefit from increased educational subsidies in accordance with a *Decree of the Minister of National Education and Sport* from 21 December 2006, on the allocation of the overall education subsidy to local governments in 2007.

On 12 February 2009, Poland ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The Convention entered into force on 1st June 2009.

In recent years, questions concerning minority and regional languages have remained present in public debate, particularly in relation to the status of the Silesian language, the financing of minority-language education and the protection of cultural rights of national and ethnic minorities. Discussions concerning multilingual education and intercultural integration also intensified after 2022 in connection with increased migration and the arrival of refugees from Ukraine. Particular projects focused on sustaining minority traditions and languages are financially supported by the Ministry of Culture, for example the publication of periodicals.

2.5.5. GENDER

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Poland scored 57.8 points out of 100 in the Gender Equality Index 2025, ranking 19th among EU member states. Since 2015, Poland's score increased by 7.4 points, including an increase of 5.9 points since 2020. The improvement was driven mainly by changes in the domains of power and money. Despite this progress, Poland still performs below the EU average, and the distance from the EU mean remains visible in several dimensions of gender equality.

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland treats equal rights of men and women and the prohibition of gender discrimination in Article 33.

At the national level, equality and anti-discrimination principles are regulated primarily through constitutional provisions, labour law and European Union legislation. In recent years, questions concerning gender equality, inclusiveness and anti-discrimination policies became more visible in public debate, including within the cultural and educational sectors.

The representation of women in political institutions and public administration has gradually increased in recent years, although gender imbalance remains visible in many decision-making structures. After the parliamentary elections of 2023, the participation of women in government and public institutions became more visible than in previous administrations. In the cultural sector, women increasingly occupy leadership positions in museums, cultural institutions, academia and the creative industries, although structural inequalities remain an important subject of debate.

There are no quota schemes and most cultural institutions are managed by men, which is in line with the general trend in Poland and in Europe. Among the lower rank cultural professions, although, there is a relatively high degree of feminisation.

Economic inequalities remain an important issue in Poland. The gender pay gap and differences in pension levels continue to affect women's economic security, particularly in sectors characterised by unstable and project-based employment. According to recent EIGE data, the average pension received by men in Poland is approximately 15% higher than that received by women, although this gap has decreased by 5 percentage points since 2015. In the cultural and creative sectors, public debate increasingly concerns equal access to leadership positions, visibility of women artists and creators, work-life balance and protection against discrimination and harassment in cultural institutions.

Questions concerning women's rights, reproductive rights and gender equality became highly visible in Polish public debate after 2020 and continue to influence social and cultural discussions. Cultural institutions, artists and NGOs frequently engage with themes related to equality, discrimination, identity and social justice through exhibitions, performances, educational projects and public debate

2.5.6. DISABILITY

The Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage runs the "Accessible Culture" grant programme. The strategic goal of the programme is to support facilitating access to culture, aimed at a wide audience and favouring social integration. These activities should serve to achieve real, systemic and long-term effects in eliminating barriers to access to culture in the following dimensions: spatial, economic, socio-mental and competence, with particular emphasis on the needs of people from localities deprived of direct access to cultural goods and people with special needs, including disabled people.

Third sector organisations play a significant role in facilitating access to culture for disabled people. It is impossible to list all the events and organizations involved in facilitating access to culture for people with disabilities. Foundations such as the Foundation of Culture Without Barriers prepare and disseminate cultural events, texts, movies etc. to people with disabilities. Various cultural outings are organised by the No Barriers Foundation, which also checks the accessibility of cultural institutions for people with disabilities. The Full Culture Foundation is involved in organising events for people with disabilities, such as the Week of People With Disabilities, fairs and picnics.

2.6. Culture and social inclusion

There are thirteen national and ethnic minorities recognised by Polish law. They constitute between 3 and 4% of the Polish population. According to the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and on the Regional Language, Poland officially recognises nine national minorities (Belarusian, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Armenian, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian and Jewish minorities), four ethnic minorities (Karaim, Lemko, Roma and Tatar communities) and the Kashubian community using a regional language. In addition, some areas of Pomorskie voivodeship are inhabited by the Kashubian community, speaking the regional language. Polish law defines in detail the rights of national and ethnic minorities.

Article 35 of the Polish Constitution ensures that national and ethnic minorities retain freedom to practice their own traditions and customs, and to use their national language.

The *National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Languages Act* was adopted by the Polish Parliament on 6th January 2005. This is the first legal document that gives a precise definition of national and ethnic minorities in Poland. This Act describes "national minorities" as those groups who identify themselves with an established country/nation i.e., Germans, Ukrainians, Jews etc. It also defines "ethnic minorities" as those who do not have their own country – those who are state-less such as the Roma people. Other points of the legal definition are common for both types of minorities.

Public debate concerning minority rights increasingly includes questions related to migration, integration and the status of newer migrant communities. Discussions concern the limits of the current legal framework, which is based primarily on historical minorities traditionally present on the territory of Poland. Since 2022, issues related to the integration of refugees and migrants, especially from Ukraine, became more visible in social, educational and cultural policies. After the outbreak of the war, Poland introduced a special law ("special act") concerning Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war. It granted broad rights to people who arrived in Poland from February 24, 2022 onward.

The main rights included: i.e. legal stay in Poland without the immediate need to obtain a visa or residence permit and Issuance of a PESEL number with UKR status.

Since 2022, Poland has also introduced measures aimed at the cultural and social inclusion of Ukrainians who arrived because of the war.

These measures included:

- Access to Polish schools and universities for Ukrainian children and students.
- Additional Polish language classes and integration programs.
- Employment support and vocational training to help Ukrainians enter the labor market.
- Psychological and social assistance for families affected by the war.
- Support from local governments, NGOs, and community organizations for integration into local communities.
- Access to cultural institutions, libraries, sports activities, and community events.
- Programs encouraging cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian communities to reduce discrimination and social exclusion.

Many cities in Poland created multicultural initiatives, including:

- intercultural assistants in schools,
- information points in Ukrainian,
- integration centers,
- free legal and administrative assistance.

The European Union also financed projects supporting the long-term integration of Ukrainian refugees into education, employment, healthcare, and public life.

Although many support mechanisms remain in place, after 2025–2026 some emergency measures began transitioning into regular migration and integration policies.

The German minority continues to maintain parliamentary representation and minority communities remain active primarily through local governments, cultural organisations and educational institutions. Other communities have their representatives in local governments. In a few communes in various regions of the country, German and Lithuanian obtained a status of "auxiliary languages" and public information is published both in Polish and German or Lithuanian.

Questions concerning equality, discrimination and the rights of minorities and LGBTQ+ communities remain important elements of public debate in Poland. In recent years, many controversial anti-LGBT resolutions adopted by local governments were withdrawn or lost practical significance following criticism from courts, civil society organisations, European institutions and changes in local political priorities. Contemporary discussions increasingly focus on anti-discrimination standards, social inclusion and the role of cultural and educational institutions in promoting democratic values and diversity.

2.7. Societal impact of arts

There are concrete examples of the societal impact of arts initiatives:

The wspólny Kongres Kultury (Co-Congress of Culture)

The wspólny Kongres Kultury (Co-Congress of Culture) was a large-scale Polish cultural policy forum and civic initiative launched in 2024 by representatives of the cultural sector together with public institutions, including the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. The congress brought together artists, cultural workers, NGOs, academics, local governments, and public institutions to discuss the future of culture in Poland and the broader societal role of the arts. The Culture Co-Congress brought together over 3,500 participants.

The initiative focused strongly on the societal impact of arts and culture, addressing issues such as social cohesion, democracy, inequality, migration, climate change, education, labor conditions in the cultural sector, and public participation in culture. One of its key ideas was that culture should not function on the margins of society, but rather play an active role in shaping civic life, wellbeing, and social imagination.

Dance Congress

The Dance Congress organised by the Institute of Music and Dance became one of the important platforms for dialogue within the Polish dance sector. The discussions concerned not only artistic development, but also cultural education, institutional support, working conditions and the visibility of dance within cultural policy. During the meeting, great emphasis was placed on the benefits of dance for society and on how to strengthen its presence, both in politics and cultural education, and in the everyday life of every human being. Recent debates in the dance sector increasingly concern accessibility, social inclusion, mental health, sustainable working conditions and the international mobility of artists and performers.

Forum Narodowego Obserwatorium Kultury (NOK)

The Forum of the National Observatory of Culture (Narodowe Obserwatorium Kultury – NOK) became an important platform for discussion on evidence-based cultural policy in Poland. It brings together researchers, cultural practitioners, local governments and public institutions to discuss issues such as cultural participation, access to culture, digital transformation, sustainability and the social conditions of cultural work. Recent discussions increasingly focused on the long-term development of the cultural sector, the impact of artificial intelligence and the role of research and data in shaping cultural policy and cultural institutions.

2.8. Cultural sustainability

The issue of sustainable development in culture has gained greater importance in Polish cultural policy after 2023, especially in the context of infrastructure investments, climate policy and energy transformation. Although culture is still rarely treated as a fully autonomous pillar of sustainable development at the national strategic level, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage increasingly links cultural policy with questions of accessibility, territorial cohesion, environmental responsibility and energy efficiency.

The document *Poland 2030, Third Wave of Modernity: The 'Long-term National Development Strategy* contains, admittedly, provisions on “strengthening the role of civic, cultural and media education, economic education and education for sustainable development in school, and stimulating cooperation between schools and external institutions, for example entrepreneurs, local government, culture institutions or NGO’s. Both the increase in employment and, once the macroeconomic conditions have been sorted out, economic growth and modernisation of the entire economy are the most important levers of Polish development, both in the long-term perspective until 2030 and in the medium term - until 2020”.

However, attempts to implement the provisions of the Agenda 21 for Culture are visible mainly in regional and local development programmes, and this is mostly at the level of large and medium-sized cities. Strategies in the field of culture are mainly executive documents for the activities of cultural institutions and support for local creators and artists, and rarely locate culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable local development. Regardless of public legal solutions, there are many grassroots initiatives taken by cultural institutions or non-governmental organisations aimed at implementing sustainable development goals by 2030.

These include, for example, the following:

- Poland's first carbon calculator, which makes it possible to estimate the impact of cultural institutions or events and compensate for the carbon footprint through offsets activities;
- The establishment of the Green Events standard;
- The creation of the Code of Responsible Festivals - organisers of festivals and events created a document promoting responsible relations with the environment, festival community and neighbours;
- Environmental declaration of the Coalition of Summer Literary Festivals;
- "Exchange waste for cultural excursions" - a nationwide campaign to exchange waste for tickets to cultural institutions.

After 2023, sustainable development objectives became more visible in public investment programmes addressed to the cultural sector. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage reported significant infrastructure allocations through the European Funds for Infrastructure, Climate and Environment programme (FEnIKS) and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (KPO). These investments include the modernisation of cultural infrastructure, improvement of energy efficiency in public cultural institutions, accessibility measures for people with disabilities and support for local cultural centres in smaller towns and rural areas. Sustainable development in culture is therefore increasingly connected with climate adaptation, reduction of energy consumption, territorial inclusion and equal access to cultural services.

2.9. Other main cultural policy issues

European Capital of Culture

On June 21st 2011, Wrocław was appointed as the European Capital of Culture for 2016. Five cities took part in the final selection (Gdańsk, Katowice, Lublin, Warszawa and Wrocław). The competition provoked a nationwide debate on local cultural policies and their directions. It also forced candidate cities into long-term planning in the field of culture.

Polish Capital of Culture

Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland launched the "Polish Capital of Culture" programme to support cultural development and strengthen the role of cities as local centres of social and artistic life. The initiative was created following the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture 2029 and aims to promote cities with ambitious cultural programmes and strong community engagement. The title has been awarded to cities such as Bielsko-Biała (2026), Katowice together with the GZM Metropolis (2027), and Kołobrzeg (2028). As part of the programme, these cities organise special artistic, educational, and social initiatives.

Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement

The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement provoked a heated discussion about copyright. Although Bogdan Zdrojewski, Minister of Culture and National Heritage, stated that ratification of ACTA by Poland will not influence the existing legal system, it was met with great reluctance. The probability of signing the agreement by the Polish government resulted in a strong social support for the Anonymous Group among Polish Internet users, who feared restrictions on freedom of expression and other rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Poland. There have been cases of

virtual attacks on governmental websites. Numerous protests took place, of which the largest was held in Krakow, with about 15 000 protesters. During the vote in the European Parliament on ACTA, all Polish MEPs present at the vote spoke against it.

Smartphones Taxation

In 2014, Polish artists proposed to producers of smartphones and tablets to introduce a tax on mobile devices. Their main slogan was "Do not kill us!". Collective Management Organisations of Copyright wanted to add the smartphones and tablets to the list of so-called "blank discs". These are the media devices in which price includes the fee, which goes to organisations of copyright administration. The idea has not been positively received neither by producers of electronics nor by the Ministry of Culture. However, in its communication the Ministry of Culture emphasised that the system of charges on blank discs and electronic devices needs to be updated. In 2020, the debate on "blank discs" was resumed due to the ongoing work on the act on the rights of the professional artist. The reprographic fee is supposed to be one of the ways of financing this project.

After 2023, the debate on the reprographic fee system returned as part of broader discussions on copyright reform, creators' remuneration and the financing of social protection mechanisms for artists. In 2025 and 2026, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage prepared and adopted a long-awaited amendment updating the list of devices covered by reprographic fees for the first time in more than fifteen years. The reform replaced outdated analogue technologies, such as VHS recorders and cassette tapes, with contemporary digital devices commonly used for storing and reproducing cultural content, including smartphones, tablets, laptops and smart televisions.

3. Cultural and creative sectors

3.1. Heritage

Contemporary heritage policy in Poland increasingly combines the protection of cultural heritage with digital transformation, sustainable development, accessibility and international cooperation. Heritage protection remains one of the central priorities of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, particularly in the context of climate risks, armed conflicts and the growing importance of digital documentation and conservation standards. The National Heritage Board of Poland is an institution responsible for such actions including the protection and monitoring of Polish UNESCO World Heritage sites, coordination of heritage documentation and support for conservation policy and heritage management.

The main objectives of the Heritage Board are to gather and disseminate information on heritage, set standards for its protection and conservation, and aim to raise social awareness on the cultural heritage of Poland in order to save it for future generations in accordance with the strategy for sustainable development.

Other national institutes responsible for heritage preservation and protection are:

- The National Institute for Museums and Public Collections. Its mission is to support the development of museums and public collections through research, training, digitisation, professional standards, educational activities and innovation in museum management. The Institute also coordinates projects related to accessibility, digitisation, audience development and professional training in the museum sector.
- The State Archives. Its tasks are: shaping the state archival resources; recording, storing, developing, protecting and sharing archival materials belonging to the archival resource; conducting scientific and publishing works in the field of archival science and related fields; and popularising knowledge about archival materials and archives as well as conducting information activities.

In recent years, heritage institutions increasingly focused on digitisation, digital access to collections and the protection of cultural heritage in emergency and crisis situations, especially after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Currently, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage runs subsidy programmes for:

- Memorial sites and permanent memorials in the country. The aim of the programme is to support local governments in providing stable care over the most important memorial sites, which are material testimony to events that are key to national identity.
- War graves and cemeteries in the country. The aim of the programme is to support the care of war graves and cemeteries in the territory of the Republic of Poland, constituting material evidence of key events in the history of Poland related to struggle and martyrdom, as well as to support scientific activities disseminating knowledge about these events
- Protection of archaeological monuments. The aim of the programme is to protect the archaeological heritage by supporting the key tasks for this area, including the identification

and documentation of archaeological heritage resources as well as the preparation and publication of the results of archaeological research.

- Protection of cultural heritage abroad. The aim of the programme is to improve the state of preservation and strengthen the protection of cultural heritage located outside the territory of the Republic of Poland, and to disseminate knowledge about it.
- Supporting museum activities. The aim of the programme is to support activities in the field of conservation care of museums, archives and book collections, as well as the presentation of the collections in the form of cognitively attractive exhibition and publishing projects.
- Protection of monuments. The aim of the programme is to preserve the tangible cultural heritage, through the conservation and restoration of immovable and movable monuments, and making them available for public purposes.

In 2025 and 2026, heritage policy was additionally supported through European Funds for Infrastructure, Climate and Environment (FEnKS), the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (KPO), EEA and Norwegian Funds and programmes related to energy modernisation and accessibility of cultural infrastructure. Public debate increasingly emphasises the need to combine heritage protection with sustainability, climate adaptation, accessibility and digital innovation.

3.2. Archives and libraries

The National Library of Poland acts as the central library of the country and is one of the most important cultural institutions in Poland. Its mission is to protect national heritage preserved as documents, be it handwritten, printed or electronic (including sound recordings and audiovisual material). The National Library is also responsible for the long-term preservation and digitisation of Polish written heritage, development of digital library services and coordination of bibliographic and archival standards. In recent years, increasing emphasis has been placed on digital accessibility, online access to collections and the preservation of born-digital cultural resources.

Currently, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage runs subsidy programmes for:

- Partnership for the book. The strategic goals of the programme are both to improve access to books in all its formats and to strengthen the culture-forming role of bookstores and libraries.
- Reading promotion. The aim of the programme is to support valuable forms of promoting reading, both by co-financing innovative, wide-ranging programmes promoting common reading practices, and by supporting projects promoting the most significant phenomena of contemporary literature.

3.3. Performing arts

There are two institutes responsible for performing arts in Poland:

- Zbigniew Raszewski Theatrical Institute – responsible for documentation, promotion and animation of Polish theatre life. The institute invokes public debate on contemporary Polish

theatre, broadens the perspectives of accompanying scientific reflections, and supports research and educational activities.

- Institute of Music and Dance – established on 1 October 2010 by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. Its creation was preceded by a sector consultation and a three month preparation of the development strategy with the Polish organisations and institutions active in the field of music and dance.

Both institutes increasingly engage in activities related to digital documentation, sectoral research, sustainability and evidence-based cultural policy. They also participate in international networks and projects connected with artistic mobility, education and cultural cooperation.

Currently, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage runs subsidy programmes for:

- Theatre and Dance. The aim of the programme is to support the most valuable phenomena and trends in contemporary theatre and dance.
- Music. The aim of the programme is to support the most valuable phenomena and trends in Polish and world music culture.

Recent editions of the programmes increasingly support interdisciplinary projects, regional accessibility, international cooperation and activities related to cultural education and social inclusion. Public debate in the performing arts sector increasingly concerns institutional stability, artists' social security, accessibility and the impact of digital transformation and artificial intelligence on artistic production and cultural participation.

3.4. Visual arts and crafts

Currently, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage runs subsidy programmes for:

- National Collection of Contemporary Art of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. The aim of the programme is to create and develop representative, international collections of contemporary art with the rank of national collections in order to strengthen the exhibition system and the field of visual arts in Poland.
- Visual arts. The aim of the programme is to support the most valuable phenomena in Polish contemporary art and to popularise the most interesting phenomena of Polish and world art in Poland.

Recent editions of visual arts programmes increasingly support interdisciplinary artistic practices, international cooperation, accessibility and projects related to digital culture, sustainability and new technologies. Public discussions in the visual arts sector increasingly concern artists' working conditions, institutional autonomy, ecological responsibility and the impact of artificial intelligence on artistic creation and copyright.

The Polish Craft Association, which was established in 1933, provides training programmes on environmental standards to promote awareness of these standards amongst small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Together with 28 regional chambers, 478 guilds and 180 cooperatives it represent the interests of SMEs in view of government and regulatory bodies, public administration, courts and social-

economic organisations. The Association remains active in vocational education and professional training, particularly in traditional crafts, handicraft and artistic professions. In recent years, increasing attention has been devoted to the preservation of traditional craftsmanship, intergenerational transmission of skills, sustainable production and the adaptation of craft professions to digital and market transformations.

Through the membership in the European Union of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEUnited), the Polish Craft Association participates in the European social dialogue.

3.5. Cultural arts and creative industries

3.5.1. GENERAL DEVELOPMENTS

State intervention in the functioning of the cultural industries is limited to regulating access of different producers to the marketplace, providing direct subsidies to selected activities and introducing tax incentives and allowances which could facilitate the development of different areas of the industry.

After 2023, cultural policy increasingly adopted a more systemic approach toward cultural and creative industries, treating them not only as a cultural field but also as an important part of innovation policy and economic development. Particular attention has been devoted to sectors such as video games, fashion, design, audiovisual production and digital creative industries. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage expanded targeted support mechanisms for creative sectors through specialised programmes, export support and innovation-oriented instruments.

An important institutional development was the growing role of the Institute of Creative Industries, which became one of the main public bodies supporting the development of creative sectors in Poland. The Institute coordinates research, educational activities, international promotion and support programmes dedicated to creative entrepreneurship, design, fashion, gaming and interdisciplinary innovation projects. The new approach reflects a broader understanding of culture and creativity as drivers of social innovation, economic competitiveness and technological development.

In recent years, the creative sectors have become one of the areas of interest of the Ministry of Culture and

National Heritage. A special programme called Creative Sector was created, which aims to develop the Polish cultural and creative sectors and to strengthen their competitiveness both in the EU and beyond. The grant programme supports in particular: educational activities related to these sectors, research projects, prototyping, development and export of products.

3.5.2. BOOKS AND PRESS

The Polish book market remains one of the largest publishing markets in Central and Eastern Europe, although it continues to face challenges related to market concentration, rising production costs, declining readership levels and digital transformation. The market is characterised by a large number

of registered publishers, while actual publishing activity remains concentrated among a relatively limited group of medium-sized and large publishing houses.

In recent years, increasing attention has been devoted to supporting local bookstores, independent publishers, literary festivals, translations and reading promotion programmes. Public debate increasingly concerns the sustainability of the publishing sector, the impact of digital platforms and audiobooks, and the changing reading habits of younger audiences.

In 2015 Poland introduced the so-called Public Lending Rights (PLR). These are royalties paid on loans that compensate authors and publishers for losses from the proceeds caused by borrowing books from libraries. Reduced VAT rates for books and publishing activities remain one of the important instruments supporting the publishing market in Poland. The equalisation of VAT rates for printed and electronic books reflected broader European policies concerning digital publishing and access to culture.

Recent cultural policy discussions increasingly concern the impact of digitalisation, subscription platforms, artificial intelligence and online distribution models on authors, publishers and booksellers. Public support mechanisms increasingly include programmes related to digital accessibility, literary education and the strengthening of local cultural infrastructure connected with reading and libraries. The Polish Book Institute finances translations of Polish literature into foreign languages in the framework of the Translation Programme © POLAND.

The Book Institute continues to play a key role in the international promotion of Polish literature through translation programmes, literary residencies, international fairs and support for foreign publishers. Recent international cultural policy increasingly promotes contemporary Polish literature together with interdisciplinary projects connected with design, illustration, comics and digital publishing.

3.5.3. AUDIOVISUAL AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA

Over the past years the Polish film market has undergone significant transformation, mainly driven by the rapid growth of streaming platforms and the impact of the pandemic. In 2019, cinemas in Poland reached a record high of more than 60 million admissions and approximately PLN 1.14 billion (EUR 267.7 million) in box office revenue. During the pandemic, however, cinema attendance dropped by more than 70%, and many viewers permanently shifted to streaming services such as Netflix, HBO Max, and Disney+. Today, going to the cinema is more often perceived as a premium or special experience, while everyday film consumption mainly takes place online.

At the same time, the importance of Polish productions has increased considerably. Domestic films and series — especially thrillers, historical films, biographies, and social dramas — have become more popular among audiences. The Polish Film Institute supports around 250–300 audiovisual productions annually, including approximately 40–50 feature films as well as more than 100 documentaries and animated productions. The institute's annual budget usually ranges between PLN 200–300 million.

The market has also become more international. Thanks to the cash rebate system, which offers up to a 30% reimbursement of production costs incurred in Poland, the country attracts a growing

number of international projects and co-productions. Social media and digital marketing have also become increasingly important, with TikTok, YouTube, and influencer recommendations having a strong impact on a film's commercial success.

The key trend of recent years has therefore been the transition from a traditional cinema-based market to one dominated by streaming platforms, alongside the growing quality and international visibility of Polish film productions.

In the field of cinema, the new Cinematography Act (2005) was a very important step forward. Under this Act, the Polish Film Institute, which acts de facto as semi non-departmental public body, was created. The Polish Film Institute is responsible directly to the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. The Institute's board is appointed by the Minister and comprises eleven people chosen from the film community. The Institute's tasks, as specified in the Act on Cinematography, are among others: to create conditions for the development of Polish film production and international co-production; to inspire and support the development of all types of Polish film creativity, in particular artistic films, including the development of film projects and the production and distribution of such films; to support film debuts and the artistic development of young filmmakers; to subsidise enterprises in developing film projects, film production, distribution and dissemination of films, and in providing assistance and expert services to public administration and to support the upkeep of film archives.

Film Commission Poland and regional film commissions continue to support the international visibility of Poland as a filming location and production partner. Their activities focus on attracting foreign productions, coordinating regional cooperation and promoting the Polish audiovisual sector internationally. The development of audiovisual infrastructure and international co-production networks became increasingly important elements of cultural and economic policy related to the creative industries.

3.5.4. MUSIC

The Polish music market has continued to grow dynamically and, by 2026, follows the main global trends in the recorded music sector, especially the dominance of streaming, the growth of digital distribution and the increasing role of online platforms in promotion and audience development. According to ZPAV, the Polish recorded music market reached nearly PLN 971 million in 2025, growing by 14.2% year on year and moving Poland to 16th place in the global IFPI ranking.

The characteristics of the music market in Poland are similar to those of other countries in the world. The following trends can be observed in both Poland and the rest of the world:

- Continued growth in the value of the recorded music market, driven mainly by streaming and digital consumption;
- An increase of the share of independent record labels in the phonographic market;
- Dominant importance of streaming platforms, social media and online distribution in music promotion, audience development and monetisation;
- An increase in the concert market share in artists revenues.

The continued importance of live performance, festivals and concerts in artists' income, although rising production costs and audience segmentation remain important challenges.

The Polish music market distinguishes itself from the world market in the following ways:

- A still visible role of physical formats, especially vinyl and collector editions, although streaming is now the main driver of market growth;
- Great importance of radio and reaching its listeners, which does not change despite the growing importance of streaming platforms and the Internet;
- The continued specific role of local popular genres, including disco polo, although the strongest commercial growth is linked to streaming-oriented genres, especially hip hop, pop and urban music;
- Polish artists are definitely more popular than foreign ones. This difference is especially pronounced in the case of hip hop.

Institutional support for the music market in Poland

- Institutional support provided to musicians of a diverse nature and manifested in the activities of public entities (Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, public institutes), market entities (media) and nongovernmental entities (associations, foundations, copyright management associations);
- There are two main paths of providing support - direct (programmes, scholarships, competitions, awards) and indirect (promotion, popularization);
- Among public institutions, the main supporting entities are: the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, institutions supervised by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage that deal with music, such as the Institute of Music and Dance, National Institute of Music and Dance, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, the Fryderyk Chopin Institute, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute as well as municipal and provincial governments.
- In 2026, the Ministry continued to support the music sector through programmes such as "Muzyka", "Muzyczny ślad" and "Zamówienia kompozytorskie". The "Muzyka 2026" programme supported 194 projects with more than PLN 31.1 million, while "Muzyczny ślad" supported non-commercial music recordings, sheet music publications and music-related scholarly and popular publications.
- Supporting entities from the non-governmental sector are mainly associations and foundations, e.g. the Meakultura Foundation, the Association of Polish Musicians, the Polish Music Foundation, the Association of Independent Polish Phonography, and trade and collective management unions (eg ZAIKS, ZPAV, STOART, SAWP). There are also cooperation networks that most often associate with other smaller entities from the nongovernmental sector, such as the Music Export Poland Foundation, the Alliance of Independent Music Producers, and the Polish Music Council.

Recent debates in the music sector increasingly concern fair remuneration from streaming, copyright reform, artificial intelligence, export potential, international mobility and the social security of artists and performers.

3.5.5. DESIGN AND CREATIVE SERVICES

Since 1950, the Institute of Industrial Design promotes effective use of design among Polish businesses and the public sector. The Institute also organises trainings for companies from different sectors, institutions and local governments. It promotes innovation and good design practices through organising exhibitions and competitions such as "Dobry Wzór" (Good Design).

In recent years, Polish cultural and economic policy increasingly recognised design and creative services as important components of the creative economy and innovation policy. Public support increasingly emphasises sustainable design, digital transformation, accessibility, circular economy solutions and the international promotion of Polish design. The growing importance of creative industries after 2023 was also reflected in the activities of the Institute of Creative Industries and in programmes supporting sectors such as design, fashion, gaming and audiovisual production. Recent debates increasingly concern the role of artificial intelligence, digital tools and ecological responsibility in the development of contemporary design and creative services.

3.5.6. CULTURAL AND CREATIVE TOURISM

The Programme for Tourism Development until 2020 states that tourism is an important part of the Polish economy.

The tourism economy can significantly contribute to the improvement of economic, territorial and social cohesion in Poland. The sustainable development of the high-quality tourism sector is one of the directional development priorities of the European Union. This raises the challenge of strengthening the economic and social potential conducive to the growth of the tourism sector, understood as an element of economic competitiveness of European regions. Tourism is a factor in the diversification of the economy, causing the demand for qualified staff, innovative services and modern management tools as well as research and analysis supporting sustainable economic development based on tourism. All this creates new opportunities to view the development of tourism as part of a regional policy that strengthens the competitiveness of a given territory.

Although cultural and creative tourism remains a relatively underdeveloped research area in Poland, public institutions and local governments increasingly collect data and develop strategies related to cultural participation, tourism mobility and the economic impact of cultural heritage and creative sectors. Discussions increasingly concern overtourism, sustainability, local identity and the balance between tourism development and heritage protection.

4. Law and legislation

4.1. General legislation

4.1.1. CONSTITUTION

Article 6 of the Constitution states:

- the Republic of Poland creates the conditions for the dissemination and equal access to culture, which is the source of Poland's national identity, its continuance and development; and
- the Republic of Poland grants assistance to Poles living abroad in fostering their bond with the national cultural heritage.

Article 73 directly refers to the field of culture and states that everyone is granted the right of freedom of creation, to conduct scientific research and announce their results, freedom of education and use of cultural assets.

4.1.2. ALLOCATION OF PUBLIC FUNDS

The following Acts provide the legal bases which enable the Minister of Culture to provide subventions for cultural institutions (of which the Ministry is the founding body) and to provide project funding outside the public sector:

- the *Act on Organising and Conducting Cultural Activity of 25 October, 1991* (OJ 110, p.721 with later amendments and annexes); and
- the *Act on Public Finances of 26 November, 1998*.

The following laws enable local governments to grant aid for state administration tasks (financial aid is granted on the basis of an agreement between the Minister of Culture and the local administration units):

- the *Act on the change of some Laws defining the competencies of the national administration bodies of 21 January 2000*; and
- the *Act on the establishment of tasks in the field of culture which are covered by state's patronage of 9 May 2000*.

Tenders in the field of culture do not fall under strict procedural rules specified in the *Act on Public Tendering*.

Tenders can be granted through any procedure without the need of agreement from the Head of the Public

Tender Office. *Article 71* of the Act allows granting a public tender freely for creative and artistic activities in the field of art and culture and in the case of issues linked with protection of exclusive

laws consequential to separate regulations. Cultural institutions are, however, bound by the *Act on Public Tendering* through regulations concerning issues such as:

- the obligation to announce tenders;
- announcement of the outcome of proceedings or in the case of granting a tender freely, announcement of contracting the agreement;
- the obligation to treat all applying subjects equally;
- rules of specifying the subject of the tender;
- exclusion from applying;
- acting as a representative of the tendering party;
- and appointing tender commissions, etc.

4.1.3. SOCIAL SECURITY FRAMEWORKS

Within the Ministry of Culture, a Commission for Pension Provisions for Artists was set up to determine the starting date of a creative and/or artistic career for pension purposes. Decisions are made in accordance with the following legal Acts:

- *Act on the Social Security System* of the 15th of October 1998 / DZ.U.Nr.157, poz.887;
- *Act on Pensions from the Social Security Fund* of the 17th of December 1998.
- Ordinance of the Minister of Culture of March 9, 1999 regarding the establishment of the Commission for
- Pension Provisions for Artists and a detailed definition of its tasks, composition and mode of operation (Journal of Laws of 1999 No. 27, item 250)

Those concerned must send the Commission a form together with necessary documents confirming the duration and character of their work.

Currently, the retirement age in Poland varies according to gender: 60 years for women and 65 years for men (*Act on Pension from the Social Insurance Fund* of 17 December 1998 as amended).

Artists in a difficult financial situation are eligible to apply for a subsistence allowance granted by the Minister of Culture from the Culture Promotion Fund. The allowance is granted once after the application has been positively verified by the commission appointed by the Minister.

Work is underway to prepare a *Act on the Rights of the Professional* that provides support for professional artists and creators in the field of social security, allowing them to pay preferential contributions. The act was created as a result of ongoing debate from an artistic milieu representing all professions and organisational forms on the occasion of the National Culture Conference.

4.1.4. TAX LAWS

The state has implemented a provision which allows creative artists to deduct 50% of their income from their creative work as expenses for income tax purposes. Tax-payers whose income from creative work exceeds the so-called first tax threshold (85 528 PLN of income, after deduction of

premiums paid to the pension scheme and health insurance) are not be able to benefit from the 50% deduction.

According to amendments made to the *Income Tax Act* (1993, amendments 2003), deductions of up to 10% are available on donations made by legal persons (organisations, foundations etc.) for "public good purposes". In the case of private persons/individuals, a ceiling of 6% of income has been introduced. Since 1991, state cultural institutions are allowed to receive private donations from individuals or legal persons.

The following tax exemptions are made available for NGO's – including both foundations and associations:

goods and services tax (1993); the tax on increase of remuneration within the framework of statutory activities (1992); property tax which exists within the framework of statutory activities (1991). Foundations are also exempt from paying court fees when registering.

Law on Income Tax on Individuals allows an individual to deduct 1% of their income tax as a donation for a chosen public organisation. Starting from the tax year of 2007, tax-payers do not transfer the donations directly to the beneficiaries, but instead pay through the tax revenue offices. That simplifies the procedure.

According to *Act on tax on goods and services* of March 11, 2004:

- cultural institutions are exempt from VAT;
- there is reduced 5% VAT on the sale of books, periodicals and ebooks;
- a 22% VAT is applicable to the sale of CDs.

According to widespread opinion, the tax changes in Poland do not encourage sponsors and donors to adequately support culture. Transparency and new solutions or measures are being called for.

4.1.5. LABOUR LAWS

Issues related to employment in the cultural sector are regulated by the *Labour Code* (Act of 26th June 1974 r., OJ 1998, no. 21, item. 94, with later amendments).

4.1.6. COPYRIGHT PROVISIONS

The *Copyright and Related Rights Act* of 4 February 1994, and amendments adopted on 9 June 2000 in order to make the Act compatible with EU law, are the basic Polish legal acts on the Protection of Copyright and Related Rights. It has been amended many times, particularly in connection with Poland's membership of the European Union and the need to implement EU copyright directives.

A major recent change was the implementation of the EU Digital Single Market Directive. The amendment introduced, among other issues, remuneration for creators from online exploitation of audiovisual works on streaming services. According to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the amendment entered into force on 20 September 2024 and responded to long-standing demands of film and audiovisual creators for internet royalties.

The *Copyright and Related Rights Act* provides the legal basis to levy fees on blank tapes and copying/reprographic machines. The system of reprographic fees, commonly referred to as the “blank media levy”, remained one of the most debated copyright issues. In 2025, the Ministry launched public consultations on updating the list of devices and media covered by the levy, arguing that the previous list was technologically outdated and still included devices such as VHS recorders, MP3 players, fax machines and DVD recorders. In April 2026, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage signed the amendment to the regulation on reprographic fees. According to the Ministry, this was the first update of the regulation in 15 years and was intended to adapt the compensation system for private copying to contemporary digital technologies.

After 2023, copyright policy increasingly focused on artificial intelligence, online distribution, streaming platforms, collective rights management and the protection of creators’ income. In September 2024, after a ten-year break, the Ministry restored the Copyright Law Forum as a platform for dialogue with creators, performers, publishers, producers, collective management organisations and other stakeholders. The 2024 and 2025 editions addressed, among other topics, the impact of artificial intelligence on copyright regulation and collective management of copyright and related rights.

During the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2025, copyright and artificial intelligence became one of the key cultural policy topics. The Ministry organised expert discussions on the impact of AI on copyright, media and creative sectors, including issues such as disinformation, digital competences and the enforcement of intellectual property rights in the digital environment.

4.1.7. DATA PROTECTION LAWS

The *Constitution of the Republic of Poland* states:

- *Everyone shall have the right to legal protection of his private life and family life, of his honour and good reputation and to make decisions about his personal life. (Article 47)*
- *Public authorities shall not acquire, collect or make accessible information on citizens other than that which is necessary in a democratic state ruled by law. (Article 51 point 2)*
- *Everyone shall have a right of access to official documents and data collections concerning him. Limitations upon such rights may be established by statute. (Article 51 point 3)*
- *Everyone shall have the right to demand the correction or deletion of untrue or incomplete information, or information acquired by means contrary to statute. (Article 51 point 4)*

Since the 29th of August 1997, the *Act on Protection of Personal Data* has been in force. Under this Act the Inspector General for Personal Data Protection (GIODO) was established.

On May 10, 2018, the Sejm passed a new law on the protection of personal data, which ensures the application of the regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council (EU) 2016/679 on the protection of personal data in Poland and establishes a new authority competent for the protection of personal data - the President of the Office for Personal Data Protection. The act entered into force on May 25, 2018. Until now, there has not been any significant impact of this law on cultural organisations.

4.1.8. LANGUAGE LAWS

The *Law on the Polish Language* (7 October 1999) introduced particular obligations on the use of the Polish language within the territory of the Republic in legal transactions involving Polish entities, or if one of the parties in a given transaction is a Polish entity. This pertains in particular to the names of goods and services including foreign language advertisements which must be accompanied by a Polish translation. The use of foreign language names is allowed even without translation. However, this law is quite general and does not refer directly to the film or television industry or other cultural activities such as theatre.

4.1.9. OTHER AREAS OF GENERAL LEGISLATION

Since 2024, legislative work has continued on a new system of social security support for professional artists. In January 2026, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage presented in the Sejm a draft Act on the Social Security of Professional Artists. Compared to earlier concepts centred on the broad "status of the professional artist", the new proposal focuses primarily on social and health insurance mechanisms adapted to the irregular and unstable nature of artistic work. The proposed mechanisms are intended to support artists whose income does not allow them to independently reach the minimum threshold required for full social and health insurance contributions. According to the Ministry, the system would introduce temporary co-financing of contributions for artists with low and irregular income, while maintaining the voluntary character of artistic activity and creative freedom.

4.2. Legislation on culture

4.2.1. GENERAL LEGISLATION ON CULTURE

The legal basis for cultural institutions is the *Act on Organising and Conducting Cultural Activity of 25 October, 1991* (OJ 110, p.721 with later amendments and annexes).

The Amendment Act on Conducting and Organising of Cultural Activity was signed by the President Bronisław Komorowski in September 2011. This law entered into force on 1 January 2012. It contains two basic theses on the activity of cultural institutions: (1) patronage in culture is an inalienable responsibility of the state and (2) the mission of the government in this field is implemented through cultural institutions, which have to adapt to changes in the world, modify themselves, increase their effectiveness etc.

This law established an opportunity to entrust management of cultural institutions to an entity selected on the basis of the *Act on Public Procurement*. Another important change relates to creation of a new category of cultural institutions: performing institutions. It introduces the concept of "artistic season" as a basis for organisation and implementation of tasks of the artistic institution. The *Amendment Act* provides new roles of appointment of directors, eliminates the possibility of appointment of the director for an indefinite period, specifies the procedures for conducting a contest for the position and conditions of appointment of the director without a contest.

Since 2024, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage has announced work on amendments to the legal framework regulating cultural institutions and cultural activity. Public consultations increasingly concern institutional autonomy, transparency of management procedures, financing models, the stability of public cultural institutions and the adaptation of legislation to contemporary social, digital and economic conditions. Since 2024, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage has announced work on amendments to the legal framework regulating cultural institutions and cultural activity. Public consultations increasingly concern institutional autonomy, transparency of management procedures, financing models, the stability of public cultural institutions and the adaptation of legislation to contemporary social, digital and economic conditions.

Title of the Act	Year of adoption
<i>Press Law of 26 January 1984</i>	OJ 1984, no. 5, item. 24 (with later amendments and annexes)
<i>Act on Organising and Conducting Cultural Activity of 25 October 1991</i>	OJ 1991, No. 114, item. 493 (with later amendments and annexes)
<i>Broadcasting Law of 29 December 1992</i>	OJ 1993, No. 7, item. 34 (with later amendments and annexes)
<i>Copyright Act of 4 February 1994</i>	OJ 1994, No. 24, item. 83 (with later amendments and annexes)
<i>Act on Museums of 21 November 1996</i>	OJ 1996, No. 5, item. 24 (with later amendments and annexes)
<i>Act of 7 November 1996 on Obligatory Library Volumes</i>	OJ 2003, no. 152, item. 722 (with later amendments)
<i>Act on Libraries of 27 June 1997</i>	OJ 1997, No. 85, item. 539 (with later amendments and annexes)
<i>Act on Polish Language of 7 October 1999</i>	OJ 1999, No. 90, item. 999 (with later amendments and annexes)
<i>Act on the Protection of Fryderyk Chopin Heritage of 3 February 2001</i>	OJ 2001, No. 16, item. 168
<i>Act in ratification of the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty (Geneva, 20 December 1996)</i>	OJ 2003, No. 50, item. 422
<i>Act on Academic Degrees and Titles in the field of Art</i>	OJ 2003, No. 65, item. 595
<i>Act of 23 July 2003 on the Protection of Monuments and the Guardianship of Monuments</i>	OJ 2003, No. 162, item. 1568
<i>Act on Cinematography of 30 June 2005</i>	OJ 2005, No. 132, item. 1111
<i>UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (Paris, 20 October 2005)</i>	OJ 2007, No. 215, item. 1585
<i>Act on the Social Security of Professional Artists (presented in the Sejm in January 2026)</i>	In preparation

4.2.2. LEGISLATION ON CULTURE AND NATURAL HERITAGE

The following laws are relevant to the field of cultural heritage:

- the Act on Museums, 21 November 1996 (OJ5, p.24, with amendments and annexes);
- the Act on Protection of Cultural Goods, 15 February 1962 (OJ 98, p.1 150);
- the Act of 23 July 2003 on the Protection and Guardianship of Monuments (with later amendments);
- the Act on the change of some Laws Defining the Competencies of the National Administration Bodies, 24 July 1998;
- and the Act on Provincial Local Authority, 5 June 1998.

Recent legislative and policy discussions increasingly concern digitisation of heritage, sustainability, energy modernisation of heritage infrastructure, accessibility and the protection of cultural heritage in emergency situations and armed conflicts.

4.2.3. LEGISLATION ON PERFORMANCE AND CELEBRATION

There are no detailed legal regulations for theatre, dance, opera, music theatre, music, circus, street arts.

4.2.4. LEGISLATION ON VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFTS

There are no detailed legal regulations for painting, sculpture, photography, video, graphic art, design, ceramics, textiles and decorative arts/crafts. Several references are however found in the *Act on Protection of Cultural Goods of 15 February, 1962* (OJ 98, p.1 150).

4.2.5. LEGISLATION ON BOOKS AND PRESS

The basic Act in this field is the *Act on Libraries* which was passed on 27 of June 1997 and the *Act on Obligatory Library Volumes* passed in 1996. Poland introduced Public Lending Right (PLR) mechanisms in 2015, providing remuneration for authors and publishers connected with library lending.

Reduced VAT rates remain one of the instruments supporting the publishing and press sectors in Poland. Since 2020, printed and electronic books have been covered by the same 5% VAT rate, while most press publications are subject to an 8% VAT rate. The equalisation of VAT rates reflected broader European Union policies concerning digital publishing and access to culture.

4.2.6. LEGISLATION ON AUDIOVISUAL AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA

Film, video and photography

The contemporary legal framework for the audiovisual sector in Poland is based primarily on the Act on Cinematography of 30 June 2005 and its later amendments. The Act regulates public support mechanisms for film production, distribution, promotion and film education.

In its current status, the Act provides for state support to the film industry, and its main premise is to ensure the endowment of film production and promotion, as well as popularisation of film culture. To achieve these goals, the Act established the Polish Film Institute which is responsible for the fulfilment of Polish cultural policy in the film sector.

The financing model of the Polish Film Institute is based on public subsidies and contributions from audiovisual market participants, including cinemas, broadcasters, distributors, cable operators and streaming platforms. In recent years, increasing attention has been devoted to international co-productions, digital distribution, streaming services and the impact of platform economies and artificial intelligence on the audiovisual sector.

Mass media

The media sector in Poland is mainly based on two legal Acts: the *Press Law of 26th January 1984* and *Broadcasting Act of 29th December 1992*, which came into force on March 1, 1993.

The Press Law regulates the functioning of the press sector, including freedom of expression, access to information and media responsibilities. Public debate increasingly concerns the adaptation of media law to digital communication environments, platform economies and online disinformation.

The Broadcasting Act was repeatedly amended in connection with European Union audiovisual regulations and the development of digital and streaming services.

Programme quotas, which were finally regulated in a detailed manner in line with EU standards, are outlined in the *Broadcasting Act of 29 December 1992*. According to the final consolidated version of the Act, with amendments, broadcasters of television programmes are obliged to reserve at least 30% of their quarterly transmission time to programmes originally produced in the Polish language.

Questions concerning public media governance became one of the central issues of cultural and political debate after the parliamentary elections of 2023. In December 2023, the new government replaced the management of public television, public radio and the Polish Press Agency and later placed public media companies into liquidation. The government presented these actions as a step toward restoring impartiality and public trust after years of politicisation, while the opposition and the National Broadcasting Council questioned their legality. The situation remains part of an ongoing institutional and legal dispute concerning the governance and independence of public media in Poland.

4.2.7. LEGISLATION ON DESIGN AND CREATIVE SERVICES

There are no detailed legal regulations for architecture or the environment. References to both can be found in the *Act on Protection of Cultural Goods of 15 February 1962* (OJ 98, p.1 150).

Architecture and design are regulated primarily through construction law, spatial planning regulations, copyright law and the Act on the Protection and Guardianship of Monuments of 23 July 2003.

5. Arts and cultural education

5.1. Policy and institutional overview

The Ministry of National Education is responsible for arts education at primary and secondary levels, while the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage supervises the public system of artistic education and specialised art schools. Public debate increasingly concerns unequal access to cultural education, shortages of arts education in general schools and the role of cultural competences in the digital era. The basic school programme is supported by cultural centres and activities of other institutions, which provide their own arts education programmes. The current school system consists of eight-year primary schools and four-year secondary schools. Two basic art courses are taught at both levels: music and fine arts. On a primary level, both subjects are compulsory for grades four to seven and account for one hour a week each.

At secondary level, schools may offer subjects such as music, visual arts, philosophy or art history depending on the curriculum profile and organisational possibilities. Additionally, secondary schools might expend their curricula to include art history, music history, Latin and ancient culture, or philosophy (eight hours a week), in order to provide students with specialised and advanced knowledge of these topics, if they choose to continue studying arts at a tertiary level. The Polish education system allows students to pass the secondary school-leaving examination in those subjects.

In addition to the aforementioned system, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage's cultural education programme supports extracurricular cultural activities developed by cultural institutions.

5.2. Arts in schools

The art education system in Poland is separated from the general preparatory education system. Some art schools in Poland carry out both curricula, general and artistic, while other schools focus solely on professional artistic education. Students attending art schools focused solely on artistic curriculum are also obliged to attend general preparatory schools on primary and secondary levels.

The public artistic education system supervised by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage includes music schools, fine arts schools, ballet schools and post-secondary artistic education institutions.

Music schools

Public and private primary and secondary music schools combine general and artistic education or provide specialised artistic curricula concluded with diploma examinations and professional qualifications.

Fine arts schools

Public and private secondary fine arts schools provide general and artistic education or specialised artistic training concluded with diploma examinations and professional qualifications.

Dance schools

Public and private ballet and dance schools provide long-cycle artistic education connected with professional dance training.

Circus arts schools

Public and private circus arts schools provide specialised professional artistic education.

In the 2024/2025 school year, there were 464 art schools not leading to professional certification with 68 266 students; 225 schools leading to professional certification with 23 651 students; and 16 post-secondary art schools.

Table 2: Number of art schools and students, 2022-2025

	Art schools not leading to professional certification		Art schools leading to professional certification		Post-secondary art schools	
	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students
2022/2023	466	63 883	220	24 248	19	987
2023/2024	465	65 789	224	24 258	12	775
2024/2025	464	68 266	225	23 651	16	837

Source: Central Statistical Office

5.3. Higher arts and cultural education

Table 3: Number of students in higher arts education

Full-time/ part-time	TOTAL		Full-time studies		Part-time studies	
Public/private	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
2022/2023	15 583	1 805	13 964	911	1 619	894
2023/2024	15 643	1 917	14 041	1 015	1 602	902
2024/2025	15 799	4 713	14 220	2 191	1 579	2 522

Source: Central Statistical Office

In the academic year 2024/2025, there were 27 higher arts education institutions of which 19 were public. The curricula included 72 different fields of study. The total number of students amounted to 42,7 thousand – 3,3% of all students in Poland.

The implementation of the Bologna Process continues to shape higher education in Poland, particularly through the development of comparable degree structures, quality assurance mechanisms, student mobility and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Since the academic year 2004/2005, university graduates receive special supplements to diplomas which contain detailed information about their education process, exam results, qualifications and also the number of gained ECTS points.

Quality assurance in higher education is supervised by the Polish Accreditation Committee (Polska Komisja Akredytacyjna), which evaluates teaching standards in public and private higher education institutions. Other positive impacts of the Bologna process include the increasing mobility of Polish students and many pro-European elements have been added to the curricula of arts and humanities faculties.

5.4. Out-of-school arts and cultural education

Non-formal cultural and arts education in Poland is carried out mainly by cultural institutions, NGOs, libraries, community centres and local governments. In recent years, increasing emphasis has been placed on accessibility, cultural participation, digital competences and cooperation between schools, cultural institutions and civil society organisations.

At the national level, an important role is played by the National Centre for Culture (Narodowe Centrum Kultury), which coordinates educational programmes, grants and training activities related to cultural participation, media education, local cultural initiatives and artistic education. The institution implements programmes addressed to children, youth, teachers, animators and cultural institutions throughout the country.

NGOs continue to play an important role in cultural education, especially in areas related to film education, local participation, social inclusion, intercultural dialogue and creative activities for children and young people. Recent educational programmes increasingly address sustainability, media literacy, digital culture and the impact of artificial intelligence and new technologies on culture and education.

5.5. Vocational and professional training

The professional post-graduation training system in Poland is still very limited. Some professional institutions provide young professionals with training. Orchestra academies for young professional musicians are a good example of such initiatives, where music graduates can perform alongside professional orchestra musicians, who provide them with support and training. However, even those are still scarce. Most of the professional training takes place in schools (secondary and tertiary levels).

For art managers and those who wish to pursue a career in arts administration, the National Centre for Culture and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage introduced an internship programme, which allows public and private cultural institutions to hire interns under the governmental regulations. The programme runs twice a year and the standard duration of an internship varies between 160 and 320 hours.

6. Cultural participation and consumption

6.1. Policies and programmes

The 1996 *Law on Museums* stipulates that free admission to the public must be guaranteed one day per week and that reduced tickets must also be made available (the amount to be determined by the museum directors). Museums have developed cultural education programmes for children and youth. A similar educational obligation is in the remit of public theatres, as one of their statutory aims, although it is rarely implemented.

Cultural centres also play a very special role in promoting participation in cultural life. First of all, they provide facilities for amateur art activities and help to organise various events. There is also formal co-operation between schools and the cultural centres as part of a cultural education programme.

The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage runs the Accessible Culture programme. The programme supports activities aimed at reducing barriers to participation in culture, including spatial, economic, digital and competence-related barriers, with particular attention to people with disabilities, seniors and residents of smaller towns and rural areas.

The Ministry also implements programmes related to digital culture and digitisation. These programmes support digitisation, online access to cultural resources, media education and the development of digital competences in cultural institutions and among audiences. Recent cultural policy increasingly emphasises accessibility, digital participation and the impact of artificial intelligence and new technologies on cultural education and participation.

6.2. Trends and figures in cultural participation

According to recent research led by prof. M. Krajewski in 2024 cultural participation in Poland is undergoing a clear transformation. Poles are increasingly moving away from the traditional model of culture based mainly on visits to institutions such as theatres, museums, galleries or philharmonic halls. Instead, culture is more often experienced at home, online and through everyday practices. Listening to music, watching films and series, using streaming platforms, following social media or sharing content on the internet have become important forms of cultural activity.

Recent research points out that culture is now strongly connected with digital technologies and everyday life. It is often consumed individually, through smartphones, computers and headphones, and adapted to personal interests and routines. As a result, cultural practices are becoming more private, fragmented and personalised. This also means that the communal role of culture is weaker than in the past, because people less often experience it together in public spaces.

An important conclusion is that traditional ways of measuring cultural activity, based mainly on attendance in cultural institutions, are no longer sufficient. They do not fully show how people actually engage with culture today. Contemporary cultural participation should therefore be understood more broadly, as a set of everyday, digital, private and social practices that go beyond the old division between “high” and “popular” culture.

The data on cultural participation in Poland is collected annually by the Centre for Public Opinion Research. The 2018 survey was carried out in January 2019 on a representative sample of 928 adult citizens of Poland. The 2025 survey was conducted in January 2026 on a representative named sample of 938 adult.

According to the Centre for Public Opinion Research, cultural participation in Poland increased between 2016 and 2018. In 2018, 56% of respondents declared that they had gone to the cinema, 44% had attended a concert, 34% had visited an exhibition or museum, and 24% had attended a theatre performance.

More recent data from 2025 indicate some changes in participation patterns. Cinema attendance slightly decreased to 53%, while participation in exhibitions and museums increased to 38%, and theatre attendance rose to 28%. Concert attendance remained stable at 44%. At the same time, the share of respondents reading books for pleasure decreased from 67% to 64%, and attendance at sports events fell from 43% to 37%.

Table 4: Share of respondents who participated at least once in a particular cultural activity, 2018 and 2025

	2018	2025
Went to a cinema	56%	53%
Attended a concert	44%	44%
Attended an exhibition, (gallery, museum)	34%	38%
Attended a play in a theatre	24%	28%
Read a book for pleasure	67%	64%
Attended a sport event	43%	37%

6.3. Trends and figures in household expenditure

Table 5: Household expenditure on culture in PLN and in EUR, 2025

	PLN	EUR	%
Newspapers and periodicals	20.23	4.69	4.20
Books and other publications	24.57	5.70	5.10
Theatre, music hall, cinema entry fees	47.20	10.95	9.80
Purchase of audio and video appliances	58.28	13.52	12.10
Purchase of photographic and film equipment and services	8.19	1.90	1.70
Purchase of sound and image recording media	5.30	1.23	1.10
Radio, TV licence fees and cabel TV fees	131.98	30.62	27.40
Other (e.g. services connected with culture, sport, recreation, games and collection items)	185.93	43.14	38.60
TOTAL	481.68	111.76	100

**calculation based on EUR exchange rate by NBP (National Bank of Poland) for 2024. 1 EUR = 4.3065 PLN*

Sources: National Statistic Office, Uczestnictwo ludności w kulturze w 2024 r.

Household expenditure on culture in 2025 amounted to 111.76 EUR per month on average. The largest share of spending was allocated to other cultural, recreational and sports-related services and activities, which accounted for 43.14 EUR, or 38.6% of total expenditure. A significant proportion was also spent on radio and television licence fees as well as cable television subscriptions, representing 30.62 EUR and 27.4% of total cultural expenditure.

Expenditure related directly to participation in cultural events, such as theatre, music hall and cinema entry fees, reached 10.95 EUR, accounting for 9.8% of total spending. Households spent 13.52 EUR on the purchase of audio and video equipment, while spending on books and other publications amounted to 5.70 EUR. Newspapers and periodicals represented 4.69 EUR of monthly expenditure.

The smallest categories of expenditure were purchases of photographic and film equipment and related services at 1.90 EUR, as well as sound and image recording media at 1.23 EUR, together accounting for less than 3% of total expenditure

6.4. Culture and civil society

Folk culture

Folklore preservation, including traditional arts, is associated mostly with rural areas. In many villages the tradition of regional arts is cultivated and more often operates as a local tourist attraction.

The protection, development and promotion of Polish folk culture are also the main aims of the "Cepelia" Polish Art and Craft Foundation operating since 1984. In particular, it supports research in the field of art, handicrafts and ethnography; arranges exhibitions, shows, concerts, lectures, conferences; establishes, maintains and supports the activities of the exhibition centres, art galleries and outlets selling works of art and handicraft products; supports the publishing of books, magazines, brochures, etc.; and promotes Polish culture and art abroad.

Folklore in its many forms (from arts and crafts to music and dance) is slowly gaining the interest of younger generations. It is no longer perceived as boring and unoriginal. Initiatives to popularise and re-new folk culture are becoming more common. Numerous design and music events using traditional folk patterns, instruments, tools, etc. in a modern way are gaining a wider audience every year.

Folk dance

The biggest organisation in Poland active in the field of folk culture and connected with the activity of unprofessional folk groups is the Polish Section of the International Council of Folklore Associations, Festivals and Folk Art (*CIOFF – Conseil International des Organisations de Festivals de Folklore et d'Art Traditionnels*). Poland was one of the initiators of this organisation in 1970. It aims to protect folklore and folk art; foster international cooperation in the field of preservation and popularisation of folklore and folk art; and include the younger generation as much as possible in the implementation of these objectives.

There are two professional folk ensembles in Poland: "Mazowsze" Tadeusz Sygietyński State Folk Song and Dance Ensemble and "Śląsk" Song and Dance Ensemble. The former is in a very good financial situation and owns an extremely modern base, which was renovated with the assistance of

EU Structural Funds several years ago. There are also many amateur folklore groups and student groups.

Folk music

Due to the engagement of local institutions, regional ensembles and ethnographers, traditional music is still present in rural areas. Folk music is increasingly an inspiration for modern musicians who play it in a traditional way or with jazz, rock or even techno arrangements. The festivals of folk music are becoming more and more popular. Since 1999, the Folk Artists Association in Lublin has conducted a national database entitled "Village artistic groups" including over 2 000 music ensembles, bands and theatre groups.

Cultural houses and community cultural clubs

Prior to 1989, cultural houses in Poland were leading institutions of the communist cultural politics. It was difficult to find their equivalent in democratic European countries. There were even problems with translating the term itself. No law defines cultural houses. The *Act on Organising and Conducting Cultural Activity* merely states that this is one of the possible forms of organising cultural activity, but does not indicate differences or gives a description. However, cultural houses run by state enterprises were dismantled in the free market economy environment because their costs were seen as unjustified.

Today, cultural houses and centres are creating a new image for themselves as a shelter for amateur art and various programmes aiming at broadening participation in cultural life, with a special focus put on those parts of the population which are "socially excluded". Together with libraries, they are often the only cultural institutions in the Polish suburbs. Their activities are undertaken in co-operation with and financed by local governments, mostly the municipalities and communes.

The extent to which cultural houses and community cultural clubs are financed by the the government and local administrations is presented in chapter 7.1.3.

An important programme has been launched by the National Centre for Culture. The Culture House + (Dom kultury +) aims at creating equal access to culture for the inhabitants of rural areas and improvement of participation in culture. The concept of the programme is to initiate the process of transformation of the existing culture houses into modern local culture centres. The programme consists of three priorities: Training, Development and Infrastructure. An important part of the programme is creating the Support Network – an interactive platform of cooperation and exchange for all culture houses. It aims at having development strategies created on the basis of socio-economic-cultural diagnosis of the given municipality or commune; actively animating the cultural life of local communities; creating possibilities for basic but universal cultural education, etc.

7. Financing and support

7.1. Public funding

7.1.1. INDICATORS

Public expenditure on culture and the protection of national heritage, including expenditure from the state budget and local government budgets, increased significantly in 2024. After excluding subsidies and grants transferred from the state budget to local governments, as well as transfers between local government units, total expenditure reached PLN 21.43 billion, representing an increase of 20.1% compared to 2023, when expenditure amounted to PLN 17.85 billion. Public expenditure on culture accounted for 0.59% of GDP in 2024, compared to 0.52% in the previous year.

Table 6: Public expenditure on culture per capita by the level of governance in EUR, 2024

Year	State*	Local authorities	Total public expenditure per capita	Average exchange rate**
2024	45.35 EUR	100.33 EUR	145.68 EUR	1 EUR = 4.3065 PLN

Source: Own calculations based on data provided by Central Statistical Office

Notes:

* State expenditure refers to the funding provided by central government; local authorities expenditure refers to the funding provided by local and regional governments; public expenditure refers to the total amount of both, state and local governments expenditure.

** Given by the National Bank of Poland.

7.1.2. EXPENDITURE ON GOVERNMENT LEVEL

In 2024, public expenditure on culture and national heritage at both state and local government levels amounted to 21 430.1 million PLN (4 976.2 million EUR). Local government units remained the main source of public cultural financing, accounting jointly for 67.9% of total expenditure, while the state budget accounted for 32.1%.

Table 7: Total cultural expenditure by level of government, in million PLN and EUR, and % share of total, 2024

<i>Level of government</i>	<i>Total cultural expenditure in 2024 (mln PLN)</i>	<i>in mln EUR*</i>	<i>% share of total</i>
State	6 883.2	1 598.3	32.1%
Voivodeships	3 098.5	719.5	14.5%
Municipal (gminy)	7 055.2	1 638.3	32.9%
District (poviats)	261.8	60.8	1.2%
Metropolises (cities with powiat status)	4 131.3	959.3	19.3%
Total	21 430.1	4 976.2	100%

*calculation based on EUR exchange rate by NBP (National Bank of Poland) for 2024. 1 EUR = 4.3065 PLN

Sources: Kultura w 2019 roku.

Kultura i dziedzictwo narodowe w 2024 r.

Among local government units, the largest share of expenditure was generated by municipalities (gminy), which accounted for 32.9% of total public cultural expenditure, followed by cities with powiat status (19.3%) and voivodeships (14.5%). Poviats represented the smallest share of public expenditure on culture and national heritage (1.2%).

7.1.3. EXPENDITURE PER SECTOR

In 2024, the largest share of state budget expenditure was allocated to radio and television activities (32.1%), followed by museums (22.2%) and other cultural activities (27.2%). Compared to 2019, the share of expenditure on museums decreased substantially from 32.6% to 22.2%, while spending on radio and television activities increased sharply from 1.4% to 32.1%. Expenditure on theatres, archives and protection of historical monuments also increased in absolute terms.

Table 8: The structure of state budget expenditure on culture and protection of national heritage, in million PLN and EUR and %, 2024 and 2019

	State budget on culture in 2024			State budget on culture in 2019		
Field / Domain	in mln PLN	in mln EUR*	% share of total	In mln PLN	In mln EUR*	% share of total
<i>Museums</i>	1 528.1	354.8	22.2%	775.9	180.5	32.6%
<i>Centres of Culture and Art</i>	344.2	79.9	5.0%	245.2	57.0	10.3%
<i>Protection of Historical Monuments</i>	247.8	57.5	3.6%	192.8	44.8	8.1%
<i>Theatres</i>	357.9	83.1	5.2%	202.3	47.1	8.5%
<i>Archives</i>	323.5	75.1	4.7%	202.3	47.1	8.5%
<i>Libraries</i>	—	—	—	111.9	26.0	4.7%
<i>Philharmonics, orchestras and choirs</i>	—	—	—	90.4	21.0	3.8%
<i>Radio and Television activities</i>	2 209.5	513.1	32.1%	33.3	7.8	1.4%
<i>Others</i>	1 872.2	434.7	27.2%	526.0	122.4	22.1%
TOTAL	6 883.2	1 598.3	100%	2 380.2	553.7	100%

*calculation based on EUR exchange rate by NBP (National Bank of Poland), annual average:

2024: 1 EUR = 4.3065 PLN; 2019: 1 EUR = 4.2988 PLN.

Sources: *Kultura w 2019 roku.* and *Kultura i dziedzictwo narodowe w 2024 r.*

At the local government level, the largest share of expenditure in 2024 continued to be allocated to cultural centres and establishments (31.2%), followed by libraries (15.8%), museums (11.7%) and protection of historical monuments (11.7%). Compared to 2019, the share of expenditure devoted to protection of historical monuments increased significantly, from 5.9% to 11.7%, while the share allocated to libraries slightly decreased from 17.2% to 15.8%.

Overall, local government expenditure remained concentrated on cultural participation infrastructure such as cultural centres, libraries and local cultural institutions, while state expenditure became increasingly focused on media activities, museums and heritage protection.

Table 9: The structure of local government units expenditure on culture and protection of national heritage (2024-2019)

	Total cultural expenditure in 2024			Total cultural expenditure in 2019		
<i>Field / Domain</i>	In mln PLN)	In mln EUR*	% share of total	In mln PLN)	In mln EUR*	% share of total
<i>Cultural centres and establishments</i>	4 538.6	1 053.9	31.2%	2 965.4	689.8	31.8%
<i>Libraries</i>	2 298.4	533.7	15.8%	1 603.9	373.1	17.2%
<i>Museums</i>	1 702.0	395.2	11.7%	1 081.7	251.6	11.6%
<i>Theatres</i>	1 309.2	304.0	9.0%	885.9	206.1	9.5%
<i>Protection of Historical Monuments</i>	1 702.0	395.2	11.7%	550.2	128.0	5.9%
<i>Centres of Culture and Art</i>	436.4	101.3	3.0%	307.7	71.6	3.3%
<i>Philharmonics, orchestras and choirs</i>	436.4	101.3	3.0%	307.7	71.6	3.3%
<i>Others</i>	2 123.8	493.2	14.6%	1 622.7	377.5	17.4%
<i>TOTAL</i>	14 546.9	3 377.9	100%	9 325.2	2 169.3	100%

*calculation based on EUR exchange rate by NBP (National Bank of Poland), annual average:

2024: 1 EUR = 4.3065 PLN; 2019: 1 EUR = 4.2988 PLN.

Sources: *Kultura w 2019 roku.* and *Kultura i dziedzictwo narodowe w 2024 r.*

7.2. Support programmes

7.2.1. STRATEGIES, PROGRAMMES AND OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT

Public support for culture in Poland is based mainly on financing cultural institutions, grant programmes and project-based support mechanisms implemented by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, local governments and public cultural institutions. In recent years, increasing attention has been devoted to the social and economic conditions of artists, creators and cultural workers. Public debate increasingly concerns precarity, unstable employment and the adaptation of social security systems to the realities of artistic work.

In January 2026, the Ministry presented in the Sejm a draft Act on the Social Security of Professional Artists. The proposal focuses on temporary co-financing of social and health insurance contributions for artists with low and irregular income and introduces a formal status of a professional artist. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage's programmes aim to co-finance project-based cultural activities and are addressed to cultural institutions, non-governmental organisations, film institutions, schools and universities, local government units, business entities, churches and religious associations and their legal entities.

In 2026, the Ministry announced 30 Ministerial Programmes with a total budget of PLN 562 million, which represented an increase compared to the previous year. Recent programmes increasingly support accessibility, digital transformation, local participation, creative industries, international cooperation and sustainability in culture.

7.2.2. ARTIST'S FUNDS

At the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, there is the Commission for Retirement Provision for Artists, whose task is to recognise the activity as creative or artistic and to set the date of its commencement, based on documents confirming the duration and nature of the activity.

The Fund to Support Artistic Creation is generated mostly by income from the sale of artworks for which copyright has expired (the so called "dead hand" funds). According to the regulation of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage from 24th February 2003, producers and editors are obliged to pay 5% of the gross income from the sale of the above mentioned artworks. The Fund supports artists in three ways: scholarships (six and twelve months), subsidies for publishing and one-off grants. In accordance with the decision of 17 May 2010, the Ministry of Culture will also provide social assistance from the Fund to creators with artistic achievements. This is a one-off allowance, granted on the basis of application, for the artists in a difficult social or health situation.

7.2.3. GRANTS, AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS

Fellowships and scholarships

Thesaurus Poloniae is a three-month fellowship programme of the Ministry of Culture, implemented by the International Cultural Centre in Cracow. It is addressed to individuals who carry out research on culture, history or the multicultural heritage of Poland, both past and present, and broadly understood Central Europe. Both individuals who deal with the management and preservation of cultural heritage in practical terms and those who carry out theoretical research in the area of heritage, history, sociology, ethnography and anthropology are invited to participate in the programme. The programme continues to support both experienced researchers and early-career scholars working in the fields of heritage, history, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies.

Creative scholarships and scholarships in the field of dissemination of culture, founded by the Minister of Culture, are awarded to people involved in artistic creativity, cultural education, dissemination of culture and heritage protection. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage also provides scholarships for students of artistic schools and universities as well as international scholarships implemented within bilateral cultural cooperation programmes. Recent scholarship

programmes increasingly support interdisciplinary projects, digital culture, accessibility, international mobility and projects related to new technologies and sustainability.

Awards

The annual Award of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage has been awarded since 1997 to artists, creators and other people working in the field of culture for all their activities or for outstanding achievements in a given year in the field they represent. This prestigious distinction allows the Minister of Culture and National Heritage to highlight the most important trends and phenomena that appear in Polish culture by honouring the people who create and represent them.

The Culture Medal – Gloria Artis is awarded to those who are outstanding in the field of artistic creativity, cultural activity and protection of culture and national heritage.

The Oskar Kolberg Award is awarded yearly in recognition of life-long activity or for outstanding achievements in the field of folk culture, including individual creativity (fine arts, folk literature, music, dance), folk music groups, research activity, documentation, animation and dissemination of folk culture.

7.2.4. SUPPORT TO PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS' ASSOCIATIONS OR UNIONS

Artists' unions have the legal status of associations, which means they have the right to conduct their own economic activities. Many unions use this right to run their own galleries. In recent years, professional associations increasingly participate in public consultations concerning copyright, artificial intelligence, artists' social security and cultural policy reforms. The draft Act on the Social Security of Professional Artists presented in the Sejm in 2026 foresees the participation of representative artistic organisations in procedures related to confirming professional status.

7.3. Private funding

Cultural institutions in Poland still rely mainly on public funding provided by the state budget and local governments. According to various analyses, public expenditure on culture in Poland has remained at approximately 0.6–0.8% of GDP for many years. Private funding comes primarily from:

- corporate sponsorship,
- private foundations,
- patronage,
- crowdfunding,
- platforms such as Patronite.

A 2017 report by ZIPSEE and Patronite indicates that crowdfunding and online patronage are becoming increasingly important sources of support for creators, especially digital and internet-based artists. Thanks to these forms of funding, artists can receive regular financial contributions directly from their audiences.

When discussing specific examples of private cultural funding in Poland, the following are often mentioned:

- Patronite — community-based support for creators,
- Bank Millennium — a long-term sponsor of music and artistic events,
- ING Bank Śląski — funding artistic projects and cooperating with museums,
- Fundacja Orange — supporting cultural and digital education projects,
- TVN Foundation — supporting socio-cultural initiatives,
- sponsorship of major festivals such as Open'er Festival and OFF Festival by commercial brands.

Researchers such as Dorota Ilczuk and Marek Krajewski emphasize, however, that the tradition of private patronage in Poland is weaker than in Western Europe or the United States. As a result, culture in Poland remains highly dependent on the state and local governments.