



Short Profile

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POLAND

Short Cultural Policy Profile

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1. Fact and figures

- **Political system:** unitary parliamentary representative democratic republic
- **Official language:** Polish

	<i>Latest available data</i>	<i>Latest available data minus 5 years</i>
<i>Population on December 31st</i>	<i>37 489 000 (2024)</i>	<i>38 383 000 (2019)</i>
<i>GDP in million EUR*</i>	<i>845 506.4 (2024)</i>	<i>533 446.4 (2019)</i>
<i>GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU27=100)</i>	<i>79 (2024)</i>	<i>73 (2019)</i>
<i>General government expenditure (in % of GDP)</i>	<i>49.4% (2024)</i>	<i>41.4% (2019)</i>
<i>Public cultural expenditure in million EUR</i>	<i>4 976.3 (2024)</i>	<i>2 723.5 (2019)</i>
<i>Public cultural expenditure as % of GDP</i>	<i>0.59% (2024)</i>	<i>0.50% (2019)</i>
<i>Public cultural expenditure per Capita in EUR*</i>	<i>132.7 (2024)</i>	<i>71.0 (2019)</i>
<i>Share of cultural employment of total employment</i>	<i>3.5% (2024)</i>	<i>3.3% (2019)</i>

*calculation based on EUR exchange rate by NBP (National Bank of Poland) annual average for 2024 and 2019, calculated from NBP Table A archive (average of published daily rates).

Sources:

<https://stat.gov.pl/sygnalne/komunikaty-i-obwieszczenia/lista-komunikatow-i-obwieszczen/obwieszczenie-w-sprawie-pierwszego-szacunku-wartosci-produktu-krajowego-brutto-w-2024-r-%2C280%2C12.html>

https://static.nbp.pl/dane/kursy/Archiwum/archiwum_tab_a_2024.csv (NBP rates used: 2024)

https://static.nbp.pl/dane/kursy/Archiwum/archiwum_tab_a_2019.csv (NBP rates used: 2019)

<https://nbp.pl/statystyka-i-sprawozdawczosc/kursy/archiwum-tabela-a-csv-xls/>

https://stat.gov.pl/files/gfx/portalinformacyjny/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5493/2/22/1/kultura_i_dziedzictwo_narodowe_w_2024_r.pdf

2. Cultural policy system

2.1 Objectives and main features of the current cultural policy model

The contemporary cultural policy of the Republic of Poland is understood as intentional and systematic intervention by central and local governments in the field of culture and its related sectors. It combines the state's responsibility for supporting cultural development and preserving national heritage with market mechanisms, technological change and a highly decentralised governance structure, in which a substantial share of responsibility for supporting and financing culture lies with local authorities.

Both the goals and principles of cultural policy in Poland are formulated in line with standards established by democratic European states. As in other EU Member States, Poland develops its cultural policy within its own institutional and political framework, and governmental priorities may evolve over time. In its current strategic approach, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage has placed particular emphasis on the preparation of a Strategy for Culture 2050, conceived as a long-term framework for cultural development, institutional sustainability and strategic coordination across the sector.

The current goals of Polish cultural policy include:

- creating conditions for the comprehensive development of artists and creators;
- increasing participation in culture and broadening public engagement in cultural life;
- developing and disseminating knowledge about culture through research and cultural education;
- ensuring equal access to culture, including through accessibility measures and digitisation;
- promoting readership and the development of literary culture;
- strengthening the domestic and international presence of Poland's cultural offer;
- building a more coherent and future-oriented strategic framework for culture through long-term planning and evidence-based policy design.

The current priorities of the Ministry also include the development of a coherent memory policy. In the ministerial approach, this goes beyond heritage protection narrowly understood and includes coordination of public action in the field of remembrance, support for civic values, dialogue and depolarisation, attention to international contexts, and a broader understanding of memory that encompasses minorities, local communities and environmental memory.

The current principles of Polish cultural policy are:

- decentralisation of decision-making processes regarding the organisation and financing of cultural activities;
- fostering civil-society participation in decision-making processes through consultations and expert dialogue;
- ensuring transparency and accountability in the cultural sector;
- applying the principle of subsidiarity, under which decisions concerning culture should be taken as closely as possible to the communities and actors concerned.

In institutional terms, the Ministry has also announced the strengthening of its analytical and strategic capacity, including the development of structures responsible for long-term planning, cooperation with local governments and the implementation of strategic priorities. The current policy agenda further includes the continuation of systemic legal reforms and the introduction of improved support mechanisms for NGOs, particularly in order to address structural gaps in organisational and operational funding.

2.2 Main features

After the Fall of Communism in Poland in 1989, culture and its governance underwent substantial changes. In the 1990s, the transformation from a planned to a market economy, as well as administrative reforms, resulted in a series of adaptation processes within the cultural sector. Even though many of these processes were driven by broader administrative and economic reforms rather than by a single strategic cultural policy, they contributed to the development of a diversified cultural landscape and to the consolidation of a decentralised system of cultural governance.

On the one hand, cultural stakeholders such as artists, creators, performers, producers and managers engage in the development of new approaches to cultural management, cross-sector partnerships and the socio-economic role of culture. They operate across cultural fields and creative industries, increasingly drawing on diversified funding sources, including European programmes. On the other hand, the decentralisation of cultural administration enabled all levels of local government to develop and implement their own cultural policies and strategic priorities.

The central state administration is the main actor setting national cultural policy objectives and funding principles. The principal policy-maker is the Minister of Culture and National Heritage (MKiDN), although other ministers may also establish cultural institutions within their respective competences. The Ministry's current role combines traditional responsibilities in the fields of heritage, artistic education, the arts and audiovisual policy with a stronger emphasis on long-term strategic planning,

coordination and evidence-based governance. This includes work on the Strategy for Culture 2050, the development of a coherent memory-policy framework, and the continuation of systemic reforms in the cultural sector.

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

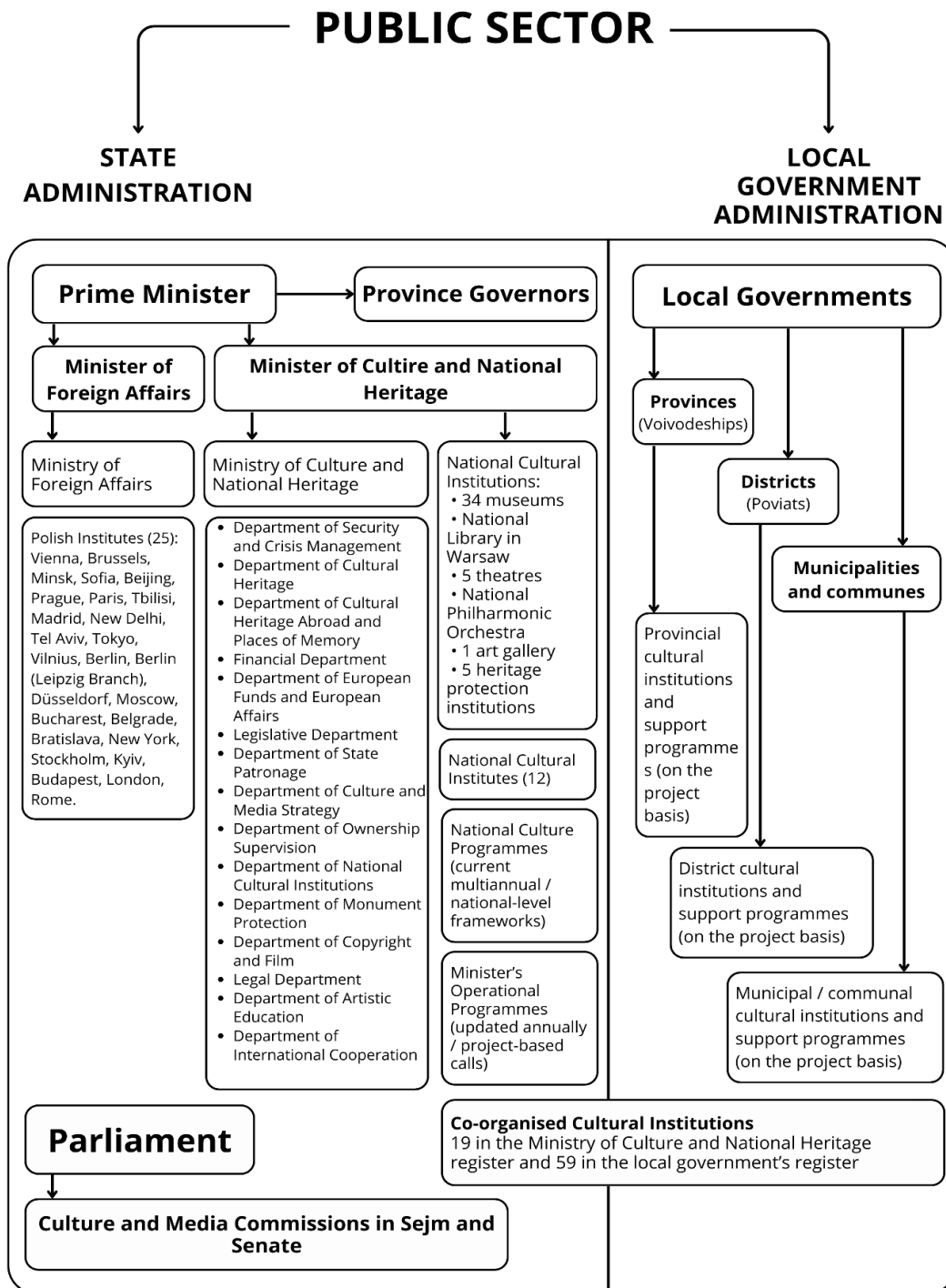
- preparing the draft state budget in the part administered by the Minister;
- overseeing the national fields of theatre, music, ballet, opera, performing arts, fine arts, literature, museology, folk culture, cultural education, amateur artistic activity and cultural exchange with foreign countries;
- drafting and reviewing legal acts relevant to the cultural sector;
- coordinating tasks resulting from government policy on monument protection;
- initiating activities aimed at maintaining and popularising national and state traditions;
- supervising artistic education;
- carrying out tasks in the field of audiovisual policy.

The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage is the founding body and co-organiser of a nationwide network of cultural institutions and appoints specialised national institutions that support particular fields of culture and heritage, such as the National Institute of Music and Dance, the Book Institute, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, the National Heritage Board of Poland and the Fryderyk Chopin Institute. These institutions conduct regranting and research activities, organise festivals and competitions, and cooperate with domestic stakeholders and international partners.

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 the formulation of local cultural policies. The catalogue of initiatives implemented by local governments is broad and includes international cultural cooperation, support for cultural projects and creative potential, cooperation with domestic and foreign regions, support for institutions and organisations active in culture and heritage protection, and the organisation of events, competitions and grant schemes.

The most common forms of financing culture by local government units include subsidies, grants, material or financial assistance, patronage, public procurement, participatory budgets, village council funds and district funds.

2.3 Governance system: Organisational Organigram*



*Note: The breakdown shown in the organigram (19 institutions in the register for which the Minister is the organiser and 59 in local-government organisers' registers) is based on the two official lists published by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in January 2026. However, the Ministry's general information page refers to 81 co-run institutions in total. The discrepancy should therefore be understood as resulting from differences in ministerial reporting across sources and reference dates, rather than as an error in the organigram.

2.4 Background

Two main periods can be identified in the development of Polish cultural policy over the last 75 years, each closely linked to the prevailing political system. The years 1945–1989 were shaped by real socialism, while the period since 1989 has been defined by parliamentary democracy and a market economy.

The first period was characterised by limited sovereignty, a one-party system and a planned economy. Cultural life operated within a highly centralised and institutionalised system based on state ownership. Decision-making in culture was strongly politicised, and artistic expression was subject to censorship. At the same time, relatively high levels of public expenditure on culture expanded access to cultural goods and services and contributed to greater professional stability for artists.

Since 1989, Poland has undergone far-reaching political and economic transformation, while redefining the state’s social responsibilities. In the cultural field, the main changes included the constitutional guarantee of freedom of artistic creation, research, education and access to culture; the establishment of a new legal framework for organising cultural activity in a market economy; and the decentralisation of public responsibilities for culture. As a result, most cultural institutions were transferred from central government to local government at voivodeship, poviast and gmina levels. This period also brought the privatisation of most cultural industries and a strong expansion of civic organisations active in culture.

3. Current cultural affairs

3.1 Key developments

From 2015 to late 2023, Poland’s cultural policy was shaped by governments led by the United Right coalition. Priorities focused on historically oriented policies, heritage protection, memory institutions and the state’s role in shaping national narratives. At the same time, parts of the cultural sector raised concerns about increasing political influence over public cultural institutions, including leadership appointments, programming priorities and the role of public broadcasters.

After the parliamentary elections of October 2023, the new coalition government that took office in December 2023 initiated a phase of institutional and policy reorientation. It declared the restoration of transparent governance standards, professional procedures,

accountability and structured dialogue with cultural stakeholders as key priorities. In practice, this involved a wider use of open calls and competitions for leadership positions in public cultural institutions, reviews of selected funding mechanisms, and efforts to improve the predictability of grant-making. A visible element of this dialogue was the Co-Congress of Culture (Warsaw, 7–9 November 2024), although discussions were largely shaped by institutional and expert perspectives. Leadership changes at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in 2024–2025 reinforced this shift towards a combination of institutional “reset” measures and longer-term strategic planning, including preparatory work on a culture strategy looking towards 2050.

A particularly visible and controversial element of this transition concerned public media. In December 2023, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage placed Telewizja Polska (TVP), Polish Radio and the Polish Press Agency (PAP) into liquidation, presenting this as an extraordinary measure intended to secure their continued operation and enable restructuring. Given the role of public broadcasters in producing and distributing cultural content, this unprecedented step had direct implications for the cultural sector.

Another important area of development was work on systemic solutions addressing the socio-economic situation of artists. Legislative work on the social security of professional artists increasingly relied on empirical evidence, particularly the nationwide study *Policzone i Policzeni 2024*, which estimated the artistic milieu at 62,423 people and provided updated data on income patterns, working conditions and social-security gaps.

European and international dimensions also gained visibility. In connection with Poland’s 2025 Presidency of the Council of the European Union, cultural policy dialogue was reinforced through several events, including the international culture forum in Kraków (December 2024), the conference “Young Artists – Challenges and Reality” at Zachęta in Warsaw (9–10 April 2025), and the expert forum “The Future of the Cultural and Creative Sectors in the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034” (December 2025). At the same time, Russia’s war against Ukraine continued to shape cultural cooperation, heritage protection and long-term support for Ukrainian cultural professionals.

Overall, the years 2023–2025 can be described as a period of recalibration and consolidation, marked by stronger emphasis on governance standards, transparency, evidence-informed policy and the use of European frameworks as platforms for cultural dialogue and programme development.

3.2 Key themes

A defining theme of Poland's cultural policy has been cultural solidarity with Ukraine and the protection of cultural heritage under conditions of armed conflict. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, together with its heritage services and national institutions, established and maintained a dedicated operational mechanism — the Cultural Assistance Centre for Ukraine — to coordinate domestic and international initiatives aimed at safeguarding Ukrainian cultural resources, supporting institutions, and enabling practical assistance (e.g., specialised equipment and materials for securing collections). The support agenda has also included programmes for cultural professionals displaced by the war, such as residency schemes continued by sectoral institutions.

A second key theme has been the continuing effort to improve the socio-economic security of artists and creators through systemic instruments rather than ad hoc support. Legislative work has been organised around a draft law on the social security of professional artists, framed around access to social and health insurance and support mechanisms for low-income creators. This policy work has been informed by evidence and sectoral research, most notably the nationwide study *Policzone i Policzeni 2024*, carried out on commission for MKiDN under the leadership of Prof. Dorota Ilczuk, which documents the size of artistic milieu, employment patterns, income structures and structural vulnerabilities in the artistic professions.

Closely linked to the debate on artists' status and creators' rights has been the issue of private copying compensation, including the reform and updating of the reprographic levy system. In 2025, MKiDN initiated consultations on updating the list of devices subject to reprographic fees and adjusting the mechanism of collection, presenting it as a means to "realign" compensation for creators and modernise the system in line with contemporary consumption of cultural content.

A further prominent theme has been civic mobilisation and sectoral pressure in the context of regulatory reforms affecting the audiovisual field. Creative communities — particularly film and audiovisual professionals — have publicly advocated for stronger protection of creators' rights in the digital environment and for clearer, more predictable governance of sectoral institutions. This included visible public protests and demonstrations connected with parliamentary work on copyright reform (including the issue of remuneration for online/streaming exploitation of works). In parallel, parts of the film community publicly criticised the management and performance of key institutions (including the Polish Film Institute), using open letters and coordinated advocacy to press for institutional stability and policy intervention.

3.3 International Cultural Cooperation

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 UNESCO-related cooperation aimed at the preservation, protection and conservation of cultural properties.

In the framework of co-operation with the Council of Europe, Polish activity is aimed at strengthening the protection of monuments and heritage at the international level. This includes participation in long-standing Council of Europe initiatives such as the European Heritage Days and the HEREIN network.

At the European Union level, Poland participates in the EU's main cultural cooperation and funding framework through Creative Europe, which supports cross-border cooperation, mobility and networking in the cultural and audiovisual sectors. In 2025, Poland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union additionally strengthened the international cultural agenda through an organised cultural programme and expert exchanges, including a focus on young artists and dialogue across generations and cultures.

Poland is a member of the Visegrad Group (V4), an informal regional format of cooperation between Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, grounded in shared historical and cultural ties and supporting cultural exchange and joint initiatives in Central Europe (including through the International Visegrad Fund).

Poland also participates in Ars Baltica, a platform for multilateral cultural cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, facilitating exchanges and joint cultural projects and promoting the role of culture in regional development.

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. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs implements cultural diplomacy primarily through the network of Polish Institutes operating abroad. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage supports international cultural promotion through national institutions, in particular the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, whose strategic goals include promoting Polish culture abroad, building partnerships and engaging audiences.

International cultural cooperation has also been influenced by the security context in Europe. Poland has been engaged in cooperation aimed at supporting Ukrainian cultural heritage and cultural institutions, including the work of the Polish Support Center for Culture in Ukraine coordinated by the National Institute of Cultural Heritage.

4. Cultural Institutions

4.1 Overview

In Poland, cultural institutions operate as public, private and non-profit entities. Non-profit organisations active in culture include foundations, associations and trade unions, while private cultural institutions operate most often in the cultural and creative sectors. The prevailing majority of cultural institutions remain public. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (MKiDN), 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 for maintaining and financing cultural institutions rests with local authorities.

Cultural institutions, in accordance with the relevant law, create, popularise and protect culture: they support creativity, cultural education, cultural activities and initiatives, and implement tasks related to the protection of monuments and heritage. For many of the most prominent institutions, state subsidies remain the most important (or one of the most important) sources of funding for statutory purposes and institutional maintenance. A characteristic feature of the Polish system is the large network of local government cultural institutions and facilities, including libraries, socio-cultural centres and cultural houses, which form the backbone of cultural participation at the local level.

The central level also plays an important organisational role through co-management of cultural institutions: in 2026, MKiDN reported co-running 81 cultural institutions together with local government units and other partners, covering a wide range of cultural fields and regions.

Poland participates in the EU's Creative Europe programme, which supports cross-border cooperation, mobility and networking in the cultural and audiovisual sectors. As an EU Member State, Poland also benefits from European funding supporting cultural development and investment. In addition to earlier infrastructure modernisation supported by EU cohesion policy (including major investments completed in the 2007–2013 period), newer EU instruments have supported the cultural sector through funding targeted at digitisation, accessibility and institutional modernisation, including recovery-related mechanisms such as the National Recovery Plan (KPO) instruments for culture and the creative sectors.

Source: <https://www.senat.gov.pl/gfx/senat/pl/senatekspertyzy/5730/plik/oe-319.pdf>

4.2 Data on selected public and private cultural institutions

Table 1: Cultural institutions, by sector and domain

Domain	Cultural Institution (Subdomain)	Public Sector — Number (2024)	Public Sector — Number (2019)	Private Sector — Number (2024)	Private Sector — Number (2019)
Cultural Heritage	<i>Cultural heritage sites (recognised)</i>	79 935	78 009	-	-
Cultural Heritage	<i>Archaeological sites</i>	7 830	7 795	-	-
Museums	<i>Museum institutions</i>	705	739	277	220
Archives	<i>Archive institutions</i>	32	33	-	-
Visual arts	<i>Art galleries / exhibition halls</i>	205	195	105	132
Performing arts	<i>Scenic and stable spaces for theatre (theatres & music institutions)</i>	174	-	32	-
Libraries	<i>Libraries</i>	7 541	7 881	1 281	1 188
Audiovisual	<i>Cinemas</i>	347	324	192	204
Interdisciplinary	<i>Socio-cultural centres / cultural houses</i>	3 637	3 949	274	306
Others	<i>Paramuseum institutions</i>	230	120	129	37

Sources: [Kultura w 2019 roku](#).

[Kultura i dziedzictwo narodowe w 2024 r.](#)

5. Cultural Funding

5.1 Overview

Poland's cultural funding system is based on the European model of public responsibility for cultural development and the protection of national heritage, combined with a decentralised governance structure. Public funding remains the main (though not the only) source of cultural financing, with local governments holding the majority of operational responsibilities for cultural institutions and participation at the local level.

Alongside institutional subsidies and local-government financing, public policy instruments also address selected segments of the cultural and creative industries. While cinematography and the book market remain important, recent years have brought greater visibility of support for video game development, fashion and design through dedicated programmes and project-based funding. In particular, the Institute of Creative Industries (ICI) implements programmes such as the Video Game Support Programme, Creative Sectors Development, and Poland_Creative: Fashion, providing more systemic support for sectors including game development, design and fashion, as well as for professionalisation, promotion and participation in shows, fairs and showrooms. These instruments complement the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage's annual competitive grant schemes, the Ministerial Programmes, which finance project-based activities across artistic, educational, reading-promotion, heritage and infrastructure strands.

Public expenditure, i.e. expenditure from the state budget and local government units for culture and the protection of national heritage (reduced by subsidies from the state budget to local governments and by transfers between local government units), in 2024 amounted to PLN 21,430.1 million (EUR 4,976.2 million*) and accounted for 0.59% of GDP. Compared to the previous year, this represented an increase of 20.1% (in 2023: PLN 17,846.3 million and 0.52% of GDP). Expenditure from the state budget amounted to PLN 4,520.0 million (approx. EUR 1,049.6 million*).

For comparability, Tables 2–4 below present public cultural expenditure both in national currency (PLN) and in EUR (converted using NBP annual average EUR/PLN exchange rates*). The tables confirm the decentralised nature of cultural financing: in 2024 local government units accounted for 67.9% of total public cultural expenditure, with municipalities (gminy) and cities with powiat status forming the largest spending categories among local tiers. Compared to 2019, the share of the state level increased, while the combined local share decreased accordingly.

The sectoral breakdown at the local level shows that, in 2024, expenditure was concentrated in cultural centres and establishments (31.2%), libraries (15.8%), museums (11.7%), protection of historical monuments (11.7%) and theatres (9.0%), with the remaining domains grouped under “Others”.

At the state level, the largest recorded categories in 2024 included radio and television activities (32.1%), museums (22.2%) and “Others” (27.2%), reflecting the structure of central-level responsibilities and reporting categories used in the statistics.

* EUR figures calculated using NBP annual average EUR/PLN exchange rates (Table A; annual average). In the tables presented here: 2024: 1 EUR = 4.3065 PLN; 2019: 1 EUR = 4.2988 PLN.

5.2 Public cultural expenditure by level of government

Table 2: Public cultural expenditure by level of government, in national currency and in EUR, YEAR

Level of government	Total cultural expenditure in 2024 (mln PLN)	in mln EUR*	% share of total	Total cultural expenditure in 2019 (mln PLN)	in mln EUR*	% share of total
State	6 883.2	1 598.3	32.1%	2 380.2	553.7	20.0%
Voivodeships	3 098.5	719.5	14.5%	1 753.1	407.8	15.0%
Municipal (gminy)	7 055.2	1 638.3	32.9%	4 466.8	1 039.1	38.2%
District (poviats)	261.8	60.8	1.2%	139.9	32.5	1.2%
Metropolises (cities with poviats status)	4 131.3	959.3	19.3%	2 965.4	689.8	25.3%
Total	21 430.1	4 976.2	100%	11 705.4	2 722.9	100%

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

Sources: [Kultura w 2019 roku.](#)

[Kultura i dziedzictwo narodowe w 2024 r.](#)

5.3. Public cultural expenditure per sector

Table 3: Public cultural expenditure*: by sector, in national currency and in EUR, YEAR

Field / Domain	Latest available data			Latest available data minus 5 years		
	2024 in million PLN	2024 in mln EUR*	2024 % share of total	2019 In million PLN	2019 In mln EUR*	2019 % share of total
Museums	1 528.1	354.8	22.2%	775.9	180.5	32.6%
Centres of Culture and Art	344.2	79.9	5.0%	245.2	57.0	10.3%
Protection of Historical Monuments	247.8	57.5	3.6%	192.8	44.8	8.1%
Theatres	357.9	83.1	5.2%	202.3	47.1	8.5%
Archives	323.5	75.1	4.7%	202.3	47.1	8.5%
Libraries	—	—	—	111.9	26.0	4.7%
Philharmonics, orchestras and choirs	—	—	—	90.4	21.0	3.8%
Radio and Television activities	2 209.5	513.1	32.1%	33.3	7.8	1.4%
Others	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](#).

[Kultura i dziedzictwo narodowe w 2024 r.](#)

Table 4: Public cultural expenditure*: by sector, in national currency and in EUR, YEAR

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

[Kultura i dziedzictwo narodowe w 2024 r.](#)

6. Legislation on Culture

6.1 Overview national cultural legislation

The fundamental legal framework for the functioning of cultural institutions in Poland continues to be the Act on Organising and Conducting Cultural Activity of 25 October 1991 (Journal of Laws, with subsequent amendments). This Act defines the principles of establishing, operating and financing cultural institutions and assigns responsibility for cultural patronage primarily to the state and local government authorities. The mission of public authorities in this field is implemented mainly through public cultural institutions, which are expected to fulfil cultural, educational and heritage-related functions while adapting to changing social, economic and technological conditions.

Subsequent amendments to the Act, in particular those introduced in the early 2010s, clarified governance mechanisms and managerial frameworks. They introduced fixed-term appointments of directors, regulated competitive recruitment procedures, and defined circumstances under which directors may be appointed without an open competition. The legislation also established the legal category of artistic (performing) institutions and introduced the concept of the artistic season as a basis for planning and implementing artistic activity. These provisions strengthened managerial accountability and professional standards but did not fundamentally alter the budgetary logic governing cultural institutions.

Despite numerous amendments, the Act of 1991 remains the subject of sustained criticism within the cultural sector. The core regulatory model continues to reflect assumptions inherited from the centrally planned economy, particularly with regard to rigid budgetary rules, limited financial autonomy of institutions and restrictions on multi-annual financial planning. Directors of cultural institutions often face structural constraints that limit their ability to manage resources flexibly, respond to changing conditions or invest strategically in development. A frequently highlighted paradox of the current system is that efforts to increase own-source revenues may result in a reduction of public subsidies in subsequent years, which discourages institutions from seeking additional financing from private or mixed sources.

In recent years, these structural weaknesses have been openly acknowledged in public debate and by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Work has been initiated on reviewing and revising the existing legislative framework governing cultural activity, with the declared aim of improving institutional stability, strengthening managerial autonomy and adapting legal solutions to contemporary models of cultural production and

financing. These discussions are closely linked to broader reform initiatives, including planned changes to the legal framework for public media, work on systemic social security solutions for artists, and preparations for a long-term national cultural development strategy.

As of 2025, the Act on Organising and Conducting Cultural Activity remains in force, but its comprehensive reform is widely recognised as necessary. Legislative work in this area is framed as part of a broader effort to modernise cultural governance in Poland, enhance transparency and effectiveness, and ensure that cultural institutions can operate sustainably in a mixed public-private funding environment while fulfilling their public mission.

6.2 Overview international cultural legislation

The main institutional actors in the promotion of Polish culture abroad are the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (MKiDN) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Other ministries and agencies also play an important role in this field, alongside public and non-governmental organisations implementing sectoral and promotional tasks (e.g. the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, the Book Institute, the Polish Film Institute, and the International Cultural Centre in Kraków). International cultural cooperation is shaped by a combination of national legal frameworks governing cultural activity and public diplomacy, as well as European Union law and programmes.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs realises its tasks in the field of international cultural cooperation chiefly through the network of Polish Institutes based in other countries, and through Polish embassies and diplomatic missions, including cultural and scientific attachés. Cooperation is also undertaken through foreign branches and representations of Polish research institutions, including selected units of the Polish Academy of Sciences located abroad.

In MKiDN, 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, cooperate with Polish organisations abroad and implement bilateral and multilateral cultural agreements. The Department also supervises and coordinates selected national cultural institutions with international mandates, in particular the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, which implements programmes for the international presentation of Polish culture and develops long-term cultural diplomacy initiatives.

At the EU level, Poland participates in the main European frameworks for cultural cooperation and funding, including Creative Europe, which supports cross-border projects, mobility, networks and international circulation in the cultural and audiovisual

sectors. EU law also increasingly shapes the international circulation of cultural content and creators' rights, particularly in the digital environment. Poland transposed the DSM Directive (Directive (EU) 2019/790 on copyright and related rights in the Digital Single Market) through amendments that entered into force in September 2024; however, the delayed transposition resulted in financial consequences, and in September 2025 the Court of Justice of the European Union ordered Poland to pay a lump sum of EUR 8.3 million for late transposition and notification.

EU-level digital regulation has also become an important external legal context for the distribution and visibility of cultural content online. The Digital Services Act (DSA) is an EU regulation aimed at strengthening accountability of online intermediary services (including platforms), improving transparency and due process in content moderation, and establishing mechanisms for addressing illegal content and systemic risks online. Domestic legislation is needed to set up the national enforcement architecture. In January 2026, President Karol Nawrocki vetoed the national act intended to implement/enforce DSA mechanisms in Poland, and further legislative work continued.

There are no official statistics in Poland that isolate public spending dedicated specifically to intercultural or international cultural cooperation. International activities are financed through a combination of state budget allocations, local government contributions, EU funds and programme-based funding implemented by national cultural institutions and diplomatic structure.