BRITISH COUNCIL

BEYOND STUDIO

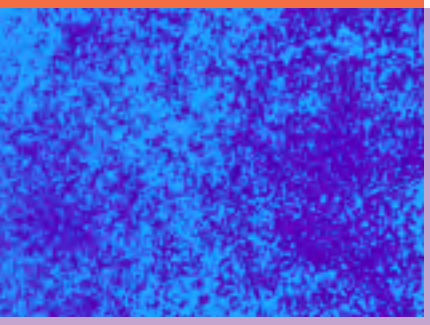
Developing the creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina







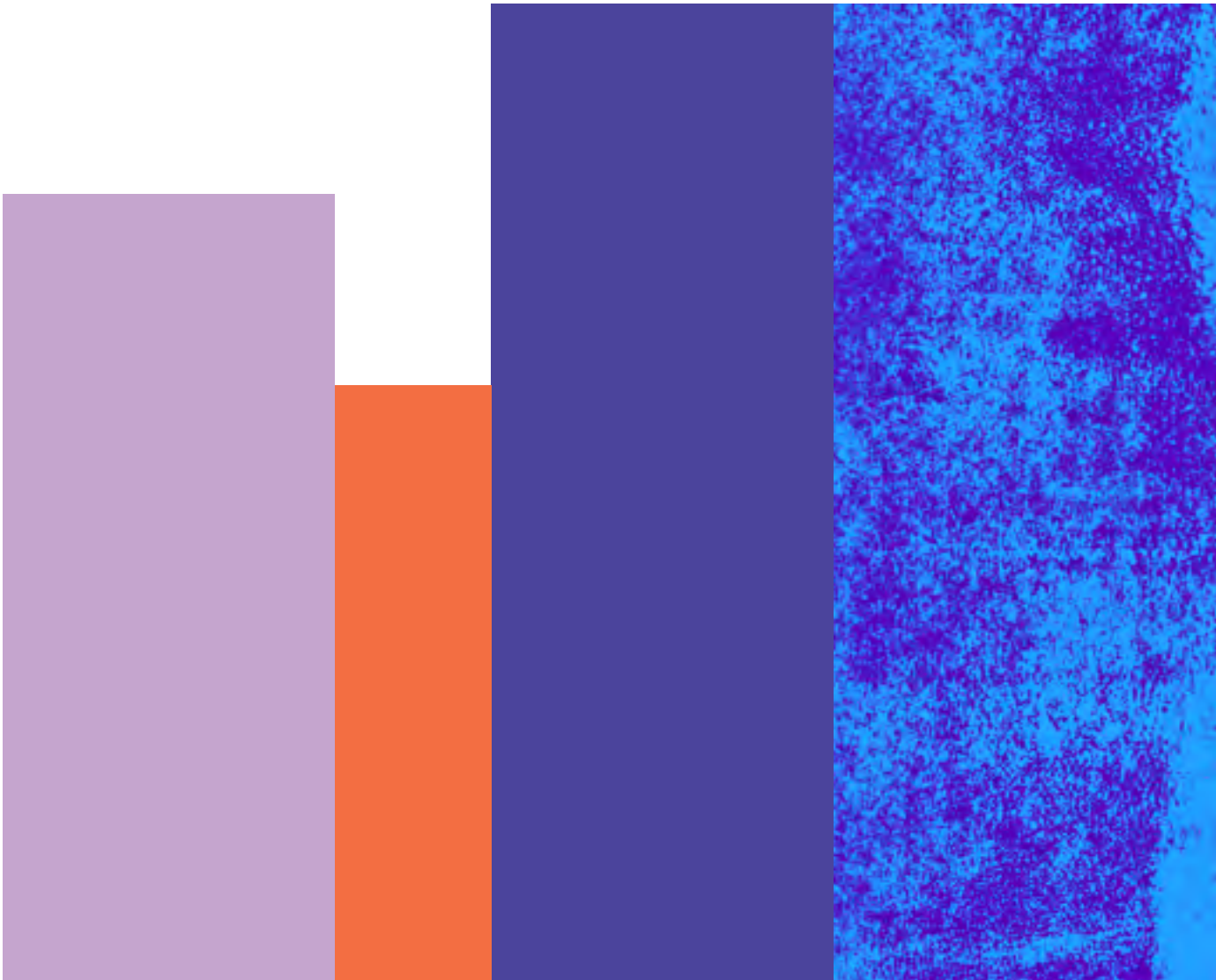
THE FIFTH SECTOR



www.britishcouncil.org

Contents

Introduction 4
Methodology 6
Context: existing and previous interventions 8
Profile of creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina 10
Opportunities and challenges 20
Endnotes 26



Introduction

The Creative Industries

The creative industries are increasingly being recognised, by Governments across the world, as a key driver of future economic growth and job creation. The UN has estimated that the cultural and creative industries generate revenues of around $2.3 trillion annually, contributing over 3% of global Gross Domestic Product and accounting for 6.2% of global employment.[1] Research has shown that jobs in the creative industries – and creative jobs across the wider economy - are much less susceptible to automation than those in other sectors[2]. In the UK, the Government's recent Industrial Strategy identified the Creative Industries as one of 8 priority growth-driving sectors for the future of the UK economy.[3]

As well as being drivers of economic growth, the creative industries are also widely recognised for their enormous cultural importance, the role that they can play in strengthen communities at local and national level, and in shaping the international image and reputation of countries.

In the Western Balkans, this potential was formally recognised in the landmark Joint Declaration by the Governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, signed at a meeting of Culture Ministers in May 2025. This placed the creative economy firmly at the heart of future growth plans, as a key contributor to "inclusive growth, social cohesion and regional cooperation".[4]

Creative Industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia and Herzegovina) is home to a strong and diverse range of cultural and creative activities. These include a rich heritage of crafts and artforms which have been passed down and evolved through generations – including weaving of traditional carpets (Kilim), pottery and Konjic wood carving; and traditional urban folk music (Sevdalinka).

Bosnia and Herzegovina also has great strengths in contemporary creative artforms too. It is probably best known international for its film industry, which has produced films and film-makers who have won multiple international awards and hosts the Sarajevo Film Festival which attracts up to 150,000 visitors annually. It also home to a range of vibrant contemporary music festivals, a number of which also attract international visitors.

As this report describes, many parts of the creative industries have received support from governing authorities at different levels across Bosnia and Herzegovina. However there has not so far been strong or consistent recognition by policy makes of the creative industries as a coherent, distinct economic sector. There are signs that this may be changing, as reflected in the Joint Declaration, which provides an opportunity for the adoption of a more strategic, cross-sectoral approach to the further development of the creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, building on its creative and economic strengths and unlocking the potential of the creative talent which exists across the country.

An important basis for that is to understand the current profile of the creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While there have been various studies and data published on specific subsectors or aspects of the creative economy, there has not as yet been any systematic mapping of the creative industries, their size and key characteristics. This report aims to make progress towards that.

The Project

The British Council commissioned this study, in partnership with the World Bank, as one of a suite of projects focusing on the development of the creative industries and creative economy in the countries of the Western Balkans. The purpose of the project was to develop a map of the creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina including both quantitative and qualitative elements, drawing on available data, existing reports and engagement with key stakeholders, to inform further development of actions and policies to grow sector.

The specific objectives set for the project were to:

- Produce a profile of the creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the sector's contribution to the national economy
- Provide an overview of key opportunities and challenges faced by creative business in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Make broad recommendations on potential next steps to support the further development of the sector

In doing so, this project seeks to contribute to the British Council's goal, reflected the Joint Declaration, of fostering cooperation within and between the countries of the Western Balkans and their creative industries.

About the Author

Jon Zeff is an independent policy expert with over 20 years' experience of working with the creative industries in the UK and internationally, including 10 years as a senior official in the UK's Department for Culture, Media and Sport. He is an advisor to the UK's Creative Industries Council, and chairs the Advisory Board for the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre. Previous projects for the British Council have included assignments relating to creative economies in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Azerbaijan.

The author would like to thank Thom Zeff for his help with extracting and presenting the data used in this report.

Methodology

Defining the Creative Industries

There is no one standard definition of the creative industries (or creative economy). The UK was the first country to produce a formalised definition of the creative industries in the late 1990s, as well as a statistical framework for measuring them. Other countries which have adopted official definitions have tended to follow the UK's approach, but often with adaptations based on their circumstances and cultural traditions and practices.

There is currently no officially adopted statistical definition of the Creative Industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina: one of the recommendations of this report is that one should be adopted. For the purposes of this report, therefore, we have applied the UK's definition.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) set out an overarching definition for the Creative Industries in 2001, describing them as being:

> **"Those industries which have their origin in original creativity, skill and talent and which have potential for wealth and job creation, through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property"[5]**

The UK definition identifies 9 sub-sectors making up the creative industries:

- Advertising and Marketing
- Architecture
- Crafts
- Design and Designer Fashion
- Film, TV, Radio and Photography
- IT, Software and Computer Services
- Publishing
- Museums, Galleries and Libraries
- Music, Performing and Visual Arts.

The DCMS developed a statistical definition of the creative industries, based on internationally accepted industrial classification codes. The list of codes included in the official definition was essentially based on "creative intensity", essentially a measure of the proportion of a sector's workforce who are in defined creative occupations.

It is worth noting that, under the definitions used by DCMS, there are significant overlaps between the Creative Industries and the cultural, digital and tourism sectors.[6]

Methodology for this study

Input for this report was gathered via three key strands of activity:

- Data gathering
- Desk Research
- Stakeholder Engagement

Data Gathering

For the purposes of this study, we have used the UK's statistical definition, based on the 9 subsectors set out above. Statistically, each of these subsectors is defined by reference to one or more 4-digit industrial classification codes, aligned with the international NACE Rev2 classification system.

This list of codes (now mapped onto the NACE rev.2 classification system, at the 4-digit level) is the list which has been used as the basis for data gathering and analysis in this report, as set out in the data tables below. The standard industry classification system used in Bosnia and Herzegovina, KD Bosnia and Herzegovina 2010, is also harmonised with NACE rev.2 to the 4 digital level.

We have sought data at this level, where available, with the aim of building a profile of key indicators for each of the creative subsectors, and for the Creative Industries as a whole, around:

- Numbers and sizes of businesses
- Employment
- Economic output

The analysis presented here is based on data from existing sources, identified with the valuable help of the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to whom we are very grateful. As discussed in the body of the report, one clear finding is that there are significant limitations on the data currently available at the level of detail required to separate out the creative industries and its constituent subsectors. One of the key recommendations from this work is around how the available data might be expanded to offer a more comprehensive picture of the creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Desk Research

Alongside the data collection and analysis, I gathered additional information and evidence for this report through a desk-based review and analysis of a range of relevant and publicly available documents and sources, including academic papers, studies, policy documents and other published information on previous policies and programmes focused on supporting the creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Stakeholder Engagement

I conducted a series of individual and group interviews with a range creative business leaders, industry representatives and policymakers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, arranged with the help of the British Council office in Sarajevo for which I'm very grateful. These took place both online and in-person in Sarajevo and were invaluable in providing insights into the distinctive experiences and complexities of both building and running creative businesses; and of developing and implementing policies, in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Context: existing and previous interventions

Government

The current Government structure in Bosnia and Herzegovina was established under the Dayton Peace Agreement of 1995. It is a highly decentralised democratic system, based on two substantially autonomous Entities – the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina FBosnia and Herzegovina), and the Republika Srpska (RS) plus the self-governing Brcko District in the north-east of the country. There is a state-level Government, including the executive Council of Ministers and the legislative Parliamentary Assembly, which are the governing authority across the whole country, although its powers over domestic policy are relatively limited.

There are layers of local Government within each of the Entities. The Federation, in particular, is subdivided into 10 cantons, which have significant autonomy themselves and are further subdivide into 79 municipalities. Republika Srpska does not have cantons, but it is constituted of 64 municipalities.

Authorities at all of these levels have roles to play in the development of the cultural and creative sectors across Bosnia and Herzegovina although, as explored further below, there is often a lack of clarity as to where the levers to effect particular changes lie. Having said that it seems that, within the Federation, many of the levers and much of the funding capacity available, sit at Canton level.

Initiatives supporting the Creative Industries

As described about there is a rich cultural heritage across Bosnia and Herzegovina and a history of public funding and support for a range of cultural activities and infrastructure, including museums, theatres, orchestras and public service broadcasting.

However there is little evidence to date of a developed, strategic approach to the development of the creative industries as an economic sector, although there are signs that the potential of the sector is starting to be recognised.

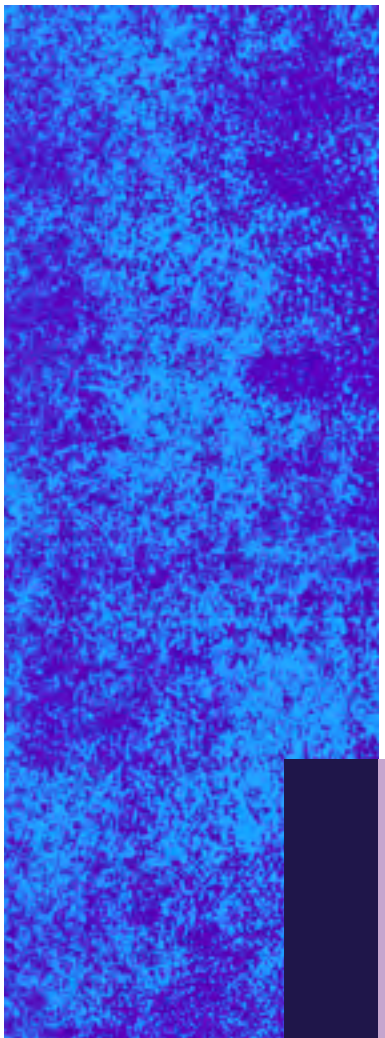
In its 2015 Strategic Framework, adopted by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers in 2015, developing the creative and cultural sectors was identified as one of 14 key strategic objectives.[7] The Framework recognised the importance of these sectors as drivers of economic development, as well as their vital cultural significance. It advocated their inclusion in development strategies at all levels of Government including local communities.

Specific measures included the establishment of a dedicated Coordination Desk to improve the success rate of applications from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Creative Europe Programme, (the main EU funding programme which supports the culture and audiovisual sectors).

Beyond that there have been several specific initiatives in both the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Republika Srpska which support creative industry projects including, for example:

- support for the establishment of the AABH “creative hub” in Sarajevo
- the Innovation Centre Incubator in Banja Luka.
- The Sarajevo Film Fund
- Support provided to various events and festivals across the country

These are small steps, but the adoption of the Joint Declaration in 2025, provides an opportunity to build on this and develop a more focused and holistic strategy for the future development of the creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



British Council and other international programmes

There have been several key initiatives run and/or funded by international agencies which have offered benefits to creative industry organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including:

Culture and Creativity for the Western Balkans, run jointly by the British Council, UNESCO and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, a 8m EUR programme to support capacity development for the culture and creative sectors across the region.[8]

Creative&CBC**,** part of a wider EU-Funded “Interreg” programme promoting cross-border cooperation between Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. This programme ran between 2020 and 2022 , and focused in particular on developing Creative Centres in, and networks between, 3 cities – Prijedor (Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Sisak (Croatia) and Podgorica (Montenegro).[9]

Creative Economy Development Fund**:** a pilot “sector development fund” for the Western Balkans, launched the British Council following the Joint Declaration on Creative Economy in May 2025. The Fund has supported a range of projects involving partnerships between creative organisations in the Western Balkans and UK, with a particular focus on youth skills and employment.[10]

Profile of creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In this section we aim to provide a profile of the creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on currently available data from a range of sources, identified with valuable guidance from the Agency for Statistica of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BHAS). As noted above it became clear from our research and discussions with BHAS, that the data currently available on the creative industries is very limited. There is no current reporting which provides an overall picture for the creative industries as a whole, so the data presented here is based on available information for individual activity codes, aggregated as far as possible to provide information on the characteristics of the recognised creative industry subsectors, and to enable some commentary on the position of the creative industries as an overall economic sector. Figures used are for 2023 – generally the most recent available at the time of the research - except where stated otherwise.

The main source of statistical information drawn on in this report is the database on Structural Business Statistics compiled by Eurostat[11], supplemented by review of other relevant sources, such as the Labour Force Survey and Culture and Art reports published by the BHAS[12]. The availability of data varies significantly between the different creative industry subsectors: where specific data is not available, we have sought, where appropriate, to offer some inferences, through comparisons with other relevant sources, but these are subjective observations.

However, while the available data does not allow for a definitive, quantitative mapping of the creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it does provide some helpful information towards a greater understanding of the relative characteristics of different parts of the sector. And, taken together with the very informative conversations held with stakeholders, it has enabled me to offer some broad but clear recommendations on potential actions both to improve the measurement of the creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to help them to grow in the future.

Quantative Overview

Table 1 below offers a statistical breakdown of the Creative Industry subsectors, based on the three central characteristics identified in the methodology described above: numbers of businesses, size of workforce, and economic value-added.

Overall, the figures in this table identify a Creative Industries sector comprising more than 4500 businesses, employing at least 23,000 people and contributing over €800m to the economy across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Based on the published BHAS estimates for the economy this implies that Creative Industry businesses make up at least 8.6% of all business enterprises in Bosnia and Herzegovina[13], covering more than 2% of the total employed persons[14], and responsible for more than 3.5% of total value added for the whole business economy.[15]

These figures are likely to be significantly underestimated, for a number of reasons, some of which are explored further in the sector-by-sector analysis below. Key points to note are:

Incompleteness: there are some activity areas – highlighted in pink below, for which figures are not published: this can be for a variety of reasons, but data may be withheld from publication if it would be possible to identify individual businesses – for example because there are very few in a particular category, or because a handful of businesses make up the overwhelming majority of sector's workforce or earnings. It is worth noting in particular that:

- there are data gaps under the publishing and music, performing and visual arts categories, which mean that the aggregate results for those two subsectors are certain to be underestimated. In particular there are currently no figures centrally available in this form, for organisations involved in performing arts or running arts facilities, whereas we know from other sources that there is significant activity in both of these areas, as described in the subsector analysis set out below.
- There is no data for museums, galleries and libraries against these specific indicators. Indeed, the data suggests there is zero activity in the in the museums sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which we know is far from the real situation, again as demonstrated later in this report.

Registration: we have been told anecdotally, by a number of the people that we spoke to, that official figures are likely to underestimate the numbers of businesses operating in the sector because not all businesses are officially registered – it is claimed that some, particularly small and micro-businesses operate in the "grey economy". We have not been able to verify or quantify that independently, but it seems to be a fairly widespread perception that this is the case.

Freelance employment: from our conversations with leading figures in Bosnia and Herzegovina creative industries, it seems clear that – in common with many other countries (including the UK) – there are significant numbers of freelancers working in the sector, often employed on a project-by-project basis. Based on the data currently available, it isn't possible to estimate reliably the size of the freelance workforce in the sector, although official estimates for 2023 indicate that, for the economy as a whole, 11.7% of all "employed persons" in 2023 were self-employed. It should be noted though, that figures on overall employment are based on snapshot data gathered at a specific point during the year: and may exclude significant numbers of freelance workers in the creative industries, depending on their activity status at the time.

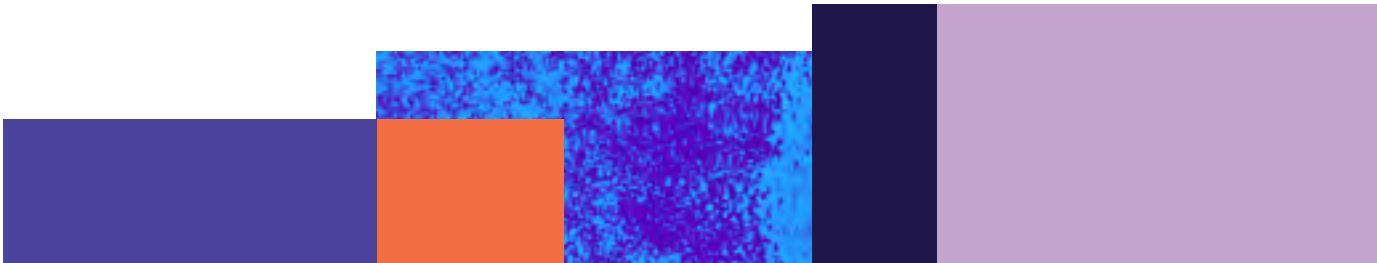


Table 1: Creative Industries Subsector profiles (2023)[16]

Code		Enterprises	Persons employed	Value added €m
	ADVERTISING AND MARKETING	**640**	**3113**	**95.6**
7021	Public relations and communication activities	29	55	2.55
7311	Advertising agencies	550	2438	73.74
7312	Media representation	61	620	19.31
	ARCHITECTURE	**467**	**1502**	**29.86**
7111	Architectural activities	467	1502	29.86
	CRAFTS	**266**	**504**	**7.87**
3212	Manufacture of jewellery and related articles	266	504	7.87
	DESIGN AND DESIGNER FASHION	**295**	**386**	**8.91**
7410	Specialised design activities	295	386	8.91
	FILM, TV, VIDEO, RADIO & PHOTOGRAPHY	**455**	**4785**	**104**
5911	Motion picture, video and television programme production activities	69	266	12.19
5912	Motion picture, video and television programme post-production activities	3	3	0.23
5913	Motion picture, video and television programme distribution activities	11	26	0.67
5914	Motion picture projection activities	9	130	3.1
6010	Radio broadcasting	90	693	9.69
6020	Television programming and broadcasting activities	55	3,245	69.48
7420	Photographic activities	218	422	8.64
	IT, SOFTWARE AND COMPUTER SERVICES	**2090**	**11357**	**517.33**
5821	Publishing of computer games	10	78	2.09
5829	Other software publishing	40	325	9.35
6201	Computer programming activities	1903	10285	479.33
6202	Computer consultancy activities	137	669	26.56
	PUBLISHING	**168**	**979**	**22.74**
5811	Book publishing	54	182	4.36
5812	Publishing of directories and mailing lists	–	–	–
5813	Publishing of newspapers	21	572	11.4
5814	Publishing of journals and periodicals	24	83	2.2
5819	Other publishing activities	–	–	–
7430	Translation and interpretation activities	69	142	4.78
	MUSEUMS, GALLERIES AND LIBRARIES	**0**	**0**	**0**
9101	Library and archives activities	0	0	0
9102	Museums activities	–	–	–
	MUSIC, PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS	**171**	**244**	**24.1**
5920	Sound recording and music publishing activities	25	37	2
8552	Cultural education	10	11	0.15
9001	Performing arts	–	–	–
9002	Support activities to performing arts	33	68	7.73
9003	Artistic creation	103	128	14.22
9004	Operation of arts facilities	–	–	–
	CREATIVE INDUSTRIES TOTAL	**4552**	**22870**	**810.41**

Further commentary by subsector is set out below but, overall, these figures indicate that IT, Software and Computer Services are by far the biggest of the Creative Industry subsectors, responsible for up to about half of the recorded total workforce for the sector, and up to 64% of its value added (although the lack of data in other areas means that the "real" proportion will be lower than this). This is not unusual – in the UK, for example, the equivalent sector makes up around 40% of the Creative Industries total – one indicator of the very close relationship between creativity and technology (CreaTech).

The charts below show the relative sizes of each CI subsector for each of the three main indicators shown above, based on the available data. These vary under each indicator but, apart the software sector, there are three subsectors which stand out consistently as being of substantial size:

- Advertising and Marketing;
- Architecture;
- Music, Performing and Visual Arts.

Relative size of creative industry subsectors, by indicator (share of total, 2023)

	Enterprises	Persons employed	Value added
Advertising and marketing	14%	14%	12%
Architecture	10%	7%	4%
Crafts	6%	2%	<1%
Design and designer fashion	6%	2%	1%
Film, TV, radio and photography	10%	21%	13%
IT, software and computer services	46%	50%	64%
Publishing	4%	4%	3%
Museums, galleries and libraries	0%	0%	0%
Music, performing and visual arts	4%	1%	3%

Business Size Classes

Looking beyond the overall size of the creative industries and their constituent subsectors, the size distribution of businesses within the sector is a key factor which needs to be considered in designing programmes for engaging with and/or supporting the sector's development. One of the defining characteristics of the creative industries in many economies, including the UK, is they are overwhelmingly made up of very small businesses.

Table 2 below captures the data which we have been able to access relating to the size distribution of businesses across the creative industry subsectors, using the EU definitions of size classes, based on numbers of persons employed, ie:

- Micro-businesses: 0-9 persons employed
- Small businesses: 10-49 persons employed, broken down here into
  - "S1": 10-19 persons employed
  - "S2": 20-49 persons employed
- Medium businesses: 50-249 persons employed
- Large businesses: 250 or more persons employed

This data is useful as a broad guide, but there are significant limitations – in particular:

- The data is incomplete: many data points are missing mostly, it appears, because of the confidentiality factors described above.
- Figures on size classes are not currently collected at the detailed, 4-digit industry classification level on which the definitions of the creative industries and its subsectors are based. The figures presented are at the 3-digit "group" level which, in many cases, includes industrial activity classes which are not part of the creative industries in addition to those which are (see table footnotes for details). So, overall, this table covers a wider range of businesses than the creative industries alone.

The main conclusion to be drawn from this table is that, in common with the UK and many other countries, it appears that the overwhelming majority of businesses operating in the creative economy are very small, falling into the "micro-business" category. This is the case for the economy generally – some 90% of all businesses in Bosnia and Herzegovina have fewer than 10 persons employed, and 95% have fewer than 20 although the numbers below, while far from complete, seem to suggest that many parts of the Creative Industries are even more skewed towards very small businesses than other sectors.

Table 2: Numbers of businesses in relevant groups by size class[17]

Code		Total	Micro	Small		Medium	Large
				S1	*S2*		
	ADVERTISING AND MARKETING plus others[1]	**1,557**	**1,470**	**29**	**15**	**:**	**:**
702	Management consultancy activities	946	911	:	:	:	:
731	Advertising	611	559	29	15	:	:
	ARCHITECTURE plus others[2]	**1,340**	**1,191**	**:**	**48**		
711	Architectural and engineering activities and related technical consultancy	1,340	1,191	:	48	:	:
	CRAFTS plus others[3]	**294**	**290**				
321	Manufacture of jewellery, bijouterie and related articles	294	290	:	:	0	0
	DESIGN AND DESIGNER FASHION	**295**					
741	Specialised design activities	295	:	:	0	0	0
	FILM, TV, RADIO, PHOTOGRAPHY	**455**	**81**	**25**	**:**	**:**	**:**
591	Motion picture, video and television programme activities	92	81	8	:	:	0
601	Radio broadcasting	90	:	12	:	:	0
602	Television programming and broadcasting activities	55	:	5	:	:	:
742	Photographic activities	218	:	:	:	0	0
	IT, SOFTWARE AND COMPUTER SERVICES plus others[4]	**2,428**	**2,209**	**94**	**82**	**36**	**4**
582	Software publishing	50	44	:	:	3	0
620	Computer programming, consultancy and related activities	2,378	2,165	94	82	33	4
	PUBLISHING	**187**	**102**	**:**	**:**	**:**	**:**
581	Publishing of books, periodicals and other publishing activities	118	102	:	:	:	0
743	Translation and interpretation activities	69	:	:	0	0	0
	MUSEUMS, GALLERIES, LIBRARIES plus others[5]	**:**	**:**	**:**	**:**	**:**	**:**
910	Libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities	:	:	0	0	0	0
	MUSIC, PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS plus others[6]	**828**	**817**	**8**	**:**	**:**	**:**
592	Sound recording and music publishing activities	25	25	0	0	0	0
855	Other education	803	792	8	:	:	0
900	Creative, arts and entertainment activities	:	:	:	0	0	0

Footnotes to table

1 Others included: “Business and other management consultancy activities” (7022)

2 Others included: “Engineering Activities and Technical Consultancy (7112)

3 Others included: “Striking of coins” (3211) and “Manufacture of imitation jewellery and related articles”(3213)

4 Others included: “Computer facilities management” (6203) and “Other information technology and computer service activities” (6209)

5 Others included: “Operation of historical sites and buildings and similar visitor attractions (9103) and “Botanical and zoological gardens and other nature reserves activities” (9104)

6 Others include: “Sport and recreation education” (8551), “Driving School Activities” (8553), and “Other education” not covered elsewhere: (8559)

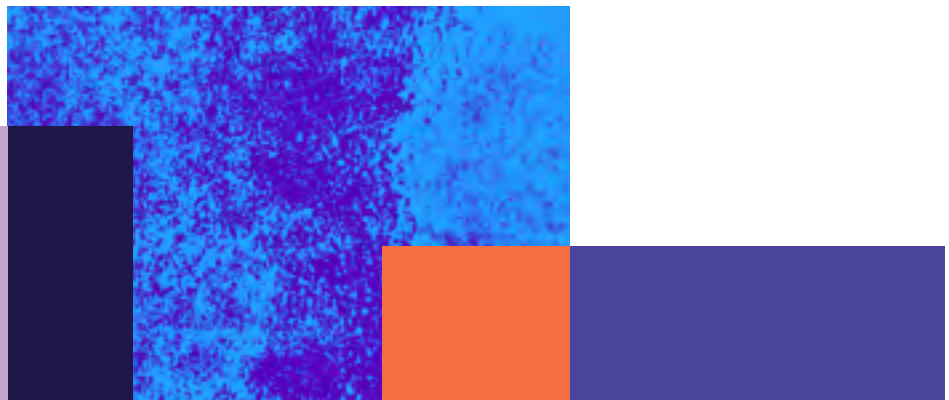
International Trade

The table below provides some information on exports and imports of goods by Creative Industry subsectors, extracted from data provided directly by BHAS. The specific numbers here should be treated with an element of caution – some of the very small numbers show significant fluctuations year-on-year, suggesting possible issues with collection timings or scope. Moreover, these figures relate to trade in goods only, whereas most Creative Industry activities will be categorised as services, for which we understand there is no data currently available. In the UK, for instance, goods make up only around 15% of total Creative Industry exports (2023 figures).[18]

Nevertheless, this table provides a useful, if limited, broad overview of goods trade – showing in particular the comparative internatlonal export strength of the book publishing sector – the one subsector listed which shows a substantial trade surplus (and has done consistently over recent years). The list of top 3 trading markets for all of these acivities is also of interest: although only a selective snapshot, it is striking (if not surprising) that Bosnia and Herzegovina's Western Balkan neighbours – particularly Serbia and Croatia – are already key markets for many of the CI sectors, consistent with the views on trading priorities expressed in our conversations with industry.

Table 3: International trade in Goods (BAM)

		2024		BALANCE OF TRADE	TOP 3 COUNTRIES
	Code	EX	IM	(EX-IM)	
Crafts	3212	7,409,430	36,026,022	-28,616,592	Turkey,Italy,Slovenia
Book Publishing	5811	47,022,874	16,060,427	30,962,447	Slovenia,Serbia,Croatia
Newspapers	5813		5,163,167	-5,163,167	Serboa,Croatia,Slovenia
Journals/Periodicals	5814	2,878,715	6,903,425	-4,024,710	Serbia,Croatia,Montenegro
Other Publishing	5819	6,316,265	26,278,509	-19,962,244	Croatia,Germany,Italy
Other Software Pb	5829	150,818	7,845,494	-7,694,676	Germany,Austria,Finland
Screen Production (2016 figs)	5911	*50531*	*4,076,365*	*-4,025,834*	Turkey,Finland,Germany
Music publishing	5920	14,045	34	14,011	Serbia,Austria,Croatia
Architecture	7111	312	87,649	-87,337	Serbia,Croatia,Germany
Photography	7420	88	145,347	-145,259	China,Netherland,Germany
Artistic Creation	9003	260,146	1,276,524	-1,016,378	France,USA,Servia
Museums	9102	506,737	76,804	429,933	Germany,Croatia,USA



Observations on subsector data

Advertising and Marketing

The Advertising and Marketing Sector is one of the biggest creative industry subsectors – making up 12-14% of the total recorded sector, across the three headline indicators covered in Table 1.

The vast majority (86%) of the 640 identified businesses in this sector are categorised as Advertising Agencies – and 95% fall within the Advertising category in Table 2 above (all apart from 29 public relations and communications enterprises, which are categorised under management consultancy activities).

91% of the 611 advertising enterprises identified are microbusinesses, just slightly higher than the whole-economy average. Most of the rest are small – with just 8 businesses in the sector identified as employing 50 or more people.

Commentaries on the shape of the advertising market in Bosnia and Herzegovina indicate that TV advertising is still the dominant medium, but online channels are growing quickly.[19]

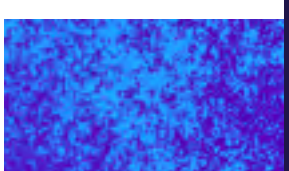
Architecture

Architecture is a significant contributor to the creative economy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 4th overall in value added, based on the available data, though much smaller than the top 3 (IT/ software; Film/TV/Radio/Photography, and Advertising). It isn't possible to quantify the size distribution of architectural businesses reliably because, at 3 digit level, it is aggregated into a much larger category (including engineering and technical consultancy). However for that category as a whole, some 89% are identifed as micro business, so we can be confident that a significant majority of architecture firms are microbusinesses too.

Crafts; and Design/Fashion

The statistics indicate that the Crafts Sector in Bosnia Herzegovina is the smallest in terms of value added, with the design and fashion sector just slightly bigger, and it is clear that virtually all the Crafts enterprises covered are in the micro-business category (the figures for design and fashion suggest all enterprises in that sector have fewer than 20 employees, but does not break the number down further). However the crafts sector is also a significant goods exporter. This was born out in our conversations with industry stakeholders, although we also heard that the costs and constraints around imports was a significant challenge for many in the sector, who needed to import materials used to make their products.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a rich heritage of traditional crafts, including weaving, pottery and wood carving (the latter a particular tradition in the Konjic municipality and recognised by Unesco as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity) – as well as handcrafted jewellery. We suspect that the data significantly understates the number of enterprises and people working in these sectors: partly due to under-registration



(though we only have anecdotal evidence for that); but also because the classification codes used to measure these subsectors are quite narrowly worded: in particular the crafts subsector is measured using the classification for "manufacture of jewellery and related articles", so it may well be the case that many crafts businesses are recorded under other sector definitions, for example under heritage-related or other manufacturing codes.

Film, TV, Radio and Photography

Bosnia and Herzegovina's film industry is clearly of major cultural importance to the country and has substantial international profile, amplified by the Sarajevo Film Festival which has a global reputation. The country still has a substantial broadcasting industry too, including the three entity-level public service broadcasters. Overall, the country still has around 35 TV channels and 90 radio stations.[2021] Although Photography accounts for nearly half of all businesses in this subsector, TV programming and broadcasting is by far the biggest segment in terms of jobs and value added.

There is very little data on business sizes in this sector, but it's clear that TV broadcasting businesses, in particular, will on average be significantly bigger than typical businesses in other areas.

IT, Software and Computer Services

This sector is by far the biggest of the Creative Industry subsectors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, making up 46% of businesses, nearly half of all people employed and 64% of total value added recorded for the creative industries as a whole. Computer programming businesses are by far the biggest group within this subsector.

The business size data for this sector includes an additional 400 businesses in areas outside the Creative Industries but, although this expanded sector is still 90% microbusinesses, it is the only one covered in this study for which any large businesses (250 or more employed) are recorded (though for some others – such as TV – the data on large business is not currently reported).

Publishing

The statistics for the publishing sector are not complete but, of the segments for which figures were available, newspaper publishing is by far the biggest element, responsible for some 60% of the total recorded workforce for the industry, and half of the total value added. It isn't possible to draw firm conclusions about business sizes from the available numbers, because the figures are incomplete, but there is an indication that a relatively low proportion of businesses in the publishing sector (excluding translation and interpretation) are micro-businesses (around 86%) – though this likely to be largely due to

newspaper publishing businesses, which on average have 27 persons employed. It is notable too that book publishing is by far the biggest exporter of goods among the creative industries.

Museums, Galleries and Libraries

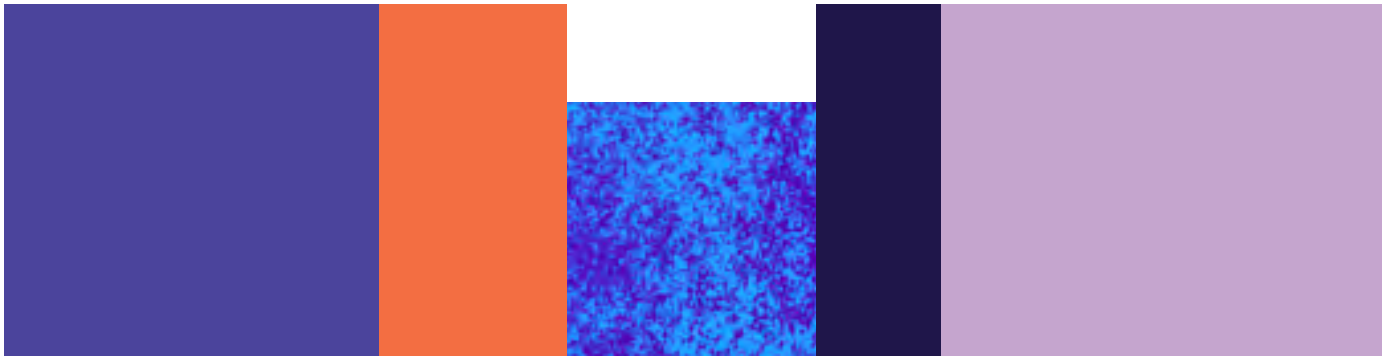
The business statistics provide no data for the codes relating to Museums, Galleries and Libraries, although the trade figures provided by BHAS indicate that museums are relatively significant exporters of goods. The BHAS also publishes separate data on culture and art in Bosnia and Herzegovina[22], collected via primarily via survey and to a different definitional basis which does not map precisely onto the subsector definitions used elsewhere. Nevertheless they show that the country has many active museums, galleries and libraries – including (2024 figures):

- 23 **museums**, with a total of 287 employees. These institutions between them mounted some 389 exhibitions, attracting more than half-a-million visitors in 2024.
- 1011 **libraries,** with 2334 employees and over 600,000 users in total. The vast majority of these are school libraries, but the figures include 88 public and community libraries, accounting for 511 employees and over 33,000 users[23]
- 10 **archives**, covering over 2800 funds and collections, and employing 113 people.
- 19 **galleries**, responsible for 37 permanent exhibitions and 131 temporary exhibitions, employing 85 people and attracting just under 52,000 visitors.

Music, Performing and Visual Arts

The business statistics are, again incomplete for this subsector, crucially missing any data on performing arts (though support activities are ostensibly covered), and operation of arts facilities. It's clear, however, that live events – including theatrical productions, concerts and festivals among other activities - play an important role in the cultural life, and creative economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is underlined in the "Culture and Art" series published by BHAS, which records (2024 figures)[24]:

- 19 **professional theatres**, with 778 employees, attracting a total annual audience of nearly 120,000
- 45 **orchestras, ensembles and choirs** giving some 700 performances (including 51 concerts abroad)
- 74 **festivals** – primarily in film, theatre and music, with a total audience of nearly 280,000
- 87 **cultural centres** (putting on events such plays, concerts etc), with around 800,000 visitors



Opportunities and challenges

It is clear from the information gathered for this report, and from all of the conversations with practitioners, officials and experts, that Bosnia and Herzegovina is home to a wealth of creative talent and has the potential to grow and strengthen its creative industries. The signing of the Joint Declaration in Kotor provides a helpful platform to build on the creative strength of the country and focus on setting measures and actions in hand to enable the sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina to fulfil its undoubted potential.

This section sets out key findings from the research and engagement conducted in the course of this project, highlighting in particular a range of issues raised in discussions with policy makers and creative industry practitioners. Bringing these insights together with the data and other research conducted, we identify a number of areas of potential opportunity to build on existing strengths in the creative industries of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as challenges and barriers which could be addressed in order unlock the potential for growth in the sector. We have included some specific recommendations for further investigation, action and policy development which could be taken forward as part of a strategic approach to drive the growth of the creative sectors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, pursued via a new partnership between policy and decision makers, and industy leaders and representatives.

Data

As demonstrated in the previous section, there is some data already available, primarily coordinated or published by the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BHAS) - working with the entity-level statistics authorities – which has enabled us to assemble a broad profile of the creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Analysis of the available data has in particular provided an approximate understanding of the relative sizes of the various industry subsectors based on headline indicators around economic contribution, business numbers and jobs.

The BHAS itself produces a range of statistical publications which provide helpful information relevant to the Creative Industries, including its own Structural Business Statistics and its annual report on Culture and Art. However these are not currently published at a level of detail, or breadth of coverage, to enable a comprehensive analysis of the Creative Industries. For example, while there are significant overlaps between the cultural and arts sectors (as defined by the BHAS[25]) and the creative industries (as defined for the purpose of this study) there are also, inevitably, major differences. And the

wider datasets published on business statistics, both in Bosnia and Herzegovina and at EU level, are often only available at a higher level of aggregation than the 4-digit NACE codes generally used to define these sectors,

Access to clear, consistent data which allows the creative industries to be accurately mapped and measured is a vital input to the development, management, and evaluation of strategies and policy measures to grow the sector.

Institutional structures

It seems clear that the value of cultural and creative activities is recognised, to at least some extent, at all levels of Government in Bosnia and Herzegovina. And the wider importance of well-established creative events and activities such as the Sarajevo Film Festival, or traditional crafts, on tourism and on the country's overall international profile is also well understood. However, recognition of the creative industries as an economic sector is less clear: for example there does not appear to be any central view of the potential role of the creative industries in future economic development or job creation. Indeed, in some of our discussions, with both governmental institutions and industry figures, concerns were raised that a focus on growing the economic impact of the creative industries would risk compromising their cultural value.

This is not an unfounded concern – there will inevitably be tensions between cultural and economic objectives to be worked through in the design of policies to support the development of the creative industries. However the choice between the two is not binary: in principle the ability to monetise creative content and products which are culturally distinct to Bosnia and Herzegovina can play a critical role in funding further creativity. But these conversations suggest that there is a need for a more strategic approach to policy for the creative economy, which can consider a range of support models and measures, and think through in detail how to strike an appropriate balance in meeting both cultural and economic objectives.

It is apparent that one of the key challenges to the development of a more strategic and coherent policy approach supporting the creative economy for Bosnia and Hezegovina stems from the complexity of the governance system. This was a consistent theme, both from the desk research and many of our stakeholder conversations. It was clear that policy and funding levers are distributed between the different levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is not in itself unusual – in the UK, for example, creative economy support programmes can be funded at city, regional, devolved nation and UK-wide levels. However the governance structure in Bosnia-and Herzegovina is particularly complicated, and one of the consistent themes raised in our discussions was the lack of clarity around the division of responsibilities and funding levers.

Overall, the system is substantially decentralised[26]. The state-level Government has limited engagement with internal policy (there is, for example, no Ministry of Culture at State level). It can develop frameworks for co-ordination between the entities (such as the Council of Ministers declaration in 2015 referred to earlier), but its direct levers tend to be focused on "external" areas, such as

international relations and defence. The two Entities – the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBosnia and Herzegovina) and Republika Srpska (RS) – are the main centres of political authority within the country and operate largely independently, and quite differently from each other.

In Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, much of the capacity to develop funding and support programmes for cultural and creative business is held by the 10 Cantons, and/or devolved further to the 79 Municipalities. Republika Srpska does not have Cantons so policy and programmes tend to be more centralised at Entity level, although the 64 municipalities are also engaged at local level in the provision of cultural services and infrastructure. Other areas of policy which are key to the Creative Economy, such as education and training, and wider business support, are also dispersed.

This dispersal of policy responsibilities presents significant challenges to creative and cultural businesses and organisations, particularly in areas which have a reliance on public subsidy or other forms of public finance – including, for example, museums and galleries, film/content production and performing arts.

We heard a number of times about challenges faced by established institutions (as well as newer organisations) in obtaining and sustaining financial support, with the need to apply to multiple sources, often for relatively small amounts of project-based support. Moreover the lack of lack of a clear culture policy remit at national level has been seriously challenging for nationally recognised cultural institutions, particularly museums, galleries and archives, who have faced funding crises and even periods of closure.[27]

Funding and business support

Funding and business models vary across the different subsectors of the creative industries. Parts of the sector, particularly those recognised as making important contributions to cultural objectives, have been reliant on direct public funding in order to do so. We heard from many of our interviewees about the challenges of securing public funding to support their activities. However many parts of the sector are also highly commercially competitive with significant potential to drive economic growth. In that context, there is a broader policy question, about how Government support can incentivise and enable businesses to attract investment and grow. Given that, in common with many other countries, the creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina are overwhelmingly made up of micro-businesses there is a particular challenge in identifying and enabling those with potential to scale up.

Public Funding

As outlined earlier there have been a range of funding streams run by governing authorities and associated organisations at different levels, as well as a number of schemes run by, or with, the EU and other international agencies. These have provided important support, particularly in sustaining and developing creative activities which are culturally distinctive, and/or important to Bosnia and Herzegovina's specific cultural heritage – including, for example, national museums and galleries, funding for indigenous film making, and small grants for individual artists. However, the fragmented landscape of funding sources presents significant challenges.

Business Support

There are a number of official programmes which aim to support small businesses – including a range of incubator and accelerator schemes - although these are mostly generic rather than being specifically tailored to the creative industries. A recent OECD report on private sector development in the country (linked to the EU's Growth Plan for the Western Balkans), noted that businesses looking for early-stage financing faced significant constraints and that support for innovation "is fragmented and lacks coherence"[28]. This was effectively a baseline assessment following the recent adoption by Bosnia and Herzegovina of its "Reform Agenda for Private Sector Development", so may change as that agenda progresses.

There are also some examples of incentive measures specific to the creative industries, including tax incentives for film production in both Sarajevo Canton and Republika Srpska; and a very recently announced programme of support for small businesses in the Federation, including a specific fund for "crafts and related activities".[29] However it is likely that the constraints identified by OECD would be particularly significant for creative businesses, which are often seen as relatively high-risk by investors, while also being innovation-intensive. This was reinforced in our conversations with industry stakeholders, which highlighted the particular difficulties of starting and growing a creative business in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This suggests that, alongside direct public funding, broader support measures to help people start and grow businesses in the creative sectors could be very helpful – whether through focused tax incentives or rebates to encourage investment, or through mentoring and development programmes to help entrepreneurs develop their business skills and attract investors. There is a range of models for interventions of this kind which have been used in other countries, and could offer valuable insights into the kinds of measures which have been successful (or not) elsehere.

Intellectual Property and Regulatory Challenges

Some of the key challenges facing small businesses identified in our conversations were related to regulatory and administrative requirements: including the costs and requirements of registering new companies, and the difficulties of navigating official inspection and/or licensing requirements. We also heard a number of allegations of corruption in some of these areas, adding costs and uncertainties due to the need to make unofficial payments to individual officials to secure permissions or licences to operate – both in relation to starting up small businesses, and in negotiating permissions around the staging of live performances and other events.

There were also significant concerns raised in relation to the enforcement and collection systems around intellectual property rights and associated royalty payments, with indications that the effectiveness of designated Collective Management Organisations (CMOs) were highly variable, and that a combination of ineffective enforcement and alleged corruption meant that some groups of creators and rights holders had seen no royalty payments for some years.

These concerns are consistent with published reports on the copyright

system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country is signatory to a range of international treaties relating to IPR, and has taken steps to strengthen its legislative framework for IP, recently with significant support from the EU[30]. However enforcement remains a concern – in a recent report, the US Government identified significant problems with software piracy and said the "collective copyright protection also remains a challenge", and a shortage of effective licensed CMOs.[31]

Intellectual property, particularly creative copyright, is the essential lifeblood of the creativity on which the CIs depend. That means that an effective IP regime, which ensures that creators are able to monetise their work, is fundamentally essential to the sustainability and growth of the sector. Progress made over recent years in strengthening the legislative framework around copyright protection is to be welcomed and should continue. This should be complemented by the development of a new enforcement strategy, in partnership with industry, including a detailed assessment of the barriers to the establishment of an effective and comprehensive network of collective management organisations, and the adoption of shared plans to address them, as well as robust action against corruption.

Skills

The creative industries have a high reliance on specialist technical, as well as creative skills, though specific vocational needs vary across subsectors. Many parts of the sector, particularly in content-based subsectors, are needing to adapt and innovate continuously to meet the challenges and opportunities of rapidly changing technology.

If the creative industries are to meet their undoubted potential for future growth, it is vital, in the first place, to ensure that there is a sustainable pipeline of new entrants to the industry, with the key skills and capabilities needed. It is also important, given the pace of change, that those working in the industry are able to access training need to update and adapt their skills through their careers. This requires action and investment by both government and industry – and, most importantly, coordination between the two.

The importance of skills development was recognised in the May 2025 Kotor Declaration, which included commitments to embed the creative economy in Government skills and innovation strategies. There are vocational training programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, largely integrated in the schools and education system. There are also examples of industry-driven provision, such as the Sarajevo Film Academy, and the regular Dreamers Talent Camps for aspiring DJs and music producers run by the Garden of Dreams festival organisation.

However overall, it seems that systems and approaches vary significantly, both between the Entities and, within the Federation, at Canton level. It has also been recognised that there has been insufficient engagement with employers in the development of the vocational education and training (VET) system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, resulting in mismatches with labour market requirements and outdated training. Some action has been set in hand on this, in particular to improve engagement with employers in the development of occupational standards and qualifications.[32]

There are also significant concerns about the "brain drain" of young people choosing to move abroad to develop their careers, due to concern about lack of career prospects, fuelled in part by lack of confidence in the education system, among other factors.[33]

Discussions with creative industry stakeholders echoed many of these points, although reported experiences varied. Some reported that they had little difficulty in recruiting new talent, as their organisation and/or industries were seen as desirable places to work with stiff competition for jobs. Others, particularly in content and performing arts areas, reported that they struggled to find people with particular key skills – especially around specialist technical and production areas. Shortages or gaps in appropriate education and training opportunities were one of the key factors cited, but other factors and suggestions included:

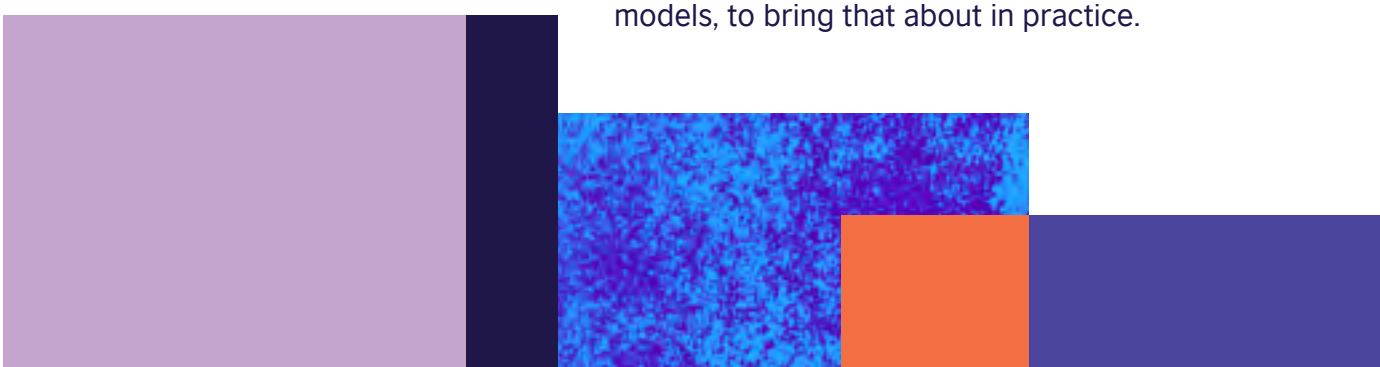
- A need to give young people more direct work experience opportunities
- Lack of awareness among young people and their parents/carers of career paths in the creative industries
- Particular challenges to freelance working: we heard that creative industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as in the UK and elsewhere, have a significant reliance on freelancers due to their project-based working models, but that freelancers – and independent artists - face regulatory and tax-based challenges, because their mode of working is not specifically recognised.

Collaboration

The broad issues and challenges identified in our conversations in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not unique to Bosnia and Herzegovina, although the specific impacts – and any actions to address them – will need to be specific to the structures, profile and wider circumstances prevailing in the country.

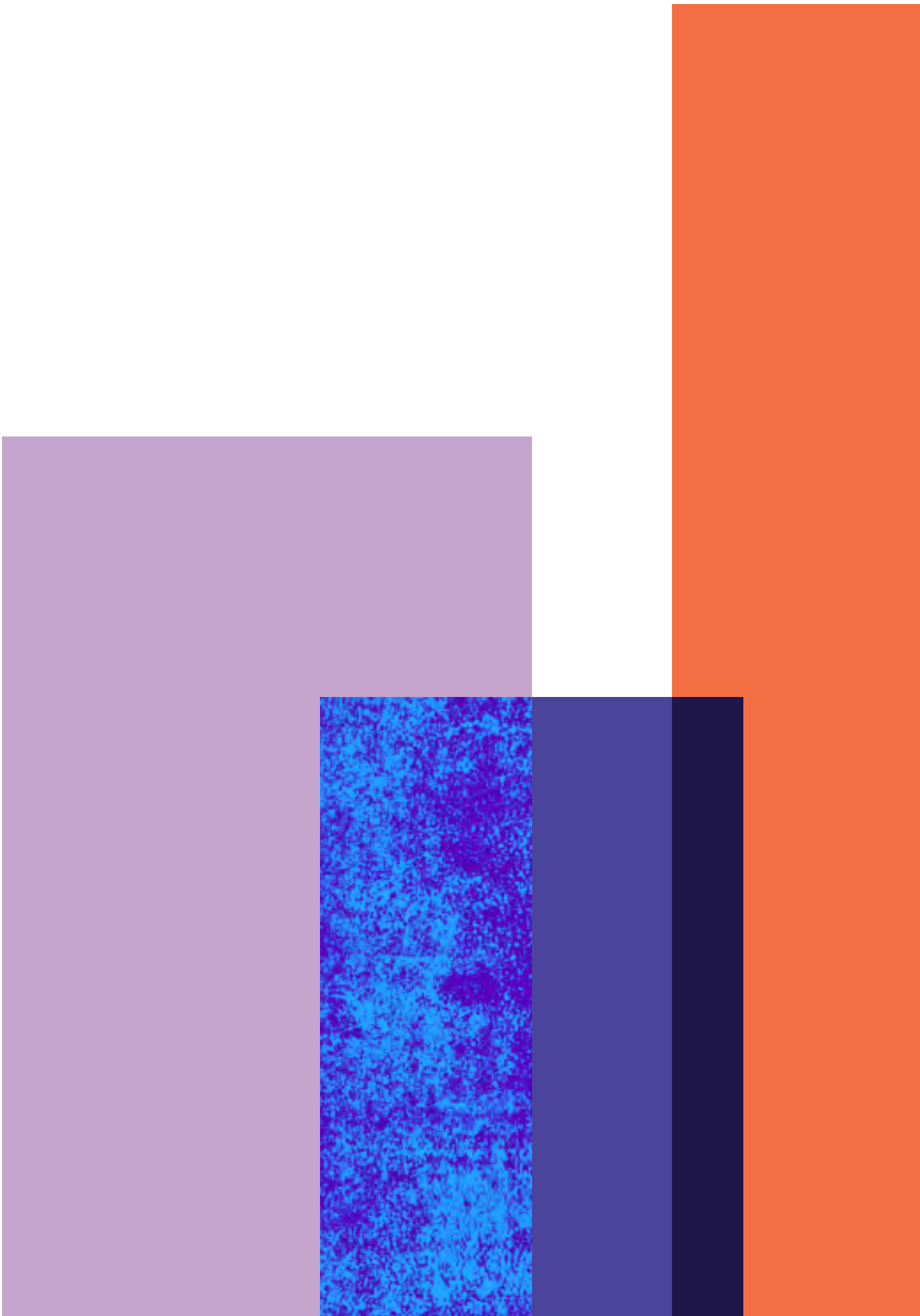
It seems clear that, in order to maximise the potential of the creative economy for the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole, effective coordination and cooperation will be key – across the sector, as far as possible across Government and public authorities, but also between the industry and Government. There are already a number of organisations which bring together and represent the interests of specific subsectors and/or groups of professionals, including for example film makers, architects, artists, and writers. In our conversations the film industry, in particular, was highlighted as a sector which had had some success in raising its profile and collectively influencing policy. There are also examples of organisations which promote and provide platforms for creators – such as KONTAKT, which promotes performing arts with an emphasis on promoting "the role of culture and art in establishing and strengthening human values in society".

Overall while the merits of greater coordination and collaboration are recognised by both industry and government representatives, further thought is needed on the development of an organisational model, or set of models, to bring that about in practice.



Endnotes

1 Creative Economy Outlook 2024, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 2024
2 Creativity vs Robots: the Creative Economy and the Future of Employment, NESTA, 2015; Demand for Creativity and AI Skills I the Post-ChatGPT Labour Market, Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, December 205
3 The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, UK Government, June 2025 (updated December 2025)
4 Joint Declaration Culture Ministers Meeting, Berlin Process, May 2025
5 Creative Industries Mapping Documents, DCMS, 2001
6 DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates Definitions (updated Oct 2025)
7 Strategic Framework for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Directorate for Economic Planning, 2015
8 Culture and Creativity for the Western Balkans – CC4WBS , UNESCO et al 2023-26
9 See Interreg – IPA CBC for details
10 See WB-UK Creative Economy Development Fund Grants, British Council 2025
11 Structural Business Statistics, Eurostat
12 Culture and Art 2024, BHAS, 2025
13 Bosnia and Herzegovina In Figures 2024, BHAS, 2025
14 Bosnia and Herzegovina in Figures 2023, BHAS 2024
15 Rough calculation based on figures from Eurostat and BHAS publications
16 Source: Structural Business Statistics database, Eurostat
17 Ibid.
18 DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates: Trade, 2022 and 2023; DCMS, October 2025
19 Various sources – see for example The Media Market in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2024, (we-know, 2025)
20 Culture and Art 2024, BHAS 2025
21 See for example Bosnia and Herzegovina media guide, BBC (October 2024)
22 Culture and Art 2024, BHAS 2025
23 2022 figures: from Culture and Art 2022, BHAS 2023 (the most recent edition which includes figures for libraries).
24 Culture and Art 2024, BHAS 2025
25 Methodology for Statistical Reporting in the Culture Sector, BHAS December 2011
26 For a detailed analysis see: Division of Powers: Multi-Level Governance Structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Centre for Social and Economic Research/European Committee of the Regions, 2025
27 See for example: Why Bosnia's National Museums are Struggling to Survive, Paul Erizanu,New East Digital Archive, February 2022
28 Assessing Bosnia and Herzegovina's Reform Agenda for Private Sector Development, OECD, September 2025
29 See Sarajevo Times, February 2026
30 EU Support to Intellectual Property Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Project 2021-2024
31 Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Commercial Guide, US Department of Commerce, February 2026
32 Employer engagement strengthens vocational education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, International Labour Organisation, March 2025
33 See for example, Sarajevo Times, November 2023



www.britishcouncil.org

BRITISH COUNCIL