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CREATIVE FLIP (CULTURE) POLICY ORIENTATIONS IN TIMES OF RAPID CHANGE*

Green Storytelling through Art, Culture, and Heritage

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Green Storytelling through Art, Culture, and Heritage

The EU continues to engage for green transformation. A range of related initiatives and measures is included in the priorities of the European Commission 2024-2029¹.

In the context of Creative FLIP, a strategic EU project, we aim at supporting good (culture) policymaking in the European Union. With the series of CREATIVE FLIP (CULTURE) POLICY ORIENTATIONS, we explore some of the main challenges in the European Union with the objective to better integrate culture (policy) in transformation areas. To do this, we make use of the Creative FLIP Collaborative Transformation Policy Approach², developed in 2023 and which identifies 8 elements of good (cultural) policymaking in transformational times. We refer to annex 1 for further information about the framework.

In this policy orientation paper, we specifically investigate how green storytelling through art, culture and heritage can be further explored and integrated in transformational (culture) policymaking for bringing the green transformation further in the EU.

The importance of green storytelling by the cultural and creative sectors in order to accelerate climate change mitigation and adaptation action

“Let’s start with a short story, ...”

But who will tell the story and why, who are the heroes and the challenges to overcome, will the audiences listen and adapt better to climate change? Telling stories is not an easy task, embedding storytelling in green transformation (policies) of the European Union even more complex.

Based on the Creative FLIP Collaborative Transformation Policy Approach, **we conducted light desk research on the topic of “Transformational policymaking considering Green Storytelling through Art, Culture, and Heritage”, making use of the 8 guiding elements of good transformation policymaking (see annex 1). The following table provides a range of insights gained from this desk research**, as well as questions which arise from some of the concepts. The insights and reflections are aimed to feed a range of policy orientations in the thematic field of “Green Storytelling through Art, Culture, and Heritage for green transformation” as well as further debate in the context of the European Union.

¹ https://commission.europa.eu/priorities-2024-2029_en

² <https://creativeflip.creativehubs.net/post/policy-paper-from-reaction-to-action-collaborative-transformation-policies-in-culture-and-beyond-for-future-oriented-policy-making-and-action>

8 guiding elements for good policy making considering green storytelling by art, culture, and heritage

Science-based	Green storytelling is increasingly popular. Tales have always been powerful as carriers of morals, norms, identity. If we want to achieve change, the definition of updated (formal/informal) norms, is a question of power (relations). “Who gets to say what is sustainable, who gets to tell the stories, and who should listen and change?” Related frames can be e. g. persuading, emancipating, collaborative. “Troubling” storytelling seems to be often used by artists and not to be targeted for effective change, but to draw attention ³ . Perceptions of the research community and artists can be divergent e. g. by using elements of conspiracy in film making and demonstrate representational challenges ⁴ .
Eco-systemic	Climate Change is a complex subject. People tend to avoid the topic also due to its complexity and influence on all living conditions. Climate change fiction goes beyond storytelling providing an important means to imagine related complex climate-influenced future livings ⁵ . Culture heritage stories are also perceived as important source of information on past societal, economic and environmental changes ⁶ . Activism can address the cultural and creative sectors ecosystems to change or other societal / economical areas. Depending on the actions the activism approach might only mobilise an ecologically aware audience ⁷ .
Value-driven	A large majority of climate scientists agrees about causes and effects of climate change. A global movement of counter-climate change organisations is strengthening due to climate action of states, but also because of perceived threats on way of life and cultural identity. Cultural opposition can become a central field of action for pro- and contra-climate protection movements ⁸ . Artists motivations can be e. g. related to the education of audiences on environmental issues, bringing to the fore ecocritical reflections in controversies or environmental improvements in specific sectors like water and mining. ⁹
Collaborative	Storytelling and narrative techniques can be applied in the whole policymaking and -implementation process and addressing or be used by policymakers, policy advocates, policy experts, as well as citizens and voters. Public policy intervention points for storytelling are e. g. at the problem definition stage, public policy and law writing, media outreach as well as policy briefings and evaluation stage ¹⁰ . Participative storytelling approaches can be challenging. Some research on cultural heritage practices ¹¹ , for example, show that people like local residents seem to be less inclined to tell (their) stories if debates are perceived to be technical. Stories of vulnerable groups can be less taken into account by involved heritage experts. Social history aiming at providing context to e. g. a heritage site might be very diverse and even divergent perceptions will emerge between institutions and citizens ¹² . Cross-sectoral approaches might face similar constraints.

³ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09640568.2023.2258276#>

⁴ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14688417.2024.2416252>

⁵ <https://rudolphina.univie.ac.at/en/rudolphina-reads-climate-change-fiction-and-ecocultural-crisis-by-tatiana-konrad>

⁶ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301479720310343>

⁷ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14742837.2022.2122949>

⁸ <https://sustainability.stanford.edu/news/global-movement-opposing-climate-policies-rise>

⁹ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361836293_Artistic_activism_promotes_three_major_forms_of_sustainability_transformation

¹⁰ https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/view/journals/pp/46/2/article-p217.xml?tab_body=pdf

¹¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02697459.2021.1891712#d1e445>

¹² <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02697459.2021.1891712#d1e445>

Urgent	Climate change adaptation is urgent as extreme events increase. However, municipalities in Europe are largely unaware of the EU climate adaptation strategies and EU adaptation tools – a report of the European Court of Auditors found. The Court is recommending a better promotion by the European Commission ¹³ . The European Environmental Agency has identified 5 main risk clusters (ecosystems, food, health, infrastructure, economy and finance) and provides risk storylines combining insights from “environmental and social sciences, anecdotal evidence, counterfactuals and locally contextual and culturally embedded knowledge to identify plausible interconnections, challenges and potential courses of action” for a faster uptake of stakeholders ¹⁴ . A lot of current (scientific) climate communication that aims to create a sense of urgency is difficult to digest. Storytelling can easier attract attention and has the potential to be a shortcut to reach out to diverse audiences ¹⁵ .
Behavioral patterns	Sustainable cultures require a change of behavior. There is an intention-action-gap in view of change of peoples’ green consumption. 70% of greenhouse-gas footprint depends on which products consumers choose and recycle properly. Social influence and social norms are powerful instruments to change behavior. Communication and related stories have to be adapted to target groups (e. g. men, conservative parts of society). Generating positive emotions are more appealing for people than emphasizing guilt ¹⁶ . Results from Ireland’s Creative Climate Action Fund highlight that artists’ unique perspectives generated motivation to act and nature-based events deepened emotional connections. Especially participative formats in safe spaces build trust and engagement ¹⁷ .
Territory-specific, international	Rural territories and communities often face deficit narratives including related to sustainable development. Open dialogue about desired futures is needed e. g. including rural stakeholders as heroes ¹⁸ . In the context of the COP conference, artistic interventions at COP festivals were organised. Research on related impact suggests overcoming dystopian focus and to move out of institutional spaces in order to reach bigger audiences ¹⁹ . Culture traits and global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are closely linked explaining 26% of variations in the SDG achievements ²⁰ .
Middle- to long-term	“Climate change is already impacting Europeans’ daily lives and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. ²¹ ” Still for decennials and decades, we will need to adapt to changing climate conditions. The EU plans to reach climate neutrality in the year 2050 ²² . Related to Culture Heritage, the Charter project emphasised based on future heritage scenarios that climate literacy has to be improved by heritage professionals which includes “the awareness of necessary types of knowledge, the organisation of access to relevant data, the ability to analyse data, possibly with the help of other disciplines”. (...) Heritage actors should be equipped with skills to become agents of change including the ability for interdisciplinary cooperation as future challenges cannot be solved by one discipline and communication skills to engage and influence a range of different audiences including policymakers and communities ²³ .

¹³ <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/publications?ref=SR-2024-15>

¹⁴ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/european-climate-risk-assessment>

¹⁵ https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-54790-4_20

¹⁶ <https://hbr.org/2019/07/the-elusive-green-consumer>

¹⁷ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666049024000343>

¹⁸ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344071217_Storytelling_for_sustainable_development_in_rural_communities_An_alterative_approach

¹⁹ <https://ntnuopen.ntnu.no/ntnu-xmlui/handle/11250/3032758>

²⁰ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349362566_Consideration_of_culture_is_vital_if_we_are_to_achieve_the_Sustainable_Development_Goals

²¹ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/topics/in-depth/climate-change-impacts-risks-and-adaptation>

²² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/5-facts-eu-climate-neutrality/>

²³ <https://charter-alliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/D4.4.-Dynamics-and-future-scenarios-for-the-cultural-heritage-sector.pdf>

What options do policymakers have to further green actions by the means of CCS storytelling?

EU culture policymakers are particularly active for the greening of the EU Creative Europe Programme²⁴ and for the sustainable development of the European Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS)²⁵. Based on the insights from the light desk research summarized in the previous chapter and further stakeholder exchanges, we elaborated a selection of actions on which policy-makers and stakeholders in the European Union could especially focus on to better mobilise CCS storytelling for the green transformation.

- **Further the use of green storytelling** by CCS and policy stakeholders covering culture, but also e. g. industry, agriculture and innovation in the EU to speed-up readiness for change of (CCS) professionals, policymakers, citizens and to better overcome intentions-actions gaps.
- **Maintain artistic freedom related to green storytelling (funding) programmes.** Culture and environmental funding programmes should embed green culture collaborative opportunities, storytelling and audience development, however, without dictating the storylines and formats of the green stories to tell.
- **Train CCS stakeholders from art, culture, creative industries and heritage** to acquire the skills needed for green (participative, effective) storytelling and related (job) market opportunities.
- **Invest in updated audience development strategies from a wide range of CCS involving (local) policymakers as well as representatives of major transformation areas (e. g. agriculture)** to enhance outreach including to the more sceptical parts of society.
- **Protect the artists and other CCS activists** engaging for environmental causes including SLAPP / AI protection and investments in safe culture spaces (on spaces refer to: Flip Policy Orientation 1).
- **Support broad testing of (innovative) green storytelling approaches** and the generation of impact data involving a range of CCS as well as a diversity of target audiences and covering all types of EU territories including rural.
- **Encourage green storytelling by the CCS** on those thematic areas which are identified as being of highest climate risk for the EU based on scientific knowledge, as well as on the cultural dimension of sustainable development including the international context.
- **Further invest in cross-sectoral cooperation** of policymakers and intermediaries in the EU responsible for the CCS and for climate change as well as environmental protection, and encourage common initiatives for green storytelling.

²⁴ <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-10/2025-creative-europe-annual-work-programme-C%282024%296503%2018-09-2024.pdf>

²⁵ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022G1207\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022G1207(01))

These recommendations could be addressed in the following policy areas:

- The New EU Creative Europe / CERV Programme 2027-2034
- The Greening of the Creative Europe & Related Work Programmes
- The OMCs related to Green and Sustainable CCS & the implementation of the Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026
- The EU Pact for Skills: Culture and Creative Ecosystems
- The EU Regional and Rural Development Programmes including in view of cross-sectoral and eco-systemic collaborations for green storytelling
- The New EU Research Framework 2027-2034
- The New European Bauhaus and related synergy potential with green storytelling by the CCS
- (EU) Policy Initiatives related to artistic freedom and to activism including cooperation with the EP
- The Implementation Frameworks of the Climate Change / Environmental Priorities of the European Commission 2024-2029 and the Climate KIC
- The evaluation of the Artificial Intelligence Act and the influence of AI on green storytelling by CCS
- The anti-SLAPP directive & the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) and related implications on green storytelling by the CCS

Main Areas of Attention for an Updated EU Green Storytelling Ecosystem that Includes the CCS

Stakeholders in green transformation aiming at enhancing the use of green storytelling might consider the insights detailed below to further develop an EU green storytelling ecosystem including the CCS:

Storytelling Ecosystem	From Research ²⁶	From EU “Green” Policy
Green Focus Areas in the EU	Most at risk in the EU due to climate change are ecosystems, food, health, infrastructure, economy and finance. Special (international) attention is required to the culture dimension of sustainable development (SDGs)	EC priorities (2024-2029) ²⁷ related to green transformation are embedded in economy, industry, agriculture, infrastructural sector policies

²⁶ For further information on research and sources, please refer to the section “8 guiding elements for good policy making considering green storytelling by art, culture, and heritage” on page 3 and 4 of these policy orientations

²⁷ https://commission.europa.eu/priorities-2024-2029_en

Potential Topics for Storytelling	Tales influencing social norms, helping to better understand complex systems, to further easy access to information, to diversify views on territories (like rural) and to prepare for long-time engagement needs.	Based on EC Priorities (2024-2029) ²⁸ , clean industry, sustainable and resilient production systems, social fairness, new international partnerships, (access to CH) are at the centre of action.
Potential Senders of Messages	A challenging environment due to “cultural” fights related to climate change. Artists can provide unique perspectives, (CCS) policymakers can be senders too. Engaged from CCS require new skills like climate literacy. Cross-sectoral cooperation between CCS actors and industry intermediaries and/or policymakers is an effective approach.	For EU Culture Policy stakeholders, storytellers from art, culture, heritage, creative industries, and the media sector are at the core of attention ²⁹ .
Messages and Instruments	(Especially participative) storytelling requires understanding of inherent power relations. Unique (artistic) perspectives and interaction in safe spaces is crucial. Dystopian narratives have difficulties to positively engage audiences. Climate risk storylines and climate fiction are interesting innovative concept. CCS storytellers often focus on education of audiences, engagement in environmental controversies, like for green (water) improvement.	Storytelling is a creative process. Stories can be true or false ³⁰ . Messages can e. g. target change of mindset including hope and motivation, change of behavior and related skills (requirements) or convincing for common cross-sectoral engagement ³¹ .
Target Audiences	Storytelling has a wide range of potential audiences to address – also on international climate change conferences. Audiences can be internal and external to the CCS. Storytelling can be a shortcut to incite audiences to change behavior.	Green (culture) EU Policies ³² target e. g. populations especially youth, CCS stakeholders (Greening of the CCS, Creative Europe), producers like farmers and fishers, decisionmakers in economy and policy

²⁸ https://commission.europa.eu/priorities-2024-2029_en

²⁹ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU\(2024\)752453](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU(2024)752453)

³⁰ Based on the definitions of storytelling of the Cambridge Dictionary - <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/story> & <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/storytelling>

³¹ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022G1207\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022G1207(01)) & <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-10/2025-creative-europe-annual-work-programme-C%282024%296503%2018-09-2024.pdf>

³² https://commission.europa.eu/priorities-2024-2029_en

Inspiring culture policies and practices related to green storytelling with CCS

The following short presentation of good practices from Europe and beyond aims at inspiring policy- and decision-makers in the European Union that want to further activate storytelling with the CCS for the green transformation. The collection of inspiring practices is built on the main actions to enhance the application of green storytelling in the CCS eco-systems and for wider climate change and environmental action.

Creative Climate Action (Ireland)

Pairing creative minds with experts in climate science, sustainability and biodiversity and seek to influence behavioural change amongst communities of place or practice.

Nordic Ministers of Culture Declaration (International)

Promoting a positive development in the international co-operation on the environment and climate, for example, by showcasing sustainable Nordic solutions, by conducting an active dialogue, and by sharing information and experiences with the rest of the world.

NEB goes Osaka (European Union)

The kick-off session introduced NEB's presence at the Expo and spotlighted six inspiring flash stories—three from Asia and three from Europe—that reflect NEB values in action. Adopting the dynamic Pecha Kucha format, each speaker delivered a visual storytelling experience.

Green Storytelling Initiative (Germany)

The Film & Media Office Lower Saxony e. V. (FMB) represents the interests of filmmakers and other professionals in the cultural media sector in Lower Saxony. The Green Storytelling Checklist is for screenwriters, dramaturges, producers, editors, and other decision-makers to consider the ecological impact of their stories and productions.

Green Stories Project (United Kingdom)

A competition being run by the University of Southampton involving sustainable business development and creative writing with the mission to create a cultural body of work that entertains and informs about green solutions, inspires green behaviour and raises awareness of the necessary transformations towards a sustainable economy.

Climate Change Fiction (Austria)

Tatiana Konrad's research "Climate Change Fiction and Ecocultural Crisis" investigates popular narratives which are able to further the understanding of climate change in contemporary fiction. She traces back the cli-fi genre to the nineteenth century and advocates for its expansion and redefinition.

The Big Green Project (European Union)

The Big Green Project is a large-scale Creative Europe project. It aims at encouraging positive utopias and expand views on possible futures in view of more sustainable ways of living. Activism activities in the project are implemented to foster social change and disseminating information.

Yderst Europe (Norway)

Yderst means outermost or the end in Northern Norwegian dialect. The Norwegian initiative aims at promoting slow journalism focusing on native communities and coastal areas. It applies the means of photojournalism to investigate updated European transactions with the ocean. It networks with engaged co-developers from Belgium.

LIM Manifesto (European Union)

LIM (Less is More) uses creative limitations as a tool. This EU Creative Europe project aims at supporting screenwriters to streamline apparent complexity. A well-understood limitation strategy triggers strong formal choices that can help make the games of a private imagination meaningful to all – especially in times of over-consumption and deep ecological concern.

Permaculture Environment Budweis 2028 European Capital of Culture (Czech Republic)

Permaculture is originally an agricultural term expressing a type of long-term planning. Its goal is to create a sustainable process that provides sufficient resources while not destroying them. Permaculture principles can be applied to all human actions, to every area of human activity. In such a system, people are considerate of each other and the environment in which they live and create. These principles guide the ECoC project.

About Creative FLIP



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Creative FLIP – Finance, Learning, Innovation and Intellectual Property Rights for CCSI is a Policy project, co-funded by the EU and project partners: Goethe-Institut (lead), the European Creative Hubs Network, IDEA Consult, and Intellectual Property Institute Luxembourg. Its goal is to support the CCSI actors by increasing their **long-term resilience** and preparing them to **tackle future disruptions** and **transformation processes**.

Its comprehensive approach involves research, collaborative transformation policy recommendations (green, digital, democratic), pooling of information and resources, peer learning, innovative actions in key areas such as **Finance**, **Learning**, **Working conditions**, **Innovation**, and **Intellectual Property Rights**.

<http://www.CreativeFLIP.eu>

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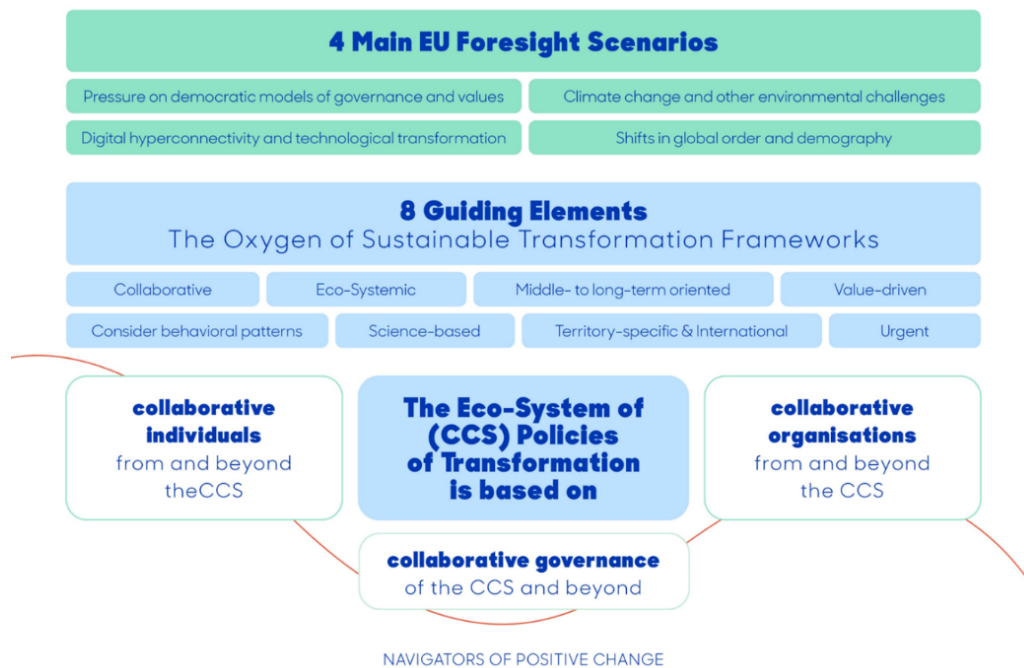
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Annex 1: What are Collaborative Transformation Policies?

Collaborative transformation policies are defined - for the purpose of this paper - as cross-sectoral endeavours involving the CCS (policies). These policies are not solely oriented by cultural objectives but engage in addition for a broader cause. Based on previous analysis of the EU foresight scenarios, four main areas of attention were considered: (1) Pressure on democratic models of governance and values (2) Climate change and other environmental challenges (3) Digital hyperconnectivity and technological transformation (4) Shifts in global order and demography. Furthermore, a set of eight elements were recommended to be taken into account by all partners of the eco-system for CCS policies of transformation.

Transformation Policies Framework³³



Deploying the full potential of the CCS for society and economy requires updated policy orientations from two angles. For the context of the European Union this implies the following changes of perspectives and actions: CCS policy makers need to more broadly consider the role of the CCS (policies) in transformation areas. The strategic EU policymaking framework needs to broadening the understanding and recognition of the CCS as an ally for positive changemaking.

Background Information

*** Nota bene:** The Creative FLIP (Culture) Policy Orientations are based on the Collaborative Transformation Policy Approach³⁴ aiming at bringing forward simplified methodologies to accelerate policy responses to most pressing agendas in the context of the development of the European Union. Issue 2 “Green Storytelling through Art, Culture, and Heritage” included a light desk research, a comprehensive stakeholder workshop as well as the collection of good (policy) practices. Issue 1 “Culture Spaces & Democracy³⁵” is available online. These policy orientations are published in order to feed further discussion and to provide timely input for the negotiations for the upcoming EU funding period 2028-2034. They will be included in transversal Creative FLIP policy recommendations due to be finalised in the year 2026.

³³ <https://creativeflip.creativehubs.net/post/policy-paper-from-reaction-to-action-collaborative-transformation-policies-in-culture-and-beyond-for-future-oriented-policy-making-and-action>

³⁴ <https://creativeflip.creativehubs.net/post/policy-paper-from-reaction-to-action-collaborative-transformation-policies-in-culture-and-beyond-for-future-oriented-policy-making-and-action>

³⁵ <https://creativeflip.creativehubs.net/post/culture-spaces-democracy>