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Posted Date: 22 May 2026

doi: 10.20944/preprints202605.1542.v1

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Article

# Dynamics of International Trade in Cultural Goods: The European Union Market in 2016–2024 as a Contribution to the Debate on the Economics of Cultural Security

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## Abstract

The article aims to determine the dynamics of international trade in cultural goods, using the European Union market in the years 2016–2024 as a case study. The analysis takes into account changes in the total value of transactions as well as the shares of individual Member States in imports and exports. The research is based on a desk research method (secondary data analysis), drawing primarily on data from the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat) and selected secondary sources. The main thesis assumes that trade in cultural goods within the EU was characterised by significant dynamics in the period 2016–2024, revealing substantial differences between national markets in terms of transaction value and, consequently, their shares in the structure of EU imports and exports. The findings confirm considerable quantitative transformations in international trade in cultural goods within the EU during the analysed period. Until 2019, the total value of trade increased markedly, while the temporary decline resulted from the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU in January 2020. Growth dynamics became visible again in the years 2020–2023, with exports exceeding imports. Germany, France and Italy maintained their leading positions in trade in cultural goods. At the same time, particular attention should be paid to the dynamic rise in the role of countries such as Ireland and Romania, both in the structure of EU imports and exports.

**Keywords:** cultural security; cultural goods; trade; EU market

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## 1. Introduction

The international exchange of cultural goods in the European Union brings together legal, economic and cultural security issues. An interdisciplinary approach to this topic is still relatively rare in the scholarly literature. International trade in cultural goods covers the import and export of works of art, books, antiques, CDs, DVDs and vinyl records, textiles and embroidery, newspapers, dailies and periodicals, musical instruments, films, consoles and video games, photographic film, maps, as well as architectural plans and drawings.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the methodology for classifying cultural goods developed for the purposes of EU statistical reporting differs somewhat from the classifications adopted by national statistical offices or by international organisations such as UNESCO. In EU reporting, a clear distinction is made between trade in cultural goods and trade in cultural services (see: [1]). This distinction is important, as the following analysis focuses exclusively on the international exchange of cultural goods, rather than on cultural services.

The scope of this article lies within the field of the economics of cultural security, understood as a field that helps to explain how economic conditions and factors influence the preservation and development of culture, heritage and cultural diversity in contemporary EU societies.<sup>2</sup> Economic issues are a key element in analysing the dynamics of phenomena that affect cultural security in Europe in the twenty-first century. International trade in cultural goods contributes to public revenues and, at the same time, facilitates the sharing of products that make up the cultural heritage of individual nations

So far, international exchange of cultural goods in the EU context has mostly been mentioned in studies of the overall level and dynamics of intra-EU trade [3]. In the academic literature, it has also appeared in analyses of the impact of EU law on the Polish legal order after 2004, addressing both intra-Community trade and trade beyond the EU's external borders [4]. Scholars have also examined bilateral trade in cultural goods, taking into account factors such as regulatory liberalisation and cultural proximity between particular states [5]. For the years 2002–2015, S. Boutsiouki and N. Koutsoupias note that research on international trade in cultural goods forms an important part of the debate on the legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions of cooperation within the EU and often focuses on the benefits that such cooperation yields for states, economies and societies [6].

The literature also discusses changes in EU law on the import of cultural goods from outside the Union, in particular in connection with Regulation (EU) 2019/880 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the introduction and the import of cultural goods [7]. These issues concern highly dynamic phenomena that unfold against a backdrop of frequent legal changes affecting the market. The 2019 Regulation is primarily aimed at countering the illicit trade in cultural goods, especially in the context of armed conflicts.<sup>3</sup> Combating the illegal trade in cultural goods is closely linked to research on international trade in such goods and on the crossing of state borders within the EU [9]. The scope of this research can also be situated within cultural economics, including the economic determinants of cultural security in the EU. A similar approach has already been adopted by the author in an earlier article [10].

This article focuses on the dynamics of EU trade in cultural goods,<sup>4</sup> considering the overall value of transactions, imports and exports, as well as the share of individual states in the EU's trade in cultural goods with all its partners in international trade. The discussion builds on an article published in issue 3/2019 of the Scientific Journal of the Military University of Land Forces [11]. Since the relevant EU legislation was examined in that earlier piece, the present article does not revisit the legal framework, although it should be noted that in the period under review it had a significant impact on the dynamics of trade in cultural goods. The period analysed also includes the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a negative effect on international trade in cultural goods.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For a more extensive discussion of attempts to provide a synthetic account of the essence of the economics of security across various areas of state security management, see: [2].

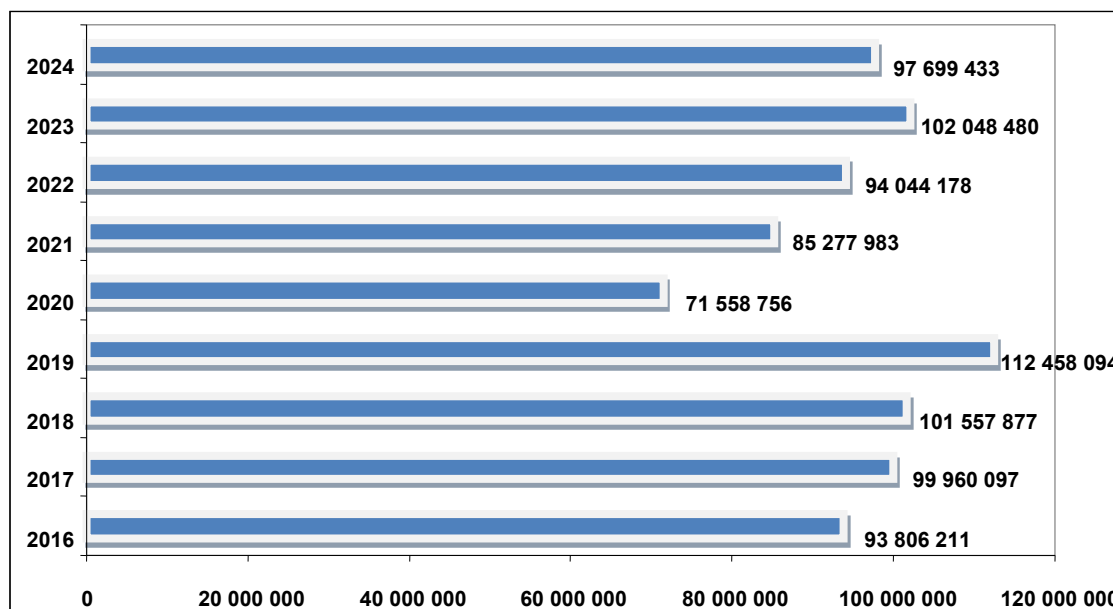
<sup>3</sup> Regulation (EU) 2019/880 additionally provides for the protection of Member States against the financing of terrorism and money laundering through the sale of looted cultural goods to purchasers within the EU, as well as for the protection of cultural goods themselves against destruction or loss. Such measures undertaken by EU Member States are intended to contribute to strengthening the protection of humanity's cultural heritage [8].

<sup>4</sup> Excluding cultural services, which are classified separately in EU statistical reporting.

<sup>5</sup> Economic indicators demonstrate that the cultural sector was among the most severely affected and at the same time the slowest to recover areas of the economy impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic [12]. This is a general conclusion referring to the condition of culture in a broad sense, rather than exclusively to the dynamics of international trade in cultural goods after 2019.

## 2. International Trade in Cultural Goods in the EU in 2016–2024: Overall Trade Volumes

This section begins by presenting data that illustrate changes in international trade in cultural goods for EU countries in the years 2016–2024 (Figure 1).



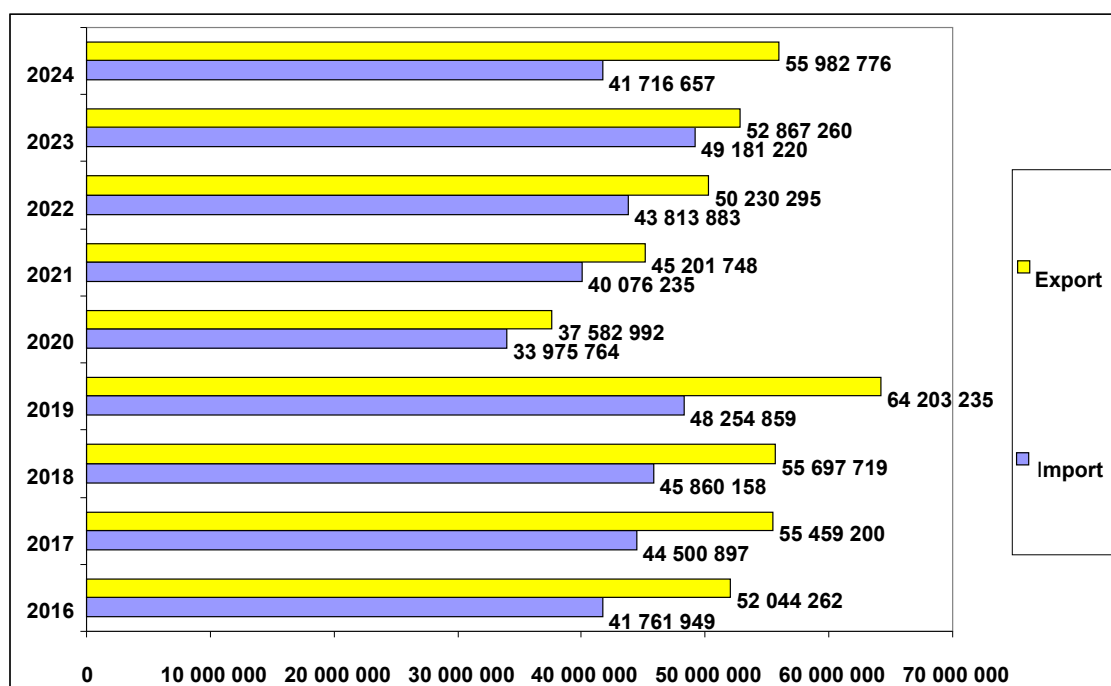
**Figure 1.** Value of Turnover in International Trade in Cultural Goods for EU Countries in 2016–2024 (thousand euro). Source: Author's own calculations based on Eurostat, Intra and extra-EU trade in cultural goods by product.

As shown in Figure 1, in the period under review the value of international trade in cultural goods for all EU Member States changed substantially. Between 2016 and 2019, turnover on this market grew steadily by 19.8% (from EUR 93.8 billion to EUR 112.4 billion). As in other sectors of the global economy, the COVID-19 pandemic may have contributed, at least to some extent, to a slowdown in the dynamics of international trade in cultural goods in EU countries [13]. The downturn primarily concerned the first full pandemic year, namely 2020. A major factor behind the decline in trade volumes was also the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union in January 2020.<sup>6</sup> Geopolitics and the short-term disruption of global supply chains thus played a role in shaping the dynamics of international trade in cultural goods on the market examined here. Other phenomena that constrained transactions included the development of e-commerce and competition from non-EU streaming platforms (SVOD – Subscription Video On Demand).<sup>7</sup> These challenges did not, however, lead to a lasting collapse in trade, since total turnover increased markedly in 2020–2023 (from EUR 71.5 billion to over EUR 102 billion).

The next step is to trace changes in the value of import and export transactions in international trade in cultural goods for EU countries in 2016–2024 (Figure 2).

<sup>6</sup> Data from Arts Council England indicate that this particularly concerned the export side, which predominated in the structure of the United Kingdom's foreign trade in cultural goods in the first and second decades of the twenty-first century [14].

<sup>7</sup> It is assessed that during the analysed years similar phenomena prompted many countries to adapt their national cultural policies to new requirements for promoting the diversity of cultural expressions in a globalised economy. Additional importance was attached to counteracting tax avoidance by enterprises trading in cultural goods in connection with transactions on the EU market [15].



**Figure 2.** Value of Imports and Exports in International Trade in Cultural Goods for EU Countries in 2016–2024 (thousand euro). Source: Author's own calculations based on Eurostat, Intra and extra-EU trade in cultural goods by product.

Figure 2 shows that the value of imports of cultural goods to EU countries in the years studied essentially did not change, remaining at EUR 41.7 billion (a decline of 0.1%). Over the same period, exports fell by 7.6% (from just over EUR 52 billion to just under EUR 56 billion). It is worth underlining that in every year exports clearly exceeded imports, although the gap between them narrowed over the period as a whole (especially from the first full pandemic year, 2020, onwards). The strength of EU exports, particularly in transactions beyond the internal market, was largely underpinned by the growth in jewellery sales, in the luxury segment (fine jewellery), affordable luxury and the mass-market (fashion) segment alike [16,17]. In the period analysed, an important driver of export growth was the sale of jewellery from Italy to Türkiye, which in 2024 accounted for almost 26% of total EU jewellery exports to non-EU countries<sup>8</sup>.

An additional factor helping to sustain a persistent export surplus was the introduction of stricter rules on the import of cultural goods into the EU from third countries following the entry into force of the 2019 regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the introduction and import of cultural goods. While the regulation was primarily intended to prevent the illicit trade in cultural goods, it also reinforced administrative and customs barriers and licensing requirements for imports of such goods in general [19]. Political and legal factors therefore played an important role in increasing the weight of exports in the EU's trade in cultural goods after 2019.

<sup>8</sup> In the context of rising inflation and the depreciation of the Turkish lira, as well as the introduction in 2023 of an additional 20% tariff on imported jewellery under Presidential Decree No. 7480, many Turkish citizens began, at an early stage, to treat purchases of jewellery (gold and silver) as a form of capital investment under difficult macroeconomic conditions. In 2023, a ban was also introduced on the import of unprocessed gold by non-professional individuals, with the exception of jewellery for personal use up to a value limit of USD 15,000. The Italian market became the primary destination for the dynamically growing purchases of jewellery by both Turkish citizens and Turkish institutions, which translated into the trade balance also in the sphere of international trade in cultural goods, as illustrated by the EU market. Cf. [18].

The downturn in international trade in cultural goods in the EU between 2019 and 2020 affected exports (a decline of 41.5%) more strongly than imports (a decline of 29.6%). This was due in particular to the deterioration of the EU's export capacity after the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the Union [20]. In the year preceding Brexit, the value of UK exports of cultural goods exceeded EUR 20.6 billion, more than twice that of France, which ranked second [21]. Despite this substantial change, the EU retained the capacity to generate surpluses in exports of cultural goods on the international market.

#### Structure of products in international trade in cultural goods: the case of the EU

International trade in cultural goods in the EU must also be considered in terms of the product structure of the transactions carried out. Table 1 presents changes in the share of individual types of cultural goods in EU imports and exports in 2016, 2020 and 2024, that is, at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the period analysed.

**Table 1.** Share of individual products in imports and exports of cultural goods in the EU in 2016, 2020 and 2024 (percent).

CATEGORIES OF CULTURAL GOODS	IMPORT			EXPORT		
	2016	2020	2024	2016	2020	2024
Antiques	4.58	3.72	4.93	2.98	2.76	3.45
Works of art (paintings, prints, sculptures, designs)	8.64	13.31	15.79	14.35	11.98	10.63
Crafts	6.27	4.81	4.64	3.72	3.82	2.62
Jewellery	35.55	30.68	34.58	48.63	48.45	64.99
Books	10.46	10.04	9.36	9.12	9.89	5.56
Newspapers and periodicals	1.96	1.26	0.95	2.89	1.72	0.84
Maps	0.31	0.21	0.08	0.16	0.10	0.04
Architectural plans and drawings	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.15	0.14	0.07
Photographic plates and films	1.14	0.91	2.43	0.70	1.18	0.88
Printing and reproduction of recorded media (e.g. CDs, DVDs, vinyl records)	5.04	3.82	2.19	10.75	10.35	4.92
Video game consoles	19.65	23.87	18.71	2.95	5.43	3.34
Musical instruments, parts and accessories	6.37	7.35	6.35	3.56	4.21	2.66

Source: Author's own calculations based on Eurostat, Intra and extra-EU trade in cultural goods by product.

As Table 1 shows, in the structure of imports of cultural goods to EU countries, jewellery ranked first (on average one third of imports), followed by video game consoles (depending on the year, one in four or one in five imported cultural goods), books (on average one in ten imported items) and works of art (almost 9% in 2016 and just under 16% in 2024). Musical instruments accounted for around 7% of these imports, while the remaining product categories had smaller shares.

In the structure of EU exports of cultural goods, jewellery clearly dominated, with its share rising from 48.5% to almost 65%. The EU played a key role in international trade in jewellery, particularly thanks to exports from countries such as Italy, Spain and Germany [22]. Works of art accounted for an average of 14% of exports, and products in the category of printing and reproduction of recorded media for around 10%, despite the decline in the latter from 10.7% to about 5%.

It is also important to note the marked disparity between exports and imports of video game consoles, in favour of imports. This can be explained by purchases made by Member States from non-EU countries, in particular imports from the United States and Japan. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the EU market has been one of the main markets worldwide in terms of purchases of such products. The absence of a European alternative among producers has meant that EU countries have effectively been compelled to import video game consoles from American and Japanese markets [23].

### 3. Geographical Structure of Trade in Cultural Goods in the EU by Individual Member States

It is necessary to examine the value of turnover in international trade in cultural goods across EU Member States by comparing data from the beginning and the end of the adopted period. This comparison is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Value of turnover in international trade in cultural goods in EU Member States in 2016 and 2024 (in thousand euro).

Country	2016	2024	Dynamics (%) 2016 = 100
Austria	2,877,922	3,237,935	112.51
Belgium	2,444,526	3,450,293	141.14
Bulgaria	172,096	295,723	171.84
Croatia	218,747	253,013	115.66
Czechia	1,968,144	2,568,370	130.50
Cyprus	65,942	106,623	161.69
Denmark	1,182,984	1,177,067	99.50
Estonia	150,411	167,354	111.26
Finland	357,103	304,664	85.32
France	15,280,922	19,588,685	128.19
Greece	509,915	605,136	118.67
Spain	3,302,427	4,711,243	142.66
Netherlands	8,229,623	12,249,262	148.84
Ireland	1,155,427	3,513,552	304.09
Lithuania	165,245	215,110	130.18
Luxembourg	251,048	185,536	73.90
Latvia	269,495	257,821	95.66
Malta	47,141	57,549	122.08
Germany	14,955,804	15,254,885	102.00
Poland	4,409,155	4,192,777	95.09
Portugal	499,737	809,911	162.07
Romania	270,240	875,504	323.97
Slovakia	531,190	791,163	148.95
Slovenia	221,801	301,382	135.88
Sweden	1,287,269	1,526,107	118.55
Hungary	397,077	429,215	108.09
United Kingdom	22,199,189	–	–
Italy	10,385,632	20,573,553	198.10

Table 2 indicates that significant disparities in the value of turnover in international trade in cultural goods persisted among EU Member States. The largest shares were recorded by the United Kingdom (just under EUR 22.2 billion in 2016), Germany (approximately EUR 15 billion), France (with an increase from EUR 15.2 billion to EUR 19.5 billion), and Italy (with nearly a twofold increase, from EUR 10.3 billion to EUR 20.5 billion). As noted above, however, the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union substantially weakened the potential of the EU market as both an importer and, above all, an exporter of cultural goods.

Moreover, the group of countries with the highest growth dynamics in turnover included Romania and Ireland (in both cases more than a threefold increase in value), as well as Italy (almost a twofold increase). Trade turnover increased by more than half in Cyprus (61.7%), Portugal (62%), and Bulgaria (71.8%). A comparison of 2024 with 2016 shows that turnover increased in 22 out of 27 Member States. The exceptions were Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Latvia, and Poland.

Romania recorded the highest increase in the number of people employed in culture (10.4% between 2023 and 2024) and the highest share of full-time employment in the cultural sector among EU economies (97.3% in 2024), which supported the country's growing engagement in international trade in cultural goods [24]. Between 2016 and 2024, Romania remained one of the fastest-growing economies in the EU, while growth in cultural goods imports was driven by rising income levels and household consumption. High economic growth was accompanied by structural economic changes, including the strengthening of the creative industries. A high proportion of intra-EU transactions in both imports and exports enabled Romania to benefit from uniform legal, administrative, and customs frameworks. The country remained relatively resilient to negative phenomena affecting international trade in cultural goods (and other categories of goods), including in transactions with third countries [25].

In Ireland's case, growth dynamics were associated with the expanding cooperation of Irish enterprises with foreign corporations (particularly American ones), the growing importance of exports of luxury goods (including jewellery and works of art), and trade in digital carriers and products. The improvement of export infrastructure after the COVID-19 pandemic was accompanied by export support and promotion programmes, such as Showcase Ireland and Enterprise Ireland, facilitating the expansion of Irish cultural goods in foreign markets [26]. Legal changes also played an important role: in 2022 Ireland introduced the Digital Games Tax Credit, offering tax relief for projects related to the development of digital gaming technologies and including digital games within the legal classification of cultural goods [27].

Finally, the significant growth in international trade in cultural goods in Italy was largely driven by rising jewellery exports, both within the EU and to non-EU markets. A report prepared by the industry association Confindustria Federorafi for the years 2019–2023 identified the internationalisation of Italian jewellery producers as a strategic objective, particularly with regard to geographic and product diversification, as well as maintaining Italy's leading position in EU jewellery exports [28].

In addition to Table 2, reference should be made to the values of imports (Table 3) and exports (Table 4) in the international trade in cultural goods in EU Member States over the period 2016–2024.

**Table 3.** Value of imports in international trade in cultural goods in EU countries in 2016 and 2024 (in thousand euro). Source: Author's own elaboration based on Eurostat, *Intra- and extra-EU trade in cultural goods by product*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/CULT\\_TRD\\_PRD/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/CULT_TRD_PRD/default/table?lang=en) [accessed: 10 June 2026].

Country	2016	2024	Dynamics (%) 2016 = 100
Austria	1,788,940	2,125,284	118.80
Belgium	1,367,065	1,844,128	134.90
Bulgaria	108,003	208,392	192.95
Croatia	131,364	181,574	138.22
Czechia	855,259	1,024,266	119.76
Cyprus	50,438	97,007	192.33
Denmark	629,753	653,440	103.76
Estonia	47,259	80,106	169.50
Finland	254,867	218,274	85.64
France	7,278,030	8,884,679	122.08
Greece	301,343	385,447	127.91
Spain	1,762,129	2,569,334	145.81
Netherlands	3,999,242	5,496,497	137.44
Ireland	612,350	1,775,384	289.93
Lithuania	69,881	99,119	141.84
Luxembourg	220,744	151,553	68.66
Latvia	106,280	79,890	75.17

Malta	35,722	45,867	128.40
Germany	6,766,154	7,456,269	110.20
Poland	1,817,500	1,858,000	102.23
Portugal	345,647	554,388	160.39
Romania	180,935	574,832	317.70
Slovakia	275,173	385,431	140.07
Slovenia	109,513	136,250	124.41
Sweden	692,432	903,408	130.47
Hungary	222,659	212,303	95.35
United Kingdom	8,697,731	–	–
Italy	3,035,536	3,715,535	122.40

Table 3 shows that in the majority of EU Member States the value of imports increased in 2024 compared with 2016. The opposite trend was observed in Finland, Luxembourg, Latvia and Hungary.

In terms of growth dynamics, the most significant increases were recorded in Romania (317.7%), Ireland (289.9%), Bulgaria (192.9%), Cyprus (192.3%), Estonia (169.5%) and Portugal (160.3%). The rise in the importance of Romania and Ireland resulted from analogous phenomena to those previously discussed in the context of overall trade turnover growth.

In the case of Bulgaria, one of the leading factors was rising private consumption and economic growth supporting the development of the creative industries. The country joined the Schengen Area in 2024 (maritime and air borders) and additionally in 2025 (land borders). A significant role was also played by relatively low tax rates: Bulgaria's VAT stands at 20%, while both personal and corporate income tax rates are 10%<sup>9</sup>.

The growing importance of Cyprus may be explained by its well-developed luxury goods and services sector, strong market absorption capacity, and dynamic growth in the video game console segment. Cyprus remained the EU leader in terms of the gross value added of the cultural sector to the economy (5.4%, compared with the EU average of 2.0%) and the sector's share in total national turnover (5.4% compared with the EU average of 1.3% in 2022) [30].

Additional data published by Eurostat indicate that more than half of EU imports of cultural goods during this period concerned intra-EU trade. For example, in 2021 this share amounted to 54.6%, particularly in Slovakia (93.8%), Poland (85.4%), Croatia (84.1%), Portugal (83.3%) and Romania (82.8%).

By contrast, among the countries with the largest share of imports of cultural goods from partners outside the EU were the Netherlands (79.3%), Ireland (54.6%), Italy (49.8%), France (49.4%), Germany (48.3%) and Belgium (46.6%) [31].

Countries with a dominant share of intra-EU transactions are primarily those with negligible or limited transit roles in the trade of cultural goods within the internal market. A different role should be attributed to states functioning as international transport hubs, such as the Netherlands and Ireland (particularly in maritime transport) and Germany and France (especially in air transport), which have greater capacity to balance intra-EU imports with purchases from third countries [32].

Moreover, the overall predominance of intra-EU transactions in the Union's cultural goods market results from the absence of customs barriers within the EU internal market and the associated simplified border procedures. It is further determined by lower logistical costs and reduced risks of theft or damage to what are typically high-value consignments. Lower regulatory risk constitutes another factor supporting the predominance of intra-EU transactions, covering not only imports but also exports of cultural goods within the European single market. This was indirectly reinforced by restrictions imposed on imports from third countries under Regulation (EU) 2019/880 [33].

<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that the National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria classified trade in cultural goods under the category "Miscellaneous manufactured articles." [29]

It should also be noted that imports of cultural goods from outside the Member States were largely concentrated on a limited number of markets. Specifically, 90% of trade turnover was generated through exchanges with China, Switzerland, the United States, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Thailand, Japan, India and Malaysia [34].

**Table 4.** Value of exports in international trade in cultural goods in EU countries in 2016 and 2024 (thousand euro).

Country	2016	2024	Dynamics (%) 2016 = 100
Austria	1,088,982	1,112,651	102.17
Belgium	1,077,461	1,606,165	149.07
Bulgaria	64,093	87,331	136.26
Croatia	87,383	71,439	81.75
Czechia	1,112,884	1,544,104	138.75
Cyprus	15,504	9,616	62.02
Denmark	553,231	523,627	94.65
Estonia	103,152	87,248	84.58
Finland	102,236	86,390	84.50
France	8,002,892	10,704,006	133.75
Greece	208,572	219,689	105.33
Spain	1,540,298	2,141,909	139.06
Netherlands	4,230,381	6,752,765	159.63
Ireland	543,077	1,738,168	320.06
Lithuania	95,364	115,991	121.63
Luxembourg	30,304	33,983	112.14
Latvia	163,215	177,931	109.02
Malta	11,419	11,682	102.30
Germany	8,189,650	7,798,616	95.22
Poland	2,591,655	2,334,777	90.09
Portugal	154,090	255,523	165.83
Romania	89,305	300,672	336.68
Slovakia	256,017	405,732	158.48
Slovenia	112,288	165,132	147.06
Sweden	594,837	622,699	104.68
Hungary	174,418	216,912	124.36
United Kingdom	13,501,458	–	–
Italy	7,350,096	16,858,018	229.36

Source: Author's own elaboration based on: Eurostat, Intra and extra-EU trade in cultural goods by product, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/CULT\\_TRD\\_PRD/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/CULT_TRD_PRD/default/table?lang=en) [accessed: 10 June 2026].

Table 4 indicates that in the majority of countries the value of exports in 2024 increased compared to 2016. The opposite trend was observed in seven countries: Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany and Poland. The value of cultural goods exports increased more than threefold in Romania and Ireland, and by more than half in Portugal, the Netherlands and Slovakia. These were the countries with the highest export growth dynamics in cultural goods within the EU.

Taking into account additional Eurostat data, it should be emphasised that in 2021, 52.6% of EU exports of cultural goods concerned intra-EU trade. The leading countries in this export segment were Slovakia (96.2%), Poland (89.3%), Czechia (84%), Romania (81.2%) and the Netherlands (81%). Particular attention should be paid to the Netherlands, which played a major role in intra-EU exports of cultural goods, although on the import side its trade in these goods was more strongly oriented towards non-EU countries. The specific character of Dutch exports resulted from the country's role

as an international logistics and distribution hub for cultural goods on the EU market. Goods were distributed via the ports of Rotterdam, Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, and the road network connecting the Dutch market with other EU countries. The Netherlands also hosts TEFAF on a regular basis, one of the most prestigious events dedicated to cultural goods and the largest sales event of this type on the European market [35].

Among the countries with the highest share of cultural goods exports outside the EU were Malta (90.8%), Ireland (89.7%), France (72.4%), Italy (70.7%), Finland (60.6%), Sweden (60.3%) and Luxembourg (58.1%) [36]. Moreover, on the extra-EU export side, the leading trade partners were Switzerland, Türkiye, the United States, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, China, Japan, South Korea and Mexico, accounting for approximately 83% of export value [36]. Exports of cultural goods outside the EU market were therefore clearly concentrated, although to a slightly lesser extent than imports.

In order to complement the analysis of the dynamics of international trade in cultural goods in the EU, it is worth examining the shares of individual countries in imports (Table 5) and exports (Table 6) within the EU internal market in the selected years.

**Table 5.** Share of individual countries in imports of cultural goods on the EU internal market in 2016, 2020 and 2024 (%)\*.

Country	2016	2020	2024
Austria	8.91	6.76	8.27
Belgium	5.07	4.62	3.98
Bulgaria	0.43	0.54	0.66
Croatia	0.62	0.46	0.69
Cyprus	0.16	0.17	0.29
Czechia	3.99	4.98	3.86
Denmark	2.28	1.79	1.66
Estonia	0.18	0.19	0.27
Finland	1.15	0.95	0.78
France	18.14	17.08	17.64
Greece	0.89	0.64	1.17
Spain	5.09	4.85	7.60
Netherlands	5.36	5.05	5.94
Ireland	0.65	2.18	3.38
Lithuania	0.23	0.33	0.29
Luxembourg	0.71	0.63	0.54
Latvia	0.41	0.21	0.21
Malta	0.09	0.07	0.11
Germany	21.26	21.57	17.73
Poland	8.38	11.91	6.34
Portugal	1.64	1.62	2.10
Romania	0.69	0.96	1.77
Slovakia	1.00	1.18	1.60
Slovenia	0.36	0.38	0.38
Sweden	2.40	3.02	2.95
Hungary	1.02	0.72	0.71
Italy	8.91	7.14	9.09

Source: Author's own elaboration based on: Eurostat, Intra and extra-EU trade in cultural goods by product, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/CULT\\_TRD\\_PRD/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/CULT_TRD_PRD/default/table?lang=en) [accessed: 10 January 2026].

**Table 6.** Share of individual countries in exports of cultural goods on the EU internal market in 2016, 2020 and 2024 (%)\*.

Country	2016	2020	2024
Austria	3.26	3.83	2.62
Belgium	3.75	3.36	3.80
Bulgaria	0.27	0.37	0.26
Croatia	0.32	0.17	0.16
Cyprus	0.01	0.01	0.03
Czechia	4.78	6.59	5.26
Denmark	1.73	1.11	1.14
Estonia	0.33	0.30	0.24
Finland	0.18	0.13	0.20
France	9.12	7.87	12.00
Greece	0.64	0.33	0.53
Spain	4.37	6.41	4.58
Netherlands	17.62	15.13	20.41
Ireland	1.21	10.70	0.83
Lithuania	0.29	0.32	0.30
Luxembourg	0.15	0.08	0.08
Latvia	0.60	0.53	0.56
Malta	0.02	0.01	0.02
Germany	26.13	21.99	18.53
Poland	10.97	15.60	8.22
Portugal	0.49	0.55	0.71
Romania	0.33	0.52	1.05
Slovakia	1.22	1.41	1.25
Slovenia	0.46	0.45	0.50
Sweden	0.93	1.36	1.25
Hungary	0.65	0.58	0.63
Italy	10.16	9.92	14.84

Source: Author's own elaboration based on: Eurostat, Intra and extra-EU trade in cultural goods by product, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/CULT\\_TRD\\_PRD/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/CULT_TRD_PRD/default/table?lang=en) [accessed: 10 January 2026].

- – to ensure data continuity for each country across the years, the United Kingdom was excluded from the comparison

Table 5 shows that, on average, the German market accounted for approximately one fifth of the value of cultural goods import transactions in the EU in each of the analysed years. The share of the French market was comparable (at 17–18%). The Italian market accounted for slightly less than one tenth of imports. Moreover, in the case of 16 out of 27 EU Member States, their share in EU imports of cultural goods in 2024 increased compared to 2016. Particular emphasis should be placed on the marked increase in Ireland's share (from 0.65% to 3.38%), taking into account the previously presented examples explaining this development.

- – to ensure data continuity for each country across the years, the United Kingdom was excluded from the comparison

As can be seen from Table 6, the largest shares in intra-EU exports of cultural goods were held by four markets: Germany (maximum 26.13%), the Netherlands (maximum 20.41%), Italy (maximum 14.84%) and France (maximum 12%), although only the German market gradually lost share over the analysed years. During the period under consideration, an overall increase in the significance of cultural goods exports within the EU was recorded for 14 out of 27 Member States: Belgium, Cyprus, Czechia, Finland, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia,

Sweden and Italy. Particular attention should be paid to the proportional increase in Romania's role in intra-EU exports of cultural goods (from 0.33% to 1.05%).

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