

The Story of 751 Bonds

Analysing partnerships in EU-financed cultural projects

In 2011 a detailed analysis was made on the results of the first five years of the cooperation grants of the Culture Programme of the European Commission, upon a request from Euclid, UK. The report is [available](#) on the site of the Budapest Observatory. Unfortunately we were not in a position to continue the exercise and offer a full picture about the seven-year programme. The search was nevertheless re-commenced with the advent of the Creative Europe programme.

In the frame of this new programme, in the course of 2014 and 2015 two rounds of cultural cooperation projects were announced and [evaluated](#). To their results we added the data of the new European Platform Projects, the essence of which is also establishing cultural cooperation partnerships. The three – or if we distinguish between smaller and larger scale cooperation projects five – lists include winners from 25 countries who gained financial support to establish cross-border cooperation with altogether 751 partners in 38 countries.

For the presentation of the cross-border cooperation bonds established by cultural operators in the respective countries the same kind of visualisation is applied as before, which allows for comparison between the two periods of 2007-2011 and 2014-2015.

United Kingdom

With altogether 170 cross-border bonds the United Kingdom proved to be the most active in international cultural cooperation in the frame of the first two years of the Creative Europe programme. What is more, the UK is the only major country that managed to increase the average number of such links per year ($170/2=85$ in 2014 and 2015 against an annual average of 62 bonds between 2007 and 2011).

The large number of spikes in the first wheel shows that already between 2007 and 2011 the UK was the champion of diversity, involving partners from 39 countries, more than anyone else. Polish organisations were irresistible to British project leaders in those years, ahead of any other nation except the French. Romanian partners used to fare fairly well, too, and remarkable was the seven invitations to Turkish operators.

With partners from 31 countries Britain has kept the broadest scope of relationship in the period of 2014-2015 (followed by France with 29 countries). Nevertheless the composition of bonds demonstrates some regression. In the first nine places UK leaders invited western partners with no Turks in sight. From the east Poles have preserved relatively strongest to attraction the British – four bonds, just like with Croats.

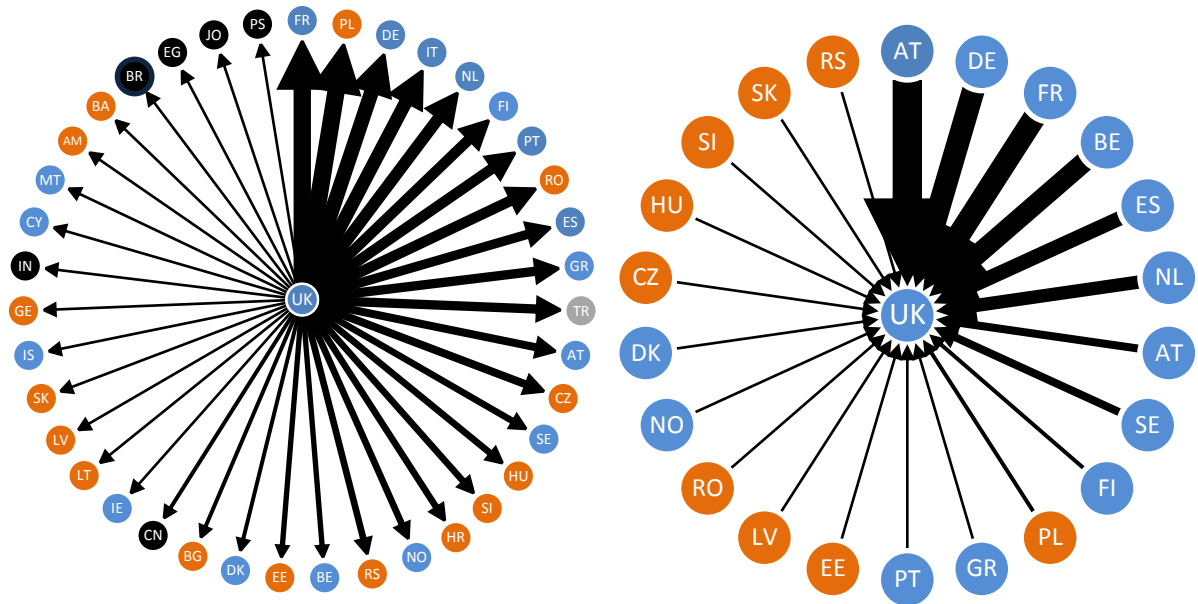
The negative balance has remained the same. Just like in the 2007-2011 period, over the past two years British partners were involved much less frequently into winning projects

than as it happened the other way round. Italians have confirmed their loyalty and the French connection remains stable. Eastern winners nevertheless became particularly shy to involve cooperation from the UK – Slovenes did so twice and Lithuanians once.

United Kingdom 2007-2011

182 bonds (182 partners involved into UK-led projects)

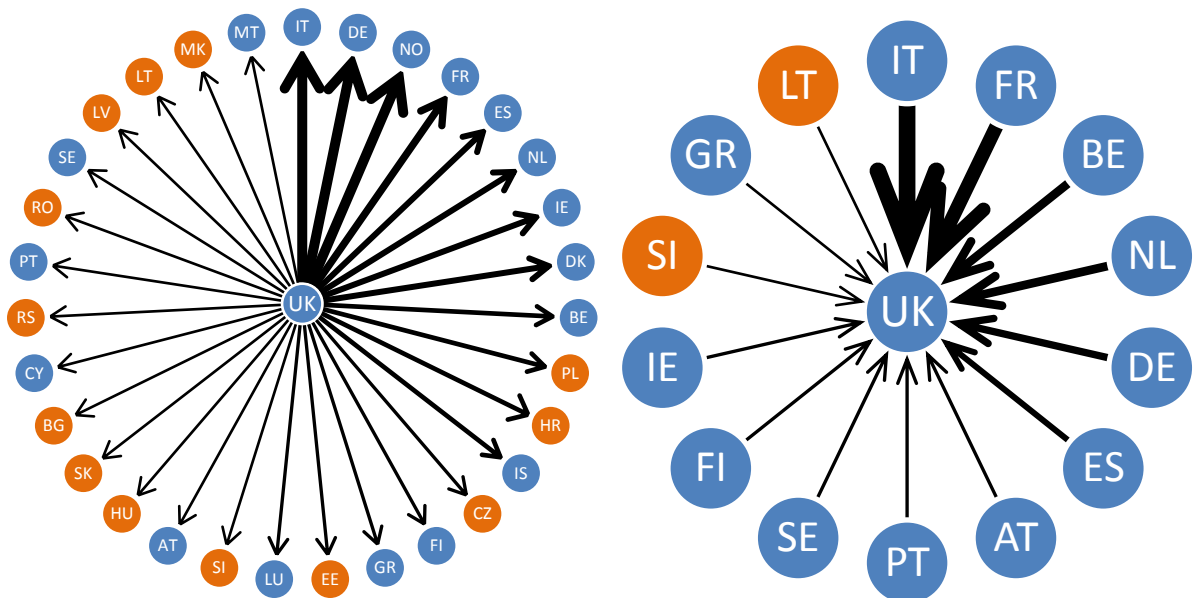
128 bonds (128 British partners invited into cross-border projects)



United Kingdom 2014-2015

101 bonds

69 bonds



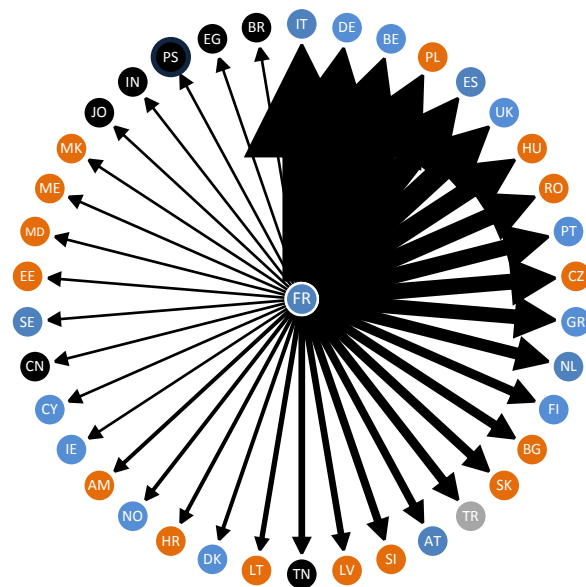
France

The balance was and remained even more lopsided than that of the UK. French leaders of cooperation projects can involve more than twice as many partners from abroad than this occurs in the opposite direction.

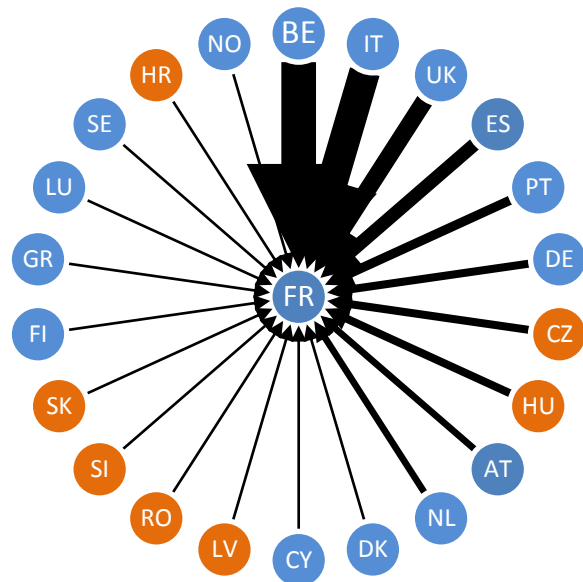
On the whole, the French-Italian and French-Belgian connections belong to the strongest axes of European cultural cooperation. The 14 instances of Italian partners in French-led cultural consortia was the strongest bond in the past two years. With regard to the (relatively) new member states, figures testify about sustainable relationship between French and Czech organisations. The liaison with Polish colleagues is nevertheless cheerless: just like in the previous period the persistent approaches from the French side have remained without response also in 2014-2015.

France 2007-2011

288 bonds

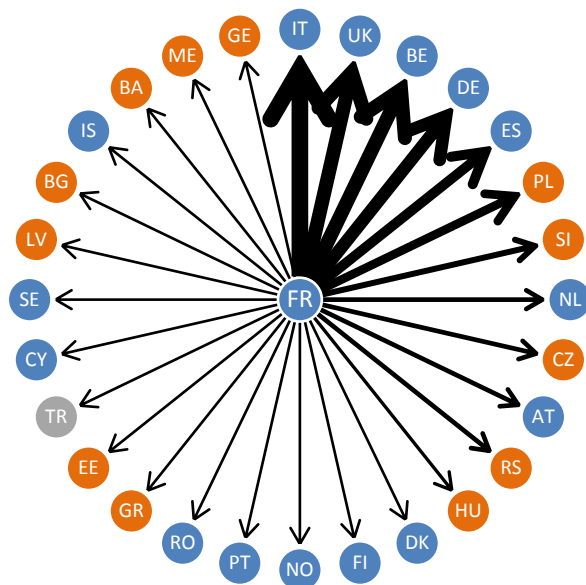


125 bonds

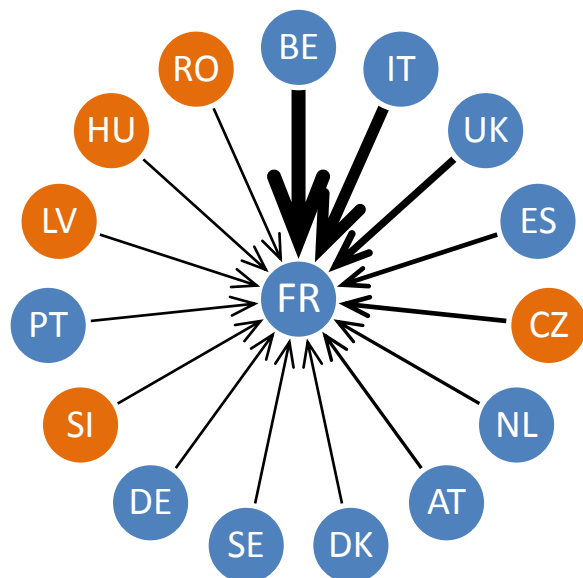


France 2014-2015

113 bonds



50 bonds



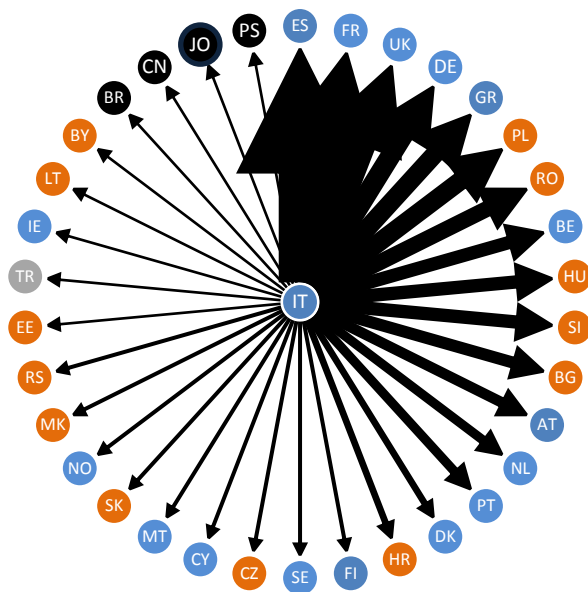
Italy

The altogether 93 bonds make Italy the third most important player in cultural cooperation according to the 2014-2015 scores of Creative Europe.

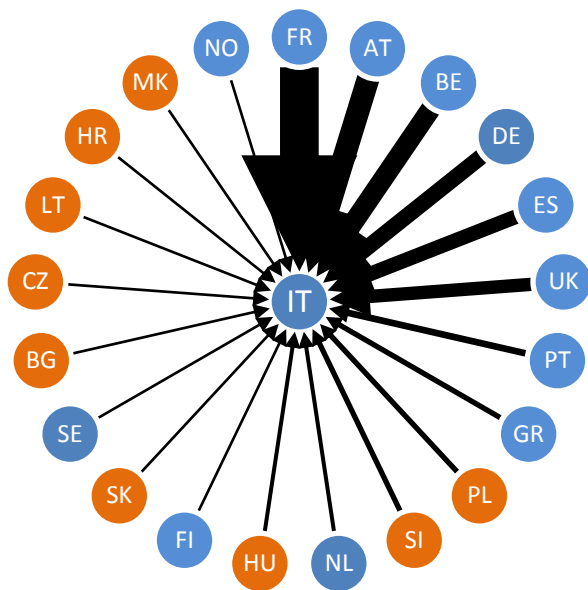
In the previously analysed five year period Spanish participation in Italian-led projects was the single strongest link between two countries. As it was noted when discussing France, the title of the strongest cultural bond has now been taken by Italians involved in French initiatives. The British connection has gained momentum in both directions. From the east, Romanians preserved their attraction in the eyes of Italian organisers, which is not the case about Poles.

Italy 2007-2011

241 bonds

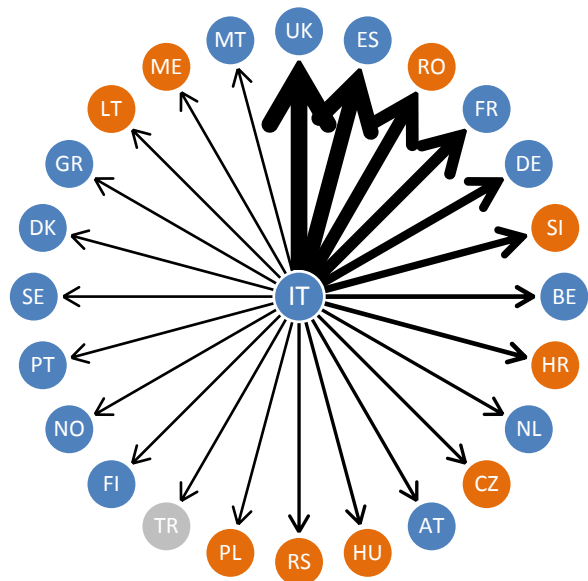


128 bonds

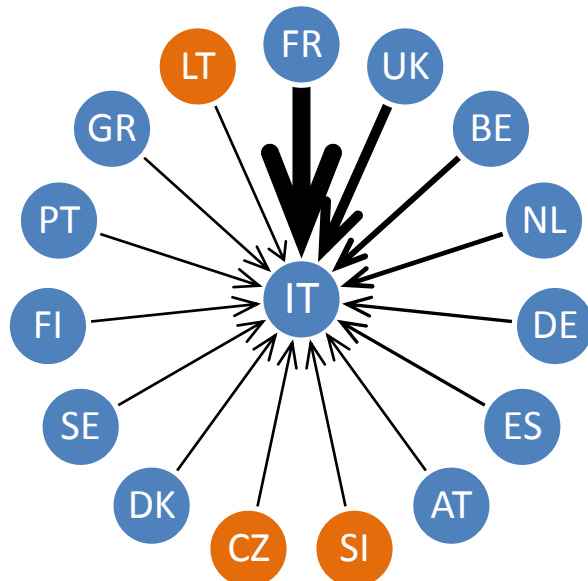


Italy 2014-2015

93 bonds



52 bonds



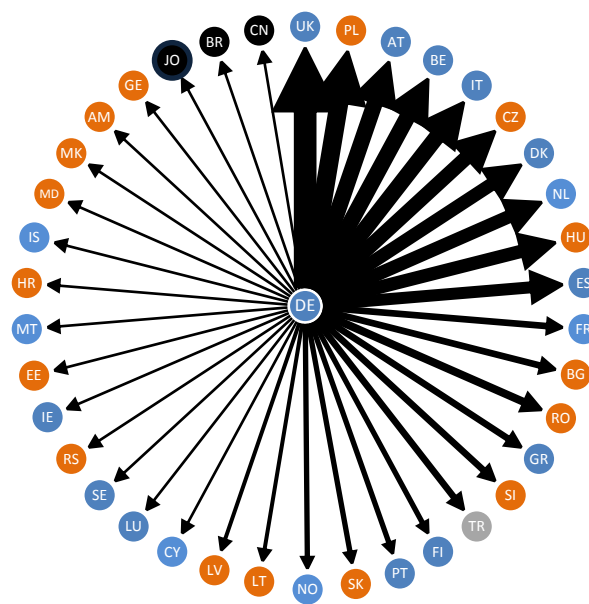
Germany

Differently from the British, the largest EU country fell behind in terms of creating average number of cultural bonds per year as compared to the period between 2007 and 2011. This relative relapse is even greater than that of the French and Italians. The other side of the coin is that the number of German organisations invited to cross-border projects is slightly greater than French and Italian ones.

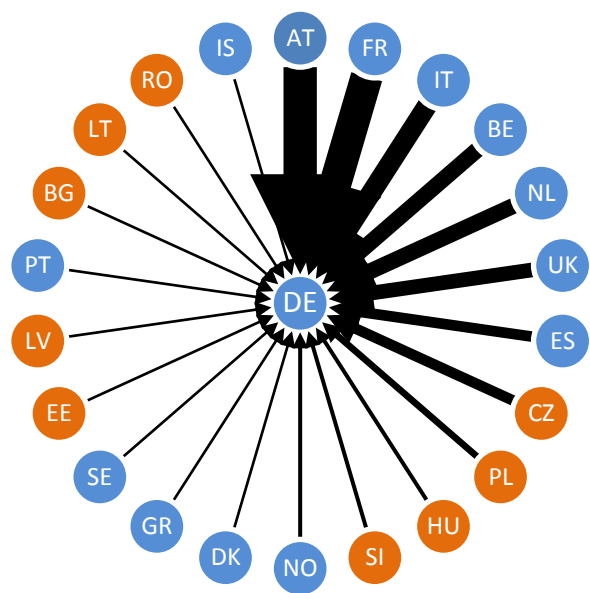
Partners from the UK were favoured most in both periods and Austrians are stable connection, too. The privileged treatment, however, that Polish organisations enjoyed in the period of 2007-2014 is past. On the other hand, Czechs and Hungarians have kept good positions in German-led projects.

Germany 2007-2011

192 bonds

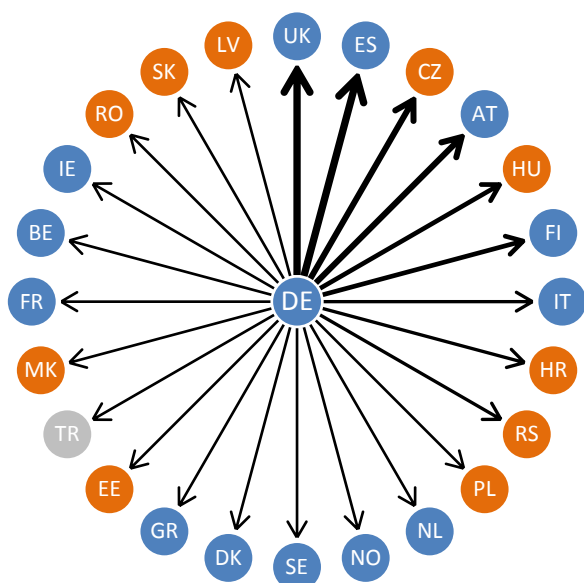


144 bonds

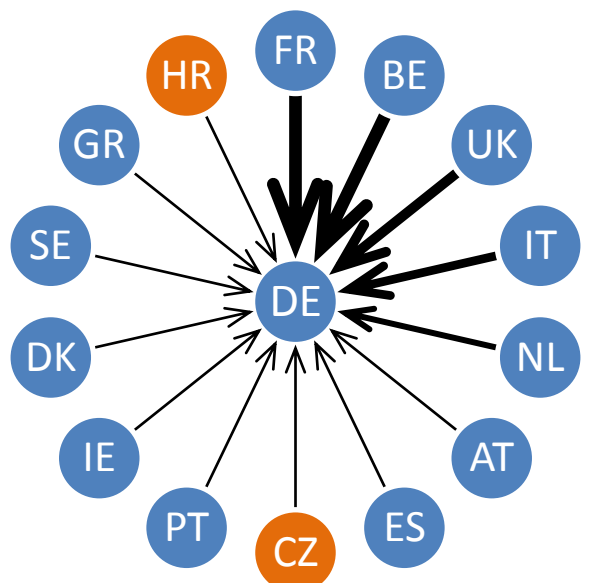


Germany 2014-2015

63 bonds



54 bonds



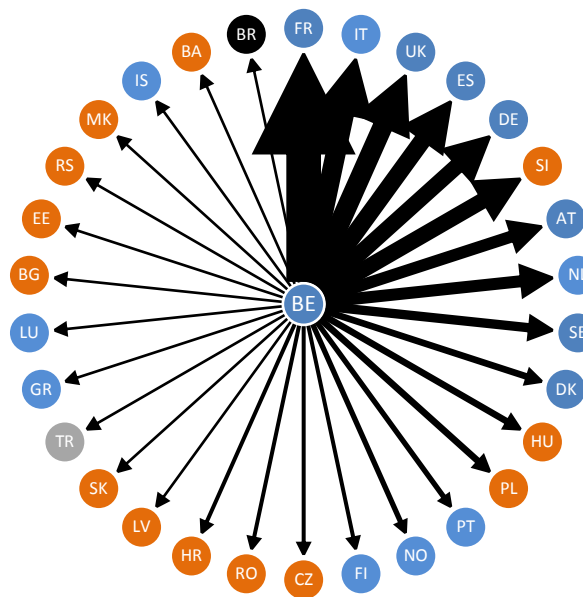
Belgium

This country retained the fifth position, just like between 2007 and 2011, establishing a greater number of cross-border links than a few countries with larger population. One of the explanations was and remained that the average Belgian leader engaged plenty of co-organisers. This may have to do with the communication advantages connected to being in the very centre of the EU. This seems to have a lesser effect in the opposite direction: relatively few Belgian organisations are found by project winners in other countries.

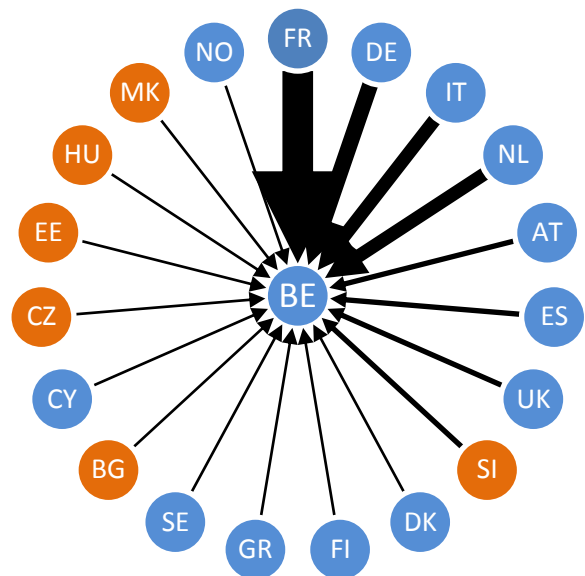
In the past two years only one more French co-organiser was involved into Belgian projects than from second placed Germany, which has produced a more balanced social network. At the receiving end, when Belgian partners are sought, French invitations still soar.

Belgium 2007-2011

168 bonds

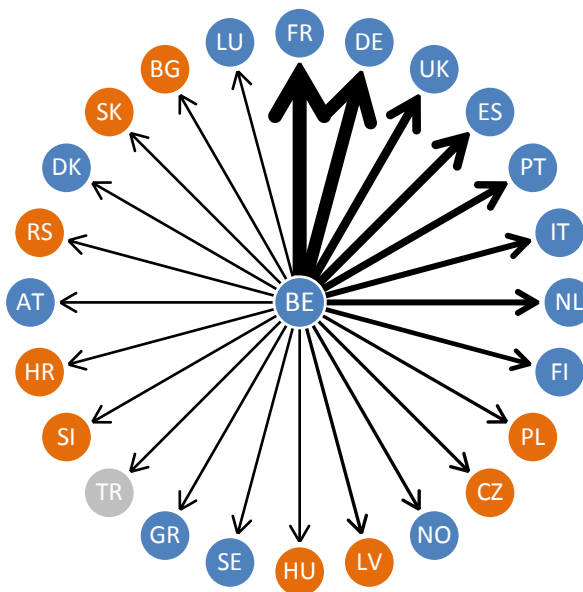


60 bonds

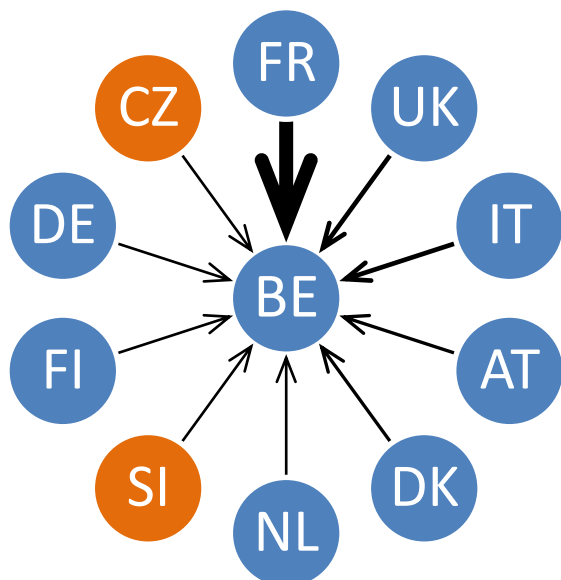


Belgium 2014-2015

83 bonds



33 bonds



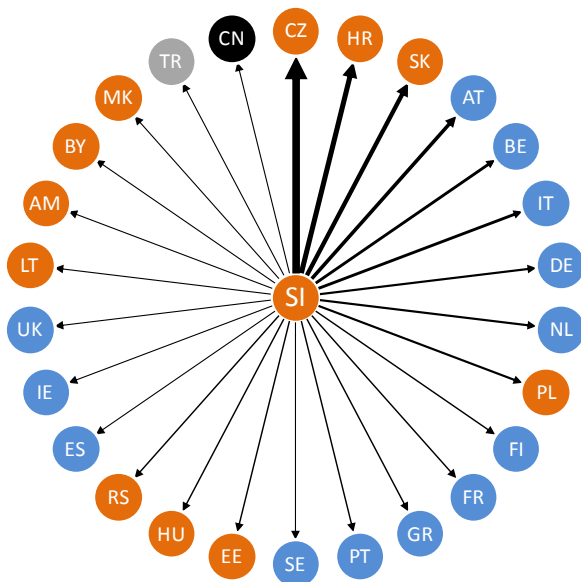
Slovenia

In the list of countries before Slovenia we can find Belgium, Spain and Netherlands with 116-84-76 links respectively. These numbers are nevertheless too few to bring robust conclusions. We make exception with Slovenians and the Czech, the best performing eastern countries, owing to the special focus of the Budapest Observatory.

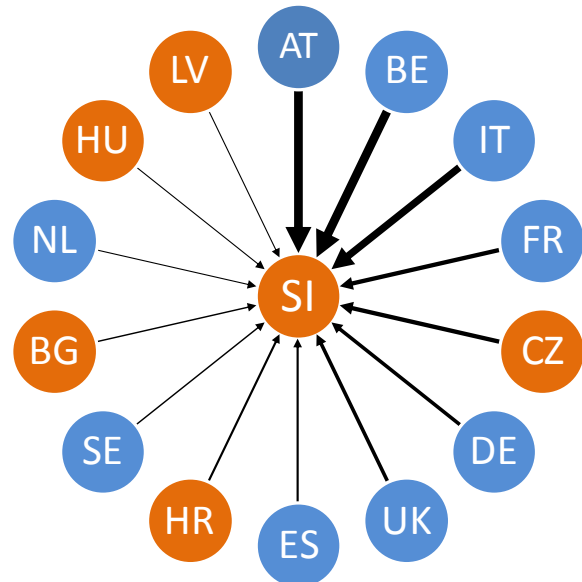
Cultural operators in this small country can boast exceptional accomplishment in the first two years of Creative Europe. They have included more foreign partners into their projects than two large countries, Spain and Poland did together (made easy with the mere two bonds established by the latter). 67 bonds were initiated by Slovenian cultural organisations in 2014-2015. Their foreign partners represent a broad range, neighbouring Croatians enjoying certain preference, which Czechs and Slovaks seem to have lost. Another neighbour, Italians co-opt Slovenes slightly more often than anybody else.

Slovenia 2007-2011

70 bonds

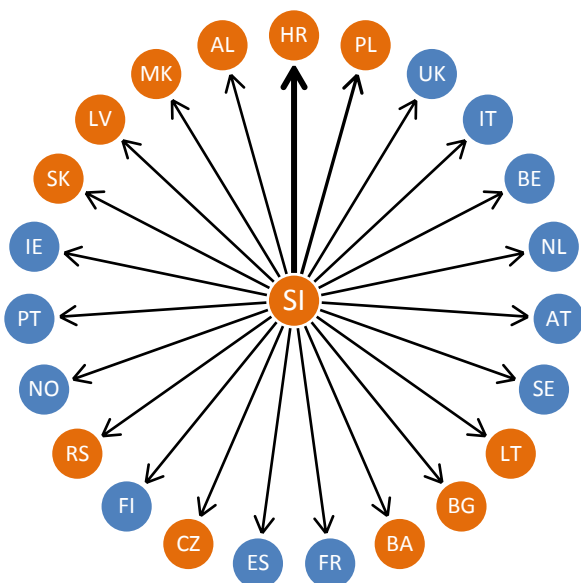


69 bonds

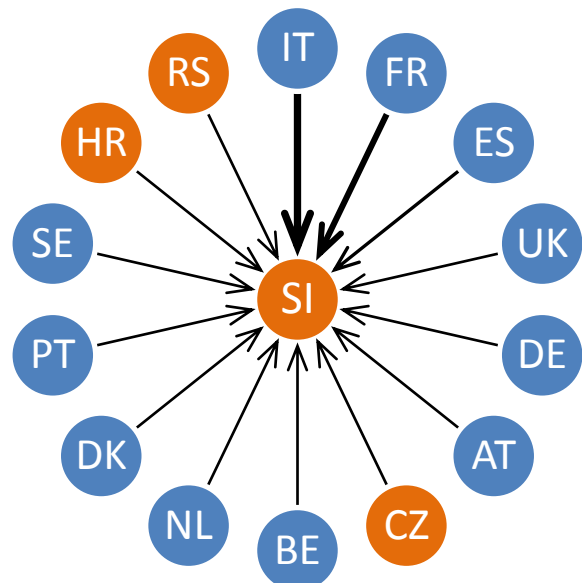


Slovenia 2014-2015

38 bonds



29 bonds



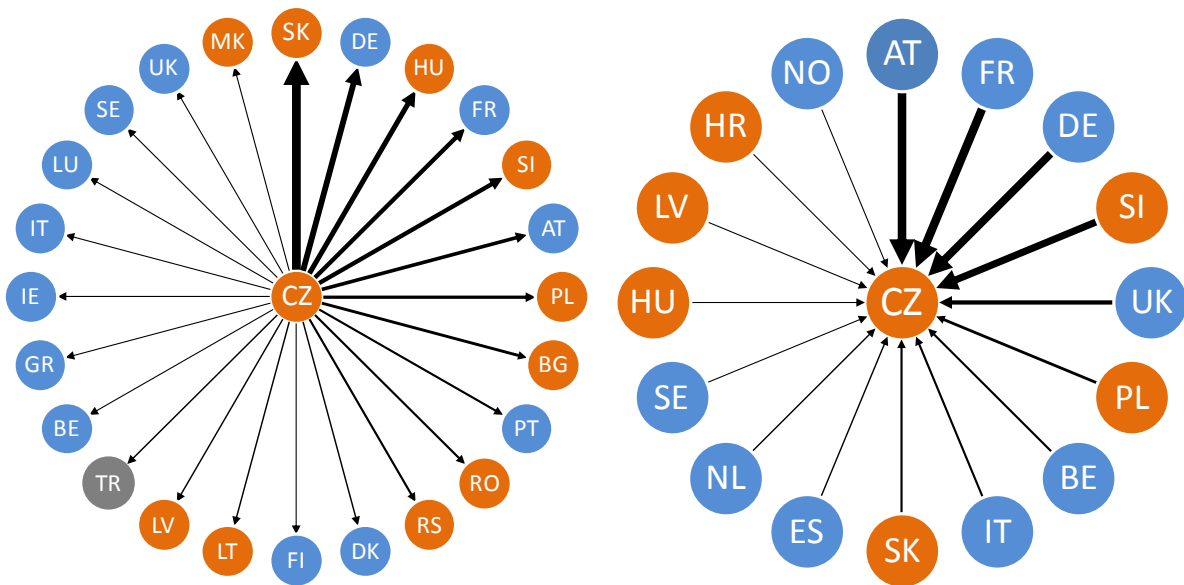
Czech Republic

The 22 partners involved into Czech projects are a pale reminder of the earlier scores. Probably the only remark that these small numbers allow to make is that combining links in both directions with French organisations are slightly more numerous than those with the big neighbour, Germany.

Czech Republic 2007-2011

81 bonds

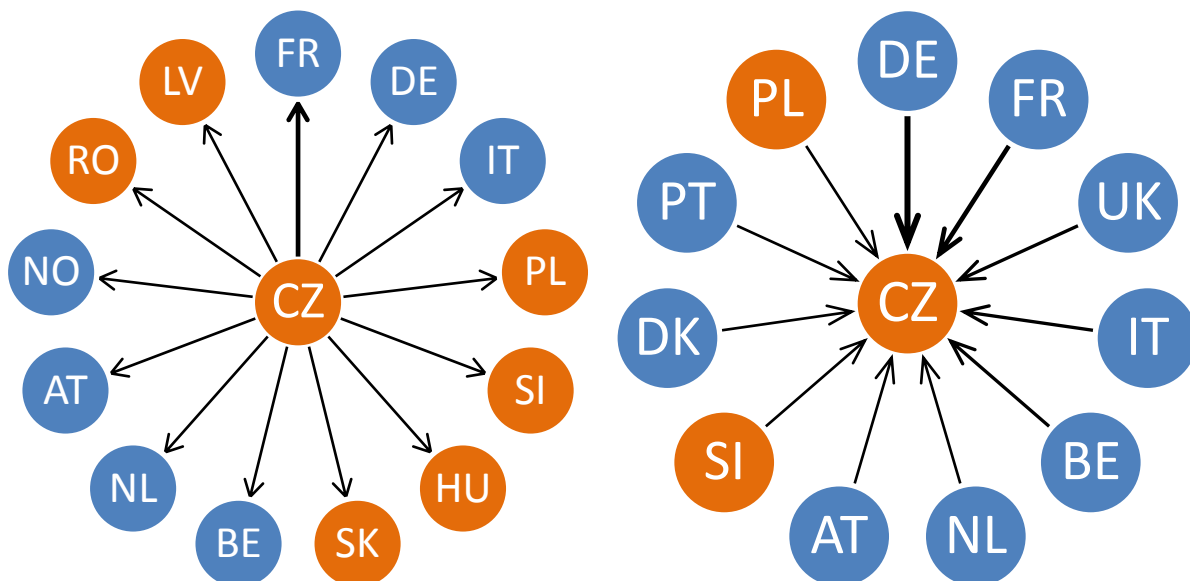
73 bonds



Czech Republic 2014-2015

22 bonds

26 bonds



The rest

In the cultural cooperation projects and platforms organisations from 38 countries are found in the [selection results](#) files of EACEA in 2014 and 2015. They share altogether 751 bonds with one another. Connections by countries that did not appear in the previous pages offer very diverse patterns. They are listed in the order of totals:

Spain	30 – 54	Ireland	9 – 16	Iceland	0 – 5
Netherlands	48 – 28	Serbia	2 – 20	Cyprus	0 – 4
Austria	39 – 21	Norway	0 – 21	Luxembourg	0 – 4
Poland	2 – 36	Latvia	8 – 11	Bosnia	0 – 4
Finland	15 – 22	Romania	3 – 16	Malta	0 – 2
Denmark	20 – 16	Lithuania	6 – 9	Albania	0 – 2
Croatia	8 – 26	Slovakia	0 – 15	Montenegro	0 – 2
Portugal	16 – 18	Macedonia	2 – 7	Georgia	0 – 1
Sweden	16 – 16	Estonia	0 – 9	Kosovo	0 – 1
Hungary	4 – 23	Turkey	0 – 8		
Greece	10 – 15	Bulgaria	0 – 6		

From the 32 countries that are not discussed separately a few features should be mentioned.

Among member states, Ireland was the only country that established more connections in the past two years than in the five years between 2007 and 2011 (25 versus 24). Relative progress was achieved by Croatia, the UK (as mentioned before), and Lithuania.

At the other end, in terms of cultural cooperation contacts the following EU members produced poorer results (starting from the less poor): Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Estonia, Cyprus and finally Bulgaria, which had 61 connections from 2007 to 2011 and six only in the past two years.

The alarming picture about the regression of the majority of countries of the former eastern bloc is slightly counterbalanced by the advances made by states of former Yugoslavia. Bonds with cultural organisations in the seven entities from Slovenia through Kosovo represented 6% in the previous five year period and reached over 9% in the first phase of the Creative Europe programme.

If encouraged, the Budapest Observatory is looking forward to analysing data after the third year of the Creative Europe programme is accomplished.