

## EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS ANALYSIS OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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### Abstract

**Research purpose.** The research purpose is to assess and compare the competitiveness of the EU creative industries' export.

**Design/Methodology/Approach.** The article is organised as follows: Section 1 presents a short theoretical conception of creative industries; Section 2 presents the theoretical background of trade competitiveness indices; Section 3 introduces the research data set, method and variables; Section 4 discusses the results of the revealed comparative advantage index analysis; and the final section presents the conclusions of the research. It should be noted that the research does not cover all possible factors underlying the differences in the external sector performance and thus may need to be complemented with country-specific analysis as warranted. Methods of the research include theoretical review and analysis, evaluation of comparative advantage indices and clustering.

**Findings.** The analysis revealed that the EU countries may gain competitiveness because of the globalisation effects and the development of creative industries. The increase in the revealed comparative advantage (RCA) index during the period 2004–2017 shows rising EU international trade specialisation in creative industries. According to dynamic RCA index results, France, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain has competitive advantage in creative industries sectors and could be specified as 'rising stars' according to dynamic of their export.

**Originality/Value/Practical implications.** A creative industries analysis is becoming increasingly relevant in scientific research. Fast globalisation growth affects the processes in which closed economies together with their specific sectors are no longer competitive in the market because productivity of countries as well as particular economic sectors depends on international trade liberalisation, technology and innovation. Scientific literature, nevertheless, contains a gap in the area of international trade competitiveness research in creative industries sector.

**Keywords:** Creative Industries; RCA; EU; Competitiveness; Trade.

**JEL codes:** F14; L82; F12.

### Introduction

In the context of globalisation, creative industries and the creative economy are gaining increasing attention because of their impact on urbanisation, technologies, economies, environmental protection and social environment. Rapidly growing employment, international trade and value added, generated in the sector of creative industries, promote scientific research and correlate with an increase in the number of scientific studies in this area.

The importance of creative industries to economics is emphasised by Potts (2011), Throsby (2009), Getzner (2002) and Canadian Heritage (2013), who analysed the links between the sector of creative industries and GDP (gross domestic product) growth, population income, unemployment rate, interest rates, price index and international trade.

The subject of creative industries and international trade is analysed by Chala (2016), Kontrimienė and Melnikas (2017), Cao and Niu (2017) and Ye and Yin (2007). Chala (2016) who analysed trade specialisation in creative industries sector in CEE (Central and Eastern Europe) countries noticed that

higher trade specialisation is located in large metropolitan areas. The article by Cao and Niu (2017) is focused on trade competitiveness in Beijing, China, Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom in different sectors, which can be attributed to creative industries. Meanwhile, Kontrimienė and Melnikas (2017) paid more attention to theoretical background of creative industries and reviewed international trade tendencies of creative industries in the European Union. Nevertheless, the issue of international trade competitiveness in the sector of creative industries in the European Union shows necessity for a deeper scientific insight.

The main purpose of this article is to assess the export competitiveness in the sector of creative industries in the European Union. The analysis of the export competitiveness, accomplished in this study, allowed to cluster the EU member states by the dynamics of their exports and to assess the potential of the creative industries export in a particular state.

The methods used in this study include general scientific methods as comparative and theoretical analysis, graphical analysis and evaluation of comparative advantage indices.

### **Main concepts of creative industries**

The concept of creative industries is inseparable from the concept of creativity, which is becoming increasingly important not only in arts but also in the areas of economics, environmental protection and social environment. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2010) in its Creative Economy Report indicated that creative industries:

- Cover product and service creation, production and distribution cycles based on corresponding resources as creativity and intellectual capital;
- Include knowledge-based activities that focus on, but are not limited to, arts and generate income from trade and intellectual property rights;
- Comprise tangible products and intangible intellectual or artistic services that possess a creative content, an economic value and particular market objectives;
- Are at the crossroad of the crafts, services and industrial sectors;
- Constitute a new dynamic sector of the global trade.

Bilton and Leary (2002) associated the emergence of the concept of creative industries with the growing production and consumption of symbolic goods. According to the authors, creative industries produce 'symbolic goods' (ideas, experiences and images) whose initial value depends on a symbolic meaning. The value of goods or services is determined by the end user (a viewer, an audience, a reader or a consumer) who decrypts and discovers the meaning and the value of particular symbolic goods. Hence, the value of symbolic goods depends on user's perception as well as the creation of an original content. Owing to this reason, the value may or may not be translated into financial returns. Hartley (2005) noted that such definition of creative industries is beneficial because it justifies the non-pecuniary essence of creative production and the relationship between the meaning of a product and its symbolic image by focusing on the growing importance of symbolic goods in industries such as footwear, automobiles and mobile telephones.

In Creative Economy Report, UNCTAD (2010) proposed that 'The creative economy' refers to a developing concept based on the creative assets that can promote economic growth and development:

- It can boost income generation, workplace creation and export earnings by promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development;
- The creative economy covers particular economic, cultural and social aspects interacting with the objectives of technologies, intellectual property and tourism;
- The creative economy is a part of micro and macro determinants in the knowledge-based economy;
- The development of the creative economy calls for the necessary innovative, interdisciplinary, political and inter-institutional actions;

- Creative industries are the essence of the creative economy.

International trade can be considered a key component of the creative economy. With reference to the research of the UNCTAD, the global trade in the products from creative industries has significantly increased over the recent years: for instance, between 2000 and 2005; its average annual growth amounted to 8.7%, whereas the global export of visual arts doubled from 10.3 billion USD in 1996 to 22.1 billion USD in 2005, and the global export of audio-visual art products nearly tripled (Laužikas & Mokšėckienė, 2014).

As it was stated by Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Director of the Division on International Trade and Commodities at the UNCTAD (2019), the creative economy and its industries are strategic sectors that, if nurtured, can boost competitiveness, employment and export opportunities. Therefore, the development of creative industries is not only an engine for promoting the share of developing countries in the global trade but also a direct benefit for developing countries in terms of income generation, workplace creation and building opportunities for artists and creators.

### **Theoretical background of trade competitiveness indices**

Export competitiveness of a country is affected by the ability of this country to effectively exploit international trade specialisation in economics. Comparative advantage is a strategic characteristic in two aspects: first, an economy will be most efficient and prosperity will be highest if the production of goods and services relies on a country's comparative advantage; second, comparative advantage is a relatively dynamic concept. As it was noted by Balassa (1979), the structure of a country's comparative advantage and its exports will change with the accumulation of labour and capital.

In fact, Liesner (1958) was the first who attempted to 'uncover' comparative advantages of different countries. Nevertheless, the general measures of comparative advantage are based on the revealed comparative advantage (RCA) index that was expanded by Bela Balassa (1965) (Ekmen-Özcelik and Erlat, 2013). A substantial share of a growing market can be considered a result of successful competition in terms of that particular share of the market where the RCA, proposed by Balassa (1965), is the greatest (Kathuria, 2013).

Although the literature contains a number of different RCA estimation methodologies, the classical Balassa index still remains most popular and most widely used in scientific research, which is possibly determined by the relatively simple calculation of the index. The RCA index provides a fairly clear picture of trade specialisation. The RCA index, used with a view to assessing international competitiveness, is widely recognised in scientific literature (Kathuria, 2013; Ervani, Widodo & Purnawan, 2019; Hanson, Lind, & Muendler, 2015).

The RCA index allows to assess whether a country focuses on the production, in which it has potential, but it does not reflect which part of the production has been exported competitively. It can also provide some useful information on the prospects of trading with new partners. It is important to note that the countries with similar RCA indices are unlikely to have any intensive bilateral trade unless they are involved in intra-industry trade (Sabonienė, 2009).

Edwards and Schoer (2002) extended the use of the dynamic RCA by developing the assessment of the market positioning dynamics. On the basis of the dynamic RCA index, exports are divided into six following categories: rising stars, falling stars, lagging retreats, leading retreats, lagging opportunities and lost opportunities (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Dynamic positioning of the export market by Edwards and Schoer (compiled by the authors with reference to Güneş and Tan, 2017)

	Share of <i>j</i> in a country's export		Share of <i>j</i> in a market's	Position
<b>Increasing RCA</b>	↑	>	↑	Rising stars
	↑	>	↓	Falling stars
	↓	>	↓	Lagging retreat
<b>Decreasing RCA</b>	↓	<	↑	Lost opportunity
	↓	<	↓	Leading retreat
	↑	<	↑	Lagging opportunity

- A rising star refers to the situation in which the share of a country's export product in the global market is growing faster than the total global export of all products. This is the best position for a country because the growth in the product's market share is inspired by rising global demand.
- A falling star reflects the situation in which the share of a country's export product is growing, whereas the global export of the product is decreasing.
- A lagging retreat refers to the situation in which the share of a country's export product decreases more than the decline in the global market.
- A leading retreat stands for the situation in which the share of a country's export product decreases less than the decline in the global market.
- A lagging opportunity reflects the situation in which the share of a country's export product is growing but less than the share of this product in the global export.
- A lost opportunity refers to the situation in which the share of a country's export product is decreasing, whereas the share of this product in the global export is rising. This is the most unfavourable position for a country (Güneş & Tan, 2017).

Tsikata (1999) also struck to the classification of four dynamic positions that, however, slightly differ from the above-presented Edwards and Schoer's classification: the category of 'falling stars' is replaced by rating an export market as 'competitive, but vulnerable' (Ekmen-Özcelik, Erlat 2013).

Although the competitiveness of international trade can be assessed by analysing a country's exports and imports, the assessment by using the indicators that are related to a country's exports is more common. In any case, the abundance of the models developed for the assessment of the competitiveness of international trade validates the necessity to evaluate the degree of specialisation, competitiveness and efficiency in international trade.

### Research methodology

**Research sample.** This research is focused on the situation in the 28 Europe Union countries – the United Kingdom, Italy, Poland, France, Cyprus, Latvia, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Estonia, Germany, Spain, Greece, Denmark, Croatia, Austria, Malta, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia, Lithuania, Ireland, Portugal, Belgium, Luxembourg, Finland, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. The analysis was conducted leaning on the data for 2004–2017, extracted from the Eurostat database.

**The RCA index** by Balassa (1965) measures the relative advantage of a country for a particular product based on exports.  $RCA > 1$  indicates that a country has an RCA in the product *i* market; the higher the index, the greater is the advantage it represents. If  $RCA < 1$ , it means that a country does not have any RCA.

$$RCA = (EX_{ij}/EX_{rj})/(EX_{is}/EX_{rs}) \quad (1)$$

where:

$EX_{ij}$  is the product  $i$  export in country  $j$ ;

$EX_{rj}$  is the whole product group export in country  $j$ ;

$EX_{is}$  is the global export of product  $i$ ;

$EX_{rs}$  is the total global export.

**The dynamic RCA index** by Kreinin and Plummer (1994) proposes that a country is considered to have a comparative advantage for the product  $i$  if the share of this product in the total export of the country is growing faster than the share of the same product in the total global export for the period under consideration.

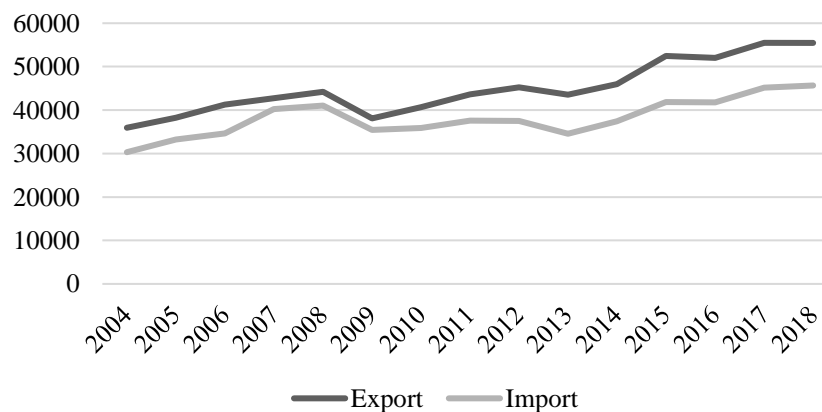
When the dynamic  $RCA > 1$ , it can be stated that a country's export of the product  $i$  is growing faster than the global export of this product, that is, the country has a comparative advantage. If the dynamic  $RCA < 1$ , the product  $i$  has lost its comparative advantage. The dynamic RCA is calculated using the formula below:

$$Dynamic\ RCA = (\Delta EX_{ij}/\Delta EX_{rj})/(\Delta EX_{is}/\Delta EX_{rs}) \quad (2)$$

## Results

Before the empirical analysis of the revealed comparative advantage indicator for the EU member states between 2004 and 2018, the overall dynamics of the EU creative industries trade, that is, their exports and imports, was considered.

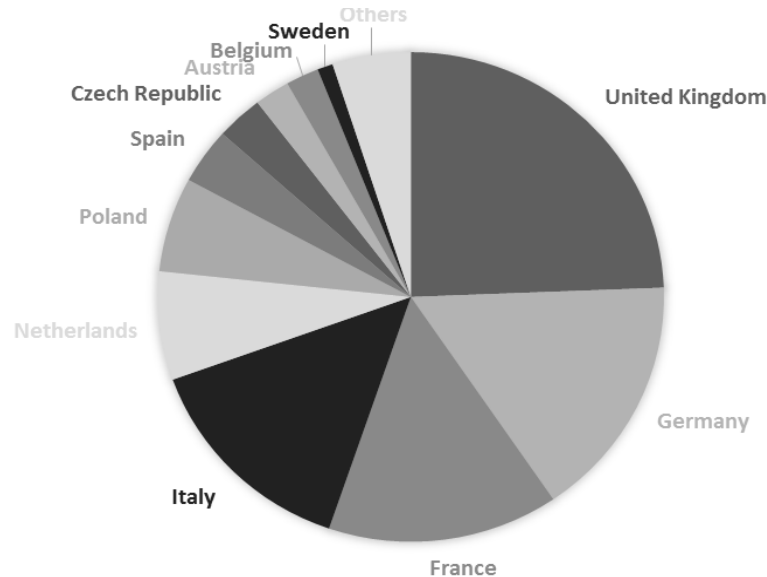
Figure 1 indicates that both export and import tended to grow, although the trade in the products from creative industries slightly declined in 2009 and 2013. Nevertheless, compared to 2004, the export of the products from creative industries in the European Union increased by 54% and import by 51%. In terms of structure, the export of the products from the EU creative industries is dominated by goods such as designer clothing, jewellery, household goods and toys.



**Fig. 1.** The dynamics of the import and export in the European Union between 2004 and 2018, million euros

(Source: Eurostat.eu)

Looking at the EU creative industries export in 2018, the following five major exporters can be identified: the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy and the Netherlands (see Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** Distribution of the EU creative industries export by countries in 2018 (Source: Eurostat.eu)

The analysis of the RCA revealed that the United Kingdom is the absolute leader in terms of the specialisation of international trade in the area of creative industries ( $RCA\ 3.29 > 1$ ) (see Table 2). Consequently, the United Kingdom could be considered as one of the pioneers that has developed concepts, theories and models for creative industry, with a strong focus on the analysis and expansion of the creative industries sector and the creative economy as a whole. As of 2017, the UK creative industries export amounted to 11.8% of the total service export. Owing to this reason, the UK international trade is significantly more competitive in comparison to the other EU member states. With reference to the strategy developed by the UK Creative Industries Trade and Investment Board (CITIB) for 2023, the United Kingdom is planning to raise its export by another 50% (HM Government, NA).

Most significant growth in the RCA index between 2004 and 2017 was, however, recorded in Poland: in 2004, it amounted to 0.42, whereas it increased to 1.63 in 2017.

Some other countries, such as France, Latvia and the Czech Republic, also demonstrated significant changes in their RCA index, that is, the countries that previously had not possessed any revealed comparative advantage began to implement it; however, Malta, Ireland and Croatia lost their revealed comparative advantage. The general RCA index for the European Union reveals that only five EU member states possess an RCA and specialise in the area of creative industries, whereas, in most other countries, this indicator is below 0.5, which demonstrates a lack of competitive advantage in the creative industries sector.

**Table 2.** The dynamics of the RCA index for the European Union between 2004 and 2018 (Source: author's compilation)

GEO/TIME	2004	2007	2010	2013	2016	2017	2018	2018-2004
Poland	0.58	0.65	0.64	0.66	1.31	1.62	1.54	0.96
France	0.82	0.95	1.06	1.58	1.65	1.55	1.64	0.83
United Kingdom	2.62	2.74	2.74	2.66	3.41	3.29	3.25	0.63

Latvia	0.49	0.45	0.85	1.12	1.37	1.18	1.02	0.53
Czech Republic	0.52	0.66	0.77	0.6	0.71	1.05	0.96	0.44
Lithuania	0.29	0.4	0.43	0.41	0.39	0.36	0.47	0.17
Estonia	0.48	0.56	0.78	1.06	0.81	0.65	0.56	0.08
Bulgaria	0.22	0.4	0.31	0.21	0.25	0.18	0.29	0.08
Netherlands	0.62	0.86	0.71	0.69	0.77	0.74	0.64	0.02
Hungary	0.17	0.11	0.21	0.23	0.18	0.17	0.17	0.01
Romania	0.2	0.19	0.14	0.15	0.15	0.12	0.18	-0.02
Italy	1.72	1.66	1.74	1.96	1.65	1.68	1.68	-0.03
Sweden	0.48	0.53	0.68	0.45	0.44	0.46	0.39	-0.09
Slovakia	0.55	0.4	0.35	0.3	0.34	0.39	0.45	-0.1
Germany	0.81	0.83	0.87	0.69	0.63	0.65	0.67	-0.14
Slovenia	0.59	0.47	0.43	0.37	0.35	0.39	0.42	-0.17
Belgium	0.47	0.43	0.34	0.29	0.28	0.28	0.29	-0.18
Denmark	0.72	0.86	1.12	0.65	0.6	0.55	0.53	-0.19
Portugal	0.49	0.5	0.42	0.41	0.29	0.31	0.29	-0.2
Spain	0.89	0.73	0.64	0.63	0.55	0.64	0.69	-0.2
Finland	0.43	0.35	0.33	0.22	0.18	0.19	0.16	-0.27
Malta	0.82	0.77	1.59	1.45	0.37	0.48	0.5	-0.32
Austria	1.34	1.25	1.39	1.19	0.74	0.53	0.79	-0.55
Luxembourg	0.84	0.37	0.28	0.34	0.2	0.27	0.27	-0.57
Greece	1.08	0.89	0.78	0.68	0.77	0.6	0.48	-0.6
Ireland	1.22	0.97	0.73	0.91	0.43	0.32	0.31	-0.9
Croatia	1.68	1.42	0.84	0.53	0.65	0.53	0.47	-1.21
Cyprus	1.53	0.96	0.93	1.21	0.54	1.3	0.26	-1.27

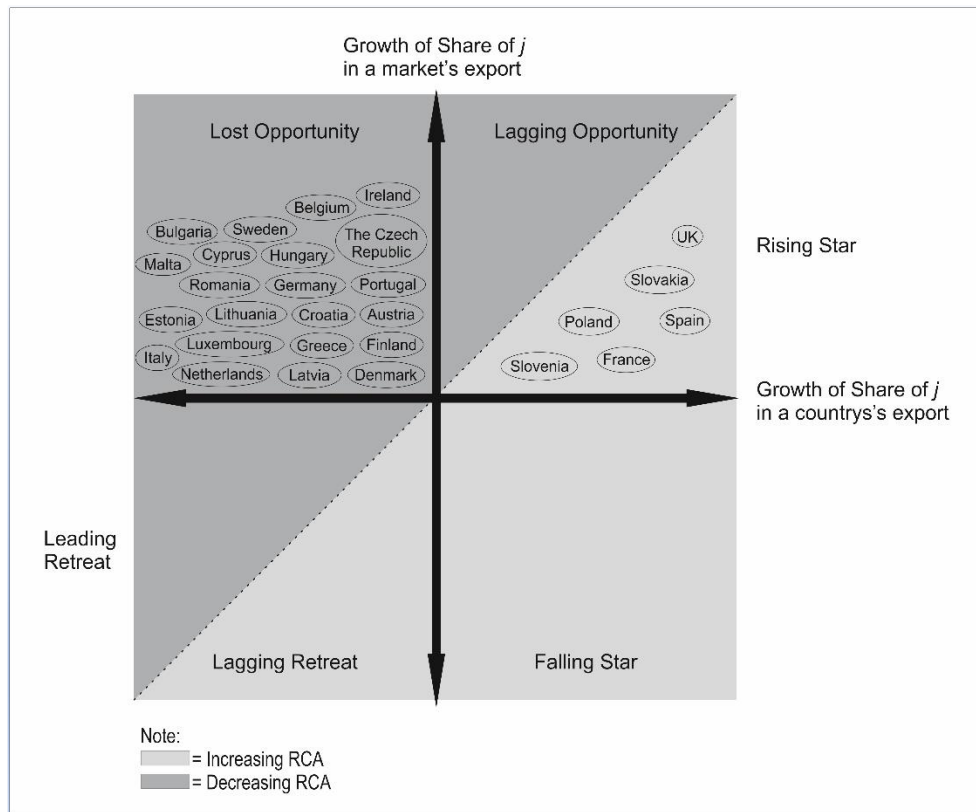
An overview above indicates that the share of creative industries export in the total EU export between 2004 and 2018 changed insignificantly and fluctuated around 1%, whereas from 2015 to 2018, it recorded an insignificant increase. On this ground, the share of creative industries export in the total EU export was considered to demonstrate the trends of growth, and the analysis of the dynamic RCA index was based on the rating of the countries by the values reflecting an increase in the share of their creative industries export in the total EU export.

In this approach, France, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom is attributed to the category of rising stars with growing shares of their creative industries export in the total EU export when the share of creative industries export within the European Union was also rising. Assessing by the RCA, only France, Poland and the United Kingdom possess a competitive advantage.

Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania and Sweden were attributed to the category of lost opportunity economies with declining shares of their creative industries export in the total EU export when the share of creative industries export within the European Union was rising. In this category, only Latvia possesses a comparative advantage (see Fig. 3).

Such distribution of the EU member states indicates that only a part of the EU countries specialise and possess a competitive advantage in the area of creative industries, but international trade in this area is not widespread within the European Union. These findings also propose that the United Kingdom,

France and Poland have a significant impact on the competitiveness of the EU creative industries export.



**Fig. 3.** Grouping of countries according to dynamic RCA (Source: author's compilation)

### Conclusions

In the context of modern globalisation, many social and economic changes are taking place. The ongoing changes could be significant for the formation of a new type of economy, where the fusion of culture and economy forms a sector of creative industries that promotes cultural and technological progress. In the recent decades, the term creative industries and the creative economy have received increasing attention because of the significant growth of this sector, knowing that the creative industries have impact on urbanisation, technological development, economic growth and the environment, they contribute to creation of workplaces and the general welfare through personal skills, talents and creativity; they promote exports and generate value added.

In this study, the competitiveness of the EU exports is assessed using the RCA index and its modification – the dynamic RCA – which served as the basis for clustering the EU member states by the potential of their creative industries export, in this case, into two groups – rising stars and lost opportunity.

The research disclosed that the greatest RCA for the period under consideration was recorded in the United Kingdom, whereas the fastest-growing indicator was observed in Poland. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom, Poland, Italy and France are attributable to the category of the countries with the highest RCA indices, which proposes that these countries specialise in the area of creative industries. These results could be related with fact that these countries have large metropolitan areas – London, Warsaw, Milan and Paris – that attracts creative products generation.

When assessing the general dynamics of the EU creative industries export, it was noticed that dynamic RCA indicator had a growing trend. Furthermore, France, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom recorded the growth in their creative industries export; these countries are attributable to the category of rising stars in consideration of the overall EU creative industries export growing trend.



The majority of the EU member states are attributable to the category of lost opportunity economies because their creative industries exports are decreasing, although the overall export is rising. Such distribution can be associated with the novelty of creative industries minding the fact that a significant share of the EU creative industries export is generated by a few member states – the United Kingdom, Poland and France. It is significant to mention that specialisation in the area of creative industries is inherent to more developed countries, than developing.

For further investigation, it is crucially important to evaluate more advanced specialisation index and estimate specialisation level in all creative industries sectors in the European Union, having in mind that some countries specialises in main cultural industries, others in mass culture or more functional products.

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