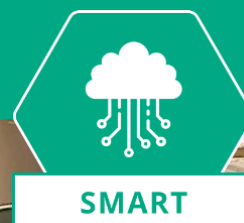


Cultural and Creative Industries

*A Policy Brief from the Policy Learning Platform
for a smarter Europe*

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Summary

Cultural and creative sectors are important for ensuring the continued development of societies and are at the heart of modern economies. They are one of the 14 industrial ecosystems highlighted in the [EU Industrial Strategy](#). This policy brief presents the main European policies supporting CCIs and highlights the main policy recommendations from the Interreg Europe projects funded under the programming period 2014-2020 and dealing with different aspects of CCIs from an innovation or competitiveness perspective. Their lessons learned are clustered in the following three categories:

1. Policies promoting the strategic development of CCIs sectors.
2. Policies aiming for facilitating the access to funding.
3. Policies fostering innovation-friendly infrastructure and environments.

Finally, an outlook on policy challenges ahead for CCIs is provided, highlighting their potential key role in the digital, green and social transformation of the European economy.

The knowledge, solutions and good practices showcased in this policy brief come mainly from Interreg Europe projects.

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CCIs ecosystem in Europe: challenges and opportunities

Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) encompass a wide variety of sub-sectors: architecture, archives, libraries and museums, artistic crafts, audiovisual (including film, television, video games and multimedia), tangible and intangible cultural heritage, design (including fashion design), festivals, music, literature, performing arts (including theatre and dance), books and publishing, radio, and visual arts ([Source EC](#)). The CCIs ecosystem represents approximately 3.95% of EU value added (EUR 477 billion) and employs around 8 million people, including around 1.2 million firms, over 99.9% of which are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Source EC, [DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs](#)).

As identified by the [EU Industrial Strategy](#), this ecosystem is an important part of Europe's economy and represents one of the 14 industrial ecosystems to be supported and closely monitored for inclusive and sustainable recovery as well as for the green and digital transformation of the European economy (*Source EC – [European industrial strategy](#)*).

The awareness of CCIs and their economic potential often remains limited both at policy and at industry level, especially due to their fragmentation along many different value chains. According to the [Single Market Report 2021](#), SMEs in CCI are smaller than the market average, due to a high share of freelancers and micro-enterprises. The CCI market is also fragmented along national/ and linguistic territories.

The sector is also facing fundamental transformations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a slow recovery and a shift towards green and digital transitions. Its many micro-enterprises struggle to attract new talents and to meet new skills demands. It also accounts for a high share of self-employed staff and part-time/non-permanent contracts, resulting in a high level of job insecurity and a lack of upskilling and reskilling opportunities.

The present policy brief aims at:

- providing an overview of the most relevant European policies supporting the development of the CCIs during the funding period 2021-2027,
- presenting the policy developments and good practices as well as key learnings from the Interreg Europe projects and community with respect to the CCIs.

The policy brief focusses thereby on the dimensions 'innovation' and 'competitiveness' applied to the CCIs, leaving aside the social and purely cultural aspects, which will be addressed in further publications or events organised by the [Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform](#).

CCIs in European policies

This chapter provides an overview of EU policies and support schemes for CCIs in terms of innovation and competitiveness during the funding period 2021-2027.

EU industrial strategy and Single Market Programme

The Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs supports entrepreneurship, cross-sectoral innovation, SMEs and skills in cultural and creative industries as part of its activities in the framework of the [EU industrial strategy](#), the [SME strategy](#) and the [Single Market Programme](#). The most relevant tools are:

- **Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) and its sectoral group for CCIs**



The [Enterprise Europe Network](#) (EEN) helps businesses innovate and grow internationally. It brings together experts from member organisations that are renowned for their excellence in business support.

- **Further pan-European networks**



Other business support measures relevant to CCIs include the [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#) and [Euroclusters](#), which are cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary and trans-European strategic initiatives.

Currently, there are two Euroclusters dedicated to the CCIs ecosystem: [CREATHRIV-EU](#): Euroclusters for Thriving Creative and Cultural Industries and [Friend CCI](#): Fostering Resilience and Innovation in Europe through Networking Development of clusters in the CCI ecosystem.



Other related initiatives include the [European Digital Innovation Hubs \(EDIHs\)](#), which are one-stop shops, located across the EU, supporting companies and public sector organisations to respond to digital challenges and **become more competitive**.

- **The large-scale skills partnership for the CCIs ecosystem under the Pact for Skills**

This stakeholder-driven European umbrella partnership is committed to working together to upskill the CCIs workforce. Launched as part of the [Pact for Skills](#) in April 2022, it brings together over 100 stakeholders from the CCIs ecosystem dedicated to establishing a shared model for skills development in the EU, pooling resources and engaging in concrete upskilling and reskilling initiatives in the cultural and creative industries. The development of the partnership was promoted by the European Commission and actioned by three coordinating organisations: the [Bureau of European Design Associations](#) (BEDA), [Creative Skills Europe](#) and the [European Federation for Creative Economy](#) (.).

- **Erasmus for Young Entrepreneur**



[Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs](#) facilitates the exchange of entrepreneurial and management experience. During the exchange, a newly established or potential entrepreneur stays with a well-experienced entrepreneur running a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) in another country.

Creative Europe



Creative Europe

Creative Europe is the European Commission's flagship programme to support the culture and audiovisual sectors. Its budget has almost doubled (EUR 2,44 billion) compared to the previous programming period (EUR 1,47 billion). Creative Europe invests in actions that reinforce cultural diversity and respond to the needs and challenges of the cultural and creative sectors.

The Creative Europe MEDIA programme

The EC considers the film and audiovisual sector as vital to safeguarding Europe's cultural diversity and sovereignty. Therefore, it supports the development, distribution and promotion of high-quality European works (including films, TV series, documentaries, video games and immersive content) with the aim of enhancing the competitiveness of the European audiovisual industry at the global level. The MEDIA strand of the Creative Europe programme supports the European film and audiovisual industries to develop, distribute and promote European works, taking into account today's digital environment

EIT Culture & Creativity



European Institute of
Innovation & Technology

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) was created by the European Union in 2008 to strengthen Europe's ability to innovate. The EIT is an integral part of Horizon Europe, the EU's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) supports pan-European partnerships, EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), composed of leading companies, research labs and universities each dedicated to solving a pressing global challenge, from climate change to health, to renewable energy. EIT Culture & Creativity is the most recent of the nine KICs. It has started operating in 2023 and its programmes and initiatives are articulated around 2 main drivers: (1) the digital, green and social **transformation** of the economy and (2) **innovation** within the CCIs and across sectors.

Local and regional authorities can get involved through the six co-location centers across Europe, located in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Bologna, Helsinki, Kosice, and Vienna.

National recovery and resilience plans

EU Member States support culture and creative industries through their national recovery and resilience plans. The European Commission has published the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard thematic analysis on Culture and Creative industries to illustrate the impact of the Recover and Resilience Facility in the sector after the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In their recovery and resilience plans, 16 Member States have included a range of reforms and investments to support the resilience of the cultural and creative industries and to drive their green and digital transition.

These measures supporting culture and the creative industries account for around €10 billion, representing approximately 2.3% of the estimated cost of the 22 recovery and resilience plans adopted in 2021. The figure takes into account measures contributing to the cultural sector and partly include measures related to tourism. Various countries have included important legislative reforms, including legislation to improve the **status and working conditions of artists** and cultural workers or embrace digital and greening opportunities. Member States have also planned investments to support the **digitisation, production and dissemination of content** as well as to **develop digital skills** in the cultural and creative sectors.

Promoting and supporting CCIs at local level

Local and regional authorities across Europe have developed policies and specific instruments in support of CCIs. Through the exchange of experiences in Interreg Europe, many of them have recognized common bottlenecks in support of the sector, but also inspiring ideas about ways to overcome them. This chapter provides examples of success stories, as well as joint reflections of policy makers involved in the Interreg Europe community about what should be done to **give CCIs the right space** in the economic development areas of their regions. Three main elements are taken into account:

1. **Strategic development of sector**
2. **Access to funding**
3. **Innovation-friendly infrastructure and environments**

1. Strategic development of CCIs

Despite the strong visibility of the audiovisual sector, the awareness about the economic potential of CCIs is still limited in many regions. This can be attributed to several factors:

- **Lack of data and metrics:** Cultural and creative industries often lack standardized metrics to measure their economic impact. This makes it challenging to quantify their contributions accurately.
- **Perception of cultural activities:** Cultural and creative industries are sometimes seen as purely artistic or recreational, not as serious economic contributors. This perception overlooks the significant economic value generated by these sectors.
- **Policy priorities:** In some cases, policymakers might prioritize other industries, such as technology or manufacturing, which might have more visibility and stronger lobbying, over cultural and creative sectors when formulating economic policies and strategies. This is also linked to the diversity of the CCIs, which are not necessarily perceived as on strong economic sector, but multiple less important ones.
- **Education and awareness:** There might be a lack of education and awareness about the diverse range of careers and businesses within cultural and creative industries. Many people might not fully understand the economic opportunities these sectors offer.
- **Limited access to funding:** Cultural and creative entrepreneurs might face challenges in accessing funding and financial support compared to more traditional industries. Limited funding can constrain the growth and visibility of these businesses.

Policy recommendations – favourable political frameworks, fertile ecosystems and strong business support are needed.

Overcoming those challenges for positioning CCIs as a strategic sector for regional competitiveness and economic development policies requires a combination of favourable political frameworks, fertile ecosystems and strong business support. Here are the main recommendations collected among the Interreg Europe community:

- **Regional mapping exercises and dedicated events** can help showing the economic weight of CCIs for regional development as well as their catalyst potential of innovation and growth in the whole economy.
- **Multilevel governance models are recommended to leverage the impact of CCIs.** Strong CCI-based ecosystems require multilevel governance models bringing together public and private actors. Policy efforts on different levels help to identify the main characteristics of CCIs, monitor quantitatively and

qualitatively their development, and address their specific challenges in the framework of dedicated policies.

- The governance models should aim for **overcoming the traditional silos of cultural and economic policies** and bundle policy efforts across departments and funding institutions.
- This takes time and requires **a proper strategy as well as a long-term perspective**, as well as continuous **monitoring and evaluation** of the governance model and the impact of the policies. It also requires having CCIs clearly mentioned in relevant **strategic policy documents**, such as for instance the regional Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3).

Several regions (or countries) have developed strategies for supporting the development of CCIs and their impact on the economy and clearly positioned CCIs at the core of their innovation and competitiveness strategies, for instance by including them in their **Smart Specialisation Strategies**. This is especially, but not only, the case of the regions involved in the project **CREADIS3** – Smart Specialisation Creative Districts with the aim to align territorial public policy agendas to support the development of more efficient CCI policies in territories aiming to generate innovation and economic development in European regions.

3 Ingredients for flourishing CCIs in the basque country (Spain)



The Regional Government of the Basque Country led the CREADIS3 project with the objective to improve the coordination, optimization, and structuring of the Basque Cultural and Creative Industries. As a result, it succeeded in realising some significant advancements in their CCI policy.

1. **Set up of the Basque District of Culture and Creativity (BDCC)**. Building on experiences from the [Wallonia European Creative District](#) and the [Creative Hubs policy](#) (Wallonia, Belgium) and the [Clust-ER CREATE](#) policy from Emilia-Romagna (Italy), the Basque partners worked on a new regional approach to bundle the support to CCIs: the Basque District of Culture and Creativity (BDCC). This is a tool **helping to improve coordination with public and private spaces** that already exist at the provincial and local levels, and to **strengthen the business fabric of CCIs** and their nodes. [BDCC](#) is a shared project between the SPRI society (within the Department of Economic Development and Competitiveness of the Basque Government), the Department of Culture of the Basque Government and Innobasque (Basque Innovation Agency). The **joint design and implementation of measures in an interdepartmental way**, thus achieving strategic results at the regional level, is considered as a major policy improvement and strong impact of the CREADIS3 project by the Regional Government.
2. **Upgrade of CCIs in the public spending watch**: the interaction with the CREADIS3 partners also contributed to a major change in the way the public spending on cultural and creative policies is monitored. While statistical analysis used to only consider cultural activities, **the scope of the analysis was extended** during CREADIS3's lifetime also to creative activities, thus ensuring a better visibility of CCIs as a whole. This statistical exercise is seen as **an essential instrument for monitoring public policies**.
3. **Creation of the RIS3 CCI strategic Pilot Group**: bringing together different stakeholder in three different working groups, it aims at defining and piloting new strategic initiatives for the Basque creative ecosystem: development of the BDCC, research and innovation activities in the CCIs, and cross-fertilization with other sectors from the Basque RIS3.

Creative industries strategy for Austria

The [Creative Industries Strategy for Austria](#) provides one of the most comprehensive strategic approach to the development of the CCIs, which was used as a blue print by other partner regions from the Interreg Europe project [RCIA](#) and beyond.

GOOD PRACTICE 1: Creative industries strategy for Austria



The Creative Industries Strategy for Austria is the result of a co-creative and participatory process led by the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, and involving 100 representatives of the creative industries from all federal provinces of Austria. It was developed in 2016 and is still valid; it contains a series of 22 specific measures covering three pillars for a strategic approach to the development of CCIs:

1. **Improving the competitiveness of the Austrian CCIs as an economic sector** by developing entrepreneurial skills, improving location-related conditions, fostering young talents and supporting the internationalisation of creative enterprises.
2. **Strengthening the innovation capacities of the Austrian CCIs**, by increasing their innovation know-how, e.g. about methods supporting innovation processes, and improving their access to funding and venture capital.
3. **Exploiting the positive contribution of CCIs to transform and improve the competitiveness of other sectors**, including public administration, by fostering cross-sector collaboration with CCIs and creating awareness on their impact, including quantitative data.



Image source: [RCIA project](#)

This policy includes a strong and continued effort in terms of **mapping and monitoring CCIs** as well as the impact of the strategy. **Kreativwirtschaft Austria**, as part of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and the organisation in charge of coordinating the implementation of the Creative Industries Strategy for Austria, produces yearly Creative Industries Facts & Figures reports (10 editions so far) on the creatives industries. The latest edition dated 2022 (accessible online [here](#), including a short English version [here](#)) has a special focus on internationalisation, regional development, innovation, cross over effects and post-COVID. Those reports include detailed statistical information on sectoral and sub-sectoral level on sales, number of employees, added value generated, regional distribution of CCIs, etc., as well as a sectoral barometer with the perspectives for the year ahead, both in terms of figures (growth, investments...) and trends likely to impact the sector.

[Click here to find out more about this practice.](#)

Further interesting examples for strategic approaches to the development of CCIs on the regional level are for instance the case of the **Donegal County (Ireland)**, as displayed in the Interreg Europe project [PASSPARTOOL](#). The [Donegal Creative Coast](#) practice illustrates a path towards **promoting creative entrepreneurship in a peripheral, mostly rural region**. In addition to the previously cited policies and practice, it also includes a strong branding dimension, linking more closely the territory and its businesses.

Several Interreg Europe projects have also contributed to concrete policy changes aiming at giving the CCIs a more prominent place on regional policy agendas. A few examples are:

- The inclusion of the CCI sector in the Frisian Project Machine ([ECoC-SME](#) project Province of Fryslan, Netherlands), an initiative fostering the involvement of regional organization in European projects, resulting in several applications.
- The inclusion of the crafts sector's digitalization needs in the regional strategy of the region of Ostrobothnia ([CRAFTS CODE](#) project, Finland).

To summarise, the following four strands of action build a comprehensive approach to the strategic positioning of the CCIs at the heart of economic development in regions:

1. Growth of **entrepreneurship** in the CCI sector
2. **Competitiveness** and **export** of the CCIs
3. Development of **innovation-friendly infrastructure and environment** for the CCIs
4. Public **information**, research and monitoring of the CCIs

2. Access to funding for CCIs

Access to funding for innovation and growth remains a challenge for many CCI businesses, due to several reasons, linked to the specificities of the CCI sectors on the one side and their perception within financial institutions on the other side. While they do not apply to the same extent to all CCI sectors, the following reasons have been identified by the Interreg Europe community:

- **A fragmented industry:** The CCIs are often fragmented, with many small businesses and freelancers. Small projects may find it difficult to attract large-scale funding compared to more consolidated industries.
- **Lack of collateral:** Creative entrepreneurs may lack physical assets that can be used as collateral for loans.
- **Regulatory challenges:** Regulations related to intellectual property rights, copyrights and royalties can be complex and vary from country to country. Navigating these regulations can be daunting for creative entrepreneurs and a challenge when seeking funding.
- **Long gestation periods:** Creative projects, particularly in areas such as film, music and art, often require a long gestation period before they can generate revenue. This long gestation period can be a barrier to obtaining funding, especially from investors looking for quick returns.
- **Lack of financial management skills:** Creative professionals may lack the financial management skills needed to present a compelling business case to potential investors or lenders.
- **Intangible assets:** Many creative ventures produce intangible assets, such as intellectual property or artistic creations, which can be difficult to value and collateralise.
- **Dependence on public funding:** Cultural and creative projects often rely heavily on public funding, which can be limited and competitive. This can create challenges when trying to scale up projects or businesses.
- **High risk:** Cultural and creative projects are often seen as high-risk investments because their success can be unpredictable. This uncertainty can make investors and funding bodies reluctant to invest large sums.
- **Limited market understanding:** Financial institutions and investors may lack an understanding of the CCI sectors, leading to a lack of investment.

Policy recommendations – specific funding schemes and criteria are needed

Implementing specific funding schemes is considered as an essential pillar of a comprehensive policy toolbox placing the development of CCI, respectively the CCI sectors at the core of regional innovation and competitiveness strategies. The Interreg Europe projects working with CCI have promoted and developed different schemes, either specifically designed for CCI or adapted to the specific needs of CCI. They cover different essential aspects of business development, mainly **innovation and investment for growth**. Three main policy avenues have thereby been followed:

- The development of **specific funding schemes**, solely dedicated to the CCI.
- The **adaptation of existing schemes** to make them easier accessible for CCI, either by including the CCI in the list of eligible sectors and/or by adapting the criteria to the specificities of the CCI.
- **Funding schemes for innovation** within the CCI or for cross-sectoral innovation projects

In the following we present some of the most striking practices brought forward by the Interreg Europe community. Please note that, while CCI have been quite strongly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has led to the implementation of a series of ad-hoc and recovery measures, we do not address them in this policy brief. More information on those schemes can be found [in other resources](#) from the Policy Learning Platform.

Funding schemes focusing on investment growth in the CCI

Financial schemes targeting CCI

A striking example for a regional investment fund dedicated to CCI is the Belgian initiative [ST'ART](#). It is a **public investment fund** that aims to achieve a return consistent with its activity as an investment company, while upholding its core purpose to serve the general interest, **by facilitating the emergence and development of the creative industries of Wallonia and Brussels** in every way possible. Its shareholders are the Walloon Region, the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles and Finance&Invest Brussels.

GOOD PRACTICE 2: ST'ART: Investment fund for creative SMEs (Belgium)



ST'ART

[ST'ART](#) is an Invest fund in Wallonia and Brussels. It has been created in 2009 through the collaboration of the Walloon region and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. **The aim is to support the development of the creative economy by enhancing the solvability and the growth of the creative SMEs.**

[ST'ART](#) was created to provide direct financing to companies, support the search for joint financing (investors and business angels, banks, crowdfunding, sponsorship, etc.) but also, and more generally, to work with other partners on the planning and implementation of new financing solutions that require public and private investment. **The fund operates in the form of loans, the acquisition of equity and the provision of guarantees.** When investing in equity [ST'ART](#) joins forces with private investors. It has currently a portfolio of 72 companies for a capitalisation of EUR 37 million.

[Click here to find out more about this practice.](#)

[ST'ART](#) also works in close collaboration with public authorities and regional investment companies in order to highlight the potential and specific characteristics of the CCI sector, raising awareness of the potentialities of the CCI sectors among the private financial actors. An example for those efforts was the "How and why to invest in CCI?" training programme initiated by [ST'ART](#) and designed specifically for investors, accountants, company auditors and banks in the [Wallonia European Creative District](#) framework.

Other approaches to funding the emergence of startups in the CCIs build on the **launch of specific calls in the framework of existing programmes**, for instance the Regional Operational Programmes. This is well illustrated by an example from the Basilicata Region in Italy:



Policy improvement in the **BASILICATA** Region (Italy)

Following the identification of underfunding of CCIs in the exchanges with the CRE:HUB partners, the Region Basilicata decided to launch a call for tender targeting creative and cultural SMEs. It was launched in 2018 under the framework of the Axe 3 of the ROP 'Competitiveness'. One of the sectors eligible within the framework of this call, namely cultural, creative and entertainment sector, was directly influenced by CREHUB. Besides, the following new selection criteria for the assessment of projects was included: "Contribution to the development of at least one technological trajectory of the five specialisation areas of the **S3** of the Basilicata Region".

Funding schemes adapted to the specificities of the CCIs

Loan guarantees are known as an efficient way to support businesses on a broad scale through the banking system, which is familiar to all businesses, or specific financial institutes. Those schemes, working on classic economic conditions, are well adapted to support growth (e.g. export development programme) but also the continuation of economic activities in terms of crisis not directly dependent from single businesses, such as Covid-19. The Finnish public funding organisation [Finnvera](#) offers **guarantees programmes** which are accessible to very small companies with limited collateral or assets, as it is often the case for crafts and CCIs.

GOOD PRACTICE 3: Finnvera working capital business loans and loan guarantees available to SMEs (Finland)



[Finnvera](#) is a special financier owned by the State and the Export Credit Agency (ECA), Finland's official export guarantee agency. [Finnvera](#) working capital business loans and loan guarantees are available to SMEs, including artistic crafts companies. [Finnvera](#) makes it **easier for companies to qualify for bank loans of working capital by providing loan guarantee protection**. SMEs may not otherwise qualify for these loans because they lack collateral or sufficient income or assets.

In the case of this programme, the specific conditions (low amounts of loans) that make it accessible for craft SMEs are noteworthy. **Loans can be as small as EUR 10,000, making it a viable option for many SMEs**. Craft and artistic SMEs have mostly low working capital reserves so that such opportunities can really make a difference. On the national level, such a programme helps to **stabilise the national economy** by making it easier for craft SMEs and other businesses to borrow funds for working capital. In Finland, the default rates have not been high and the program is successful overall. The success of a similar program in other countries would also need a high rate of loan repayment.

[Click here to find out more about this practice.](#)

The following example from the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy) illustrates the potential of policy collaboration across departments within a regional government for leveraging opportunities for funding schemes adapted to the needs of CCIs. It is essential to highlight that the approach does not consist in making the criteria for CCIs lower than for other sectors, but in **increasing the necessary understanding for the specificities of the CCIs** among funding organisations.

The representatives of the Department for Culture and Sports of the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia worked on the creation of financial instruments to support the access to credit for the CCIs and focused on exploring the possibility of using an existing Guarantee Fund thanks to the adaptation of the eligibility criteria for applications from cultural and creative established businesses or startups. Following meetings with different regional Departments (economy, health and education), regional stakeholders such as Chambers of Commerce and associations of enterprise, as well as institutional funding organisations, it was possible to create a specific grid for the evaluation of cultural and creative projects to be financed, including skills mix and taking into account the production life cycle of CCIs and the ability to generate positive effects in other sectors.

The specific example of the audiovisual sector

Most of the specific funds for investment and growth in the CCIs are related to audiovisuals. Besides its strategic importance, the sector combines several of the challenges listed above with respect to the access to funding. They are emphasized by the characteristic life cycles of productions, articulated around projects (movies, live performance...) with a clear end, and a very strong global competition. It is especially critical, in order to maintain and further develop the sector in Europe, to ensure the necessary funding enabling businesses to **develop new projects** that will keep their teams busy between productions and **retain their best professionals** in a globalized market characterized by a high mobility of talent. It is also a sector which generates potentially high return on investments. Several good practices dedicated to the audio-visual sector, including the animation sub-sector, were highlighted by the Interreg Europe project [ALICE](#) - Animation League for Increased Cooperation in Europe.

GOOD PRACTICE 4: Wallimage enterprises, Wallonia's fund dedicated to audiovisual companies (Belgium)



In addition to a traditional funding support to audio-visual projects, Wallonia's film fund [Wallimage](#) has provided support to regional audio-visual companies since 2008. This funding is intended to structure the local industry while helping production and post-production businesses develop, innovate and accelerate their growth. Initially dedicated to film companies and animation studios, the Walloon fund has gradually broadened the scope of its actions to include new media and gaming companies. Financial participations are provided either in the form of equity investments (minority stake) or in the form of loans. Wallimage benefitted from the [Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility](#) (CCS GF) of the [European Investment Fund](#) (EIF). Wallimage also runs a [Funding Program for TV Pilots](#).

[Click here to find out more about this practice.](#)

Further relevant examples from [ALICE](#) are a [funding programme for animated projects](#) (Spain) and an [Editorial writing and development program](#) (France).

Policy improvement in Puglia region (Italy) inspired by the Alice partners

The specific knowledge and expertise available within the ALICE partnership enabled the representatives of the Department for Tourism, Economy of Culture and Valorisation of the Apulia Region (Italy) to promote and boost their activities of improving the access to funding for regional businesses in the animation sector. A need for more funding for the operators working in such a specialised sector had been identified early in the project by the Apulian local stakeholders. As a result of the activities in ALICE, a **specific funding category** for the first time in Apulia was devoted entirely to the animation sector in the framework of the new Apulia Film Fund 2020 (funded by the Regional Operational Programme), launched by the Apulia Film Commission Foundation, an in-house company of Apulia Region.



Image source: [ALICE project](#)

Further funds dedicated more specifically to the film industry were displayed by the Interreg Europe [RCIA](#) project.

GOOD PRACTICE 5: Film industry support Austria (FISA)

[FISA](#) is a financial incentive programme by Austria's Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (bmdw) which aims to strengthen the Austrian film industry by providing support to cinema films (national productions, Austrian-foreign co-productions and service productions). It focuses on raising the number of co-productions with Austria and on promoting Austria as a film location. The Austria Wirtschaftsservice GmbH ([aws](#)), together with Location Austria, Commission is responsible for the administration of the programme.

[Click here to find out more about this practice.](#)

GOOD PRACTICE 6: Lublin film fund (Poland)

[Lublin Film Fund \(LFF\)](#) was established in the municipality of Lublin in 2009 to promote the city through films, as part of the application process for the European Capital of Culture 2016.

Lublin Film Fund supports production of films presenting a positive image of Lublin and being connected with the City by their theme, location, and realisation. LFF operates on competitive procedure and its services are free of charge. The support is provided in form of grants.

[Click here to find out more about this practice.](#)



Image source: [RCIA project](#)

Funding schemes focusing on innovation activities in and with the CCI

Entrepreneurs and SMEs in CCIs face unique challenges compared to traditional SMEs and entrepreneurs and stand to benefit from curated funding mechanisms to help them innovate and expand their offerings. Several Interreg Europe projects have worked on improving the access to funds for innovation for the CCIs.

- **Flexible funding**

A good example of how to design and implement flexible funding mechanisms for such entrepreneurs and SMEs is the programme [CreaDemo, CreMa and DigiDemo: flexible funding for CCI focused development projects](#) (Finland).

GOOD PRACTICE 7: Flexible funding for CCIs (Finland)

The Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland has set up three funding schemes for innovation in CCIs: CreaDemo, CreMa and DigiDemo.

CreaDemo grants are intended for projects developing the creative industries and cultural entrepreneurship. Grants are awarded to companies, professionals, or organisations engaged in projects seeking new products or service innovations for the creative industries (method, demo, pilot, prototype, or concept design) based on or utilising creative expertise.

CreMa aims to launch multidisciplinary pilot projects in the creative industries and other industries and thus promotes the creation of new products, services or operating models. CreMA is a flexible grant which is intended for merging together the expertise of creative and other fields and for developing cooperation and business models.

DigiDemo support is intended for product development of new audiovisual or other cultural content applicable for digital terminals (production of a demo, the pilot episode of a serial programme, or for concept planning).

[Click here to find out more about this practice.](#)



Image source: [RegionArts project](#)

- **Vouchers**

Another popular approach for promoting the involvement of CCIs in innovation activities with companies from other sectors are **vouchers**, which are low-threshold grants and co-fund the participation of business from the CCIs in cross-sectoral innovation projects. The vouchers are typically used by the beneficiary company to pay the contribution of CCIs to such projects. Successful examples from the Interreg Europe community are the practices [CICI – Call for Innovation with the Creative Industries \(RegionArts project, Belgium\)](#) and [Kreativwirtschaftsscheck – KWS \(Creative Voucher\) \(RCIA project, Austria\)](#).

In the framework of the [RCIA](#) project, the Austrian Lead Partner was able to establish “Creat(iv)e Solution”, a new funding programme taking further the idea of the Creative Voucher and promoting the contribution of creative service providers to innovation projects led by businesses from other sectors on a wider scale. After a successful pilot phase in [RCIA](#), the programme got approval for funding by the Austrian National Foundation for Research, Technology and Innovation (NFTE) in its regular programme portfolio. Similarly, in the framework of the [RegionArts](#) project, the Greek Partner from Central Macedonia managed to include CCIs in the scope of eligible sectors for a new Technology Voucher programme.

3. Innovation-friendly infrastructures and environments

Availability of infrastructures and inspiring environments for companies is a crucial factor for fostering CCIs. They are often combined with funding opportunities dedicated to supporting innovative activities.

Policy recommendation – Innovation-friendly infrastructures and environments are needed

The need for innovation-friendly infrastructures and environments for the CCIs has been clearly identified within the Interreg Europe community. While they can take different forms, such as incubators, co-working space, creative hubs, clusters, etc., those initiatives have some characteristics in common:

- There is **no one size fits it all model**. They interact with local policy makers and businesses and are often part of urban development projects. They are therefore strongly influenced by their geographic placement, their cultural context and social requirements.
- Beyond this diversity, it was made clear that such initiatives have in common that **they play a significant role in building and running local ecosystems** involving public authorities, businesses, cultural actors and civil society.
- They have also in common their aim to **support the development of business not only within the CCIs but also beyond**.
- Most creative hubs provide a broad range of services, encompassing typically infrastructure (co-working space, FabLab...), soft support (incubation, coaching...) and access to funding (vouchers...).

A widely shared characteristic of creative hubs is that their management and staff reflect the diversity of their stakeholders and clients, serving in parallel economic, social and cultural ambitions.

In the following, relevant examples from the Interreg Europe community are displayed.

Innovation-friendly infrastructures for the CCIs

Providing adequate and strong support services is one of the recommendations expressed by the Interreg Europe community with respect to the development of the CCIs. This includes training on different aspects of innovation processes and innovation management, such as intellectual property management, innovation methods, technology transfer. **Dedicated infrastructures**, such as creative hubs, incubators, co-working spaces, etc. provide a convenient working environment and foster interaction among CCI businesses and other economic actors, such as business support providers, for their highest leverage potential.

- **Incubators and other spaces for startups**

Business incubators are a well-established tool for supporting entrepreneurs and help startups enter the market and grow. Not surprisingly, incubators with a strong focus on creative industries have also emerged. A classic example is the [Creative Industries Incubator in Riga](#) (Latvia). The Creative Industries Incubator (CII) is part of the Latvian support program for young entrepreneurs of creative industries. It is one of the 15 Incubators under the Latvian Incubation Program, which is managed by the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia and was opened in January 2017. It has both an incubation and a pre-incubation programme. The model of the

Latvian incubator for CCIs has served for the design of a Creative Incubator program in the Ljubljana Urban Region (Slovenia) in the framework of the [CRE:HUB](#) project, also involving Latvian partners.

Quite often though, incubators with a focus on the CCIs do have also a creative approach to the incubation concept and offer unconventional facilities and environments. This is for instance the case of the [Blokhuispoort](#) in Leeuwarden (Netherlands).

GOOD PRACTICE 8: Blokhuispoort (the Netherlands)



Blokhuispoort is an incubator for start-up entrepreneurs in the creative sector. Start-ups are challenged to contribute to the building itself and find nicely designed places to work. Either as an office in a former jail cell or in a co-working place hosted by Blokhuispoort or one of its tenants (the bieb, library) and two restaurants which offer a coworking place. The Blokhuispoort management organises specialised workshops for professional services offered to the entrepreneurs and create a hub for networking in the region.



Image source: [Blokhuispoort](#)

[Click here to find out more about this practice.](#)

This is a great example of how a unique repurposed cultural site can become a gathering point for innovative start-ups and entrepreneurs. The [Blokhuispoort](#) practice provides benefits on several levels:

- The **local community** gains from having a well-designed and unique community space where they can view artwork, go to restaurants, attend workshops and other events.
- **Local businesses** who occupy the building have a unique workspace where they can interact with one another, network with other companies, collaborate with each other, and take advantage of the learning opportunities that are organized there.

A further successful initiative is [Incredibol!](#) in Bologna (Italy). Incredibol! provides a smart package of support to entrepreneurs in the CCIs by combining financial support through grants, consultancy services provided in kind by different partners and free spaces offered by the Municipality of Bologna. The public-private partnership not only contributed to improve the business competences of the awarded entrepreneurs but also helped to **valorise vacant buildings** in the city area. The **use of in-kind resources** from both consultants and the City makes the practice especially attractive, considering the outcomes and the low amount of financial resources involved.

Initiatives such as [Blokhuispoort](#) and [Incredibol!](#) have a high learning potential for further communities that have unique buildings that could be repurposed in a similar fashion; adding a community gathering point for residents and creating an exciting work environment for local businesses.

- **Creative hubs and further infrastructures**

Not only startups but also established businesses can benefit from dedicated support infrastructure. This is especially the case in the CCIs, which are characterized by a high share of freelancers and micro-enterprises with limited access to infrastructure such as e.g. workshops for prototype development or places to show their products. The nature of the creative process also benefits from suitable places for interaction with other businesses or further stakeholders. To answer those needs, **creative hubs** have emerged in many places in Europe. The term 'creative hubs' represents a variety of organisations usually providing space or infrastructure for networking, organisational and business development for businesses from the CCIs but also from more traditional sectors, which can benefit from innovative and creative input.

One of the most interesting examples of creative hub within the Interreg Europe community are the Walloon creative hubs (Belgium), as highlighted in the project [CREADIS3](#) and [RCIA](#).

GOOD PRACTICE 9: Wallonia creative hubs policy – WAP’s hub (Belgium)



The Creative Hubs were created following a call for projects launched by the Walloon Government as part of the "[Creative Wallonia](#)" programme in October 2014.

The aim of the Walloon hubs is to encourage the transition from our traditional economy to a creative economy by bringing together creative minds, CCI's, public institutions, cities, innovative companies, universities, innovation centres, local development actors... and by implementing the notions of open innovation, trans-disciplinary hybridisation, design thinking and collective intelligence in a local context. Creative hubs are located in urban centres.

The Waps' hub is a good illustration of a multilevel project: initiated by a local development agency (Ideta) in the context of a regional policy (Creative Wallonia) and co-funded by the EU (ERDF). Regarding the CCI's, Wap's hub is a physical place as well as an association that structures the whole CCI's' ecosystem in the Tournai area.

[Click here to find out more about this practice.](#)

Such a model has a strong potential to develop the CCI's. Wap's hub proposes simultaneously training, third places to meet and network, programmes to launch projects or develop ideas and advice to innovate or to access financing. Moreover, its core mechanism is to link different target audiences (artists, scientists, etc.) to SME's in order to reinforce the cross-collaboration between the wider economy and CCI's.

A further interesting example is the [Officina Creativa](#) initiative in Florence (Italy). This good practice combines the concept of an incubator and co-working space and applies it to the local artistic craft sector. Artisans, by their nature, often work in a silo with little opportunity to innovate and create new offerings. The [Officina Creativa](#) helps solve this problem by providing a co-working space where local artisans can interact, experiment, and learn from each other. In some cases, this may also lead to new collaborations and business ideas. What is more, **incubators and co-working spaces have a proven track record for facilitating innovation** – and this good practice shows that such programmes can be applied to sectors beyond tech and start-up communities.

GOOD PRACTICE 10: Officina Creativa (Italy)

The Municipality of Florence has launched Officina Creativa in partnership with Artex – Center for the Artistic and Traditional Handicraft in Tuscany and further local stakeholders. Officina Creativa is a multifunctional and multi-sectoral space that acts as a driving force for local - Florentine and Tuscan - Italian and international artistic craftsmanship, seen in constant relationship with other traditional and innovative "creative industries."

Officina Creativa is the place where artisans, designers, students and all those interested in the world of crafts meet, work and learn together, creating a unique community of its kind.



Image source: [CRAFTS CODE project](#)

Some numbers: 3500 sqm in total, 830 sqm for laboratory, equipped room for conferences, 1 pottery workshop, 1 coffee-shop dedicated to arts and craft, and a total of 26 laboratories where craftspeople are running their own businesses. Officina Creativa responds to the question of how to give to the city of Florence a center for artistic Craftsmanship, a place where craftspeople can work, and where the events and activities referred to crafts sector could be held.

[Click here to find out more about this practice.](#)

The working principles and practices of the creative hubs are widely integrating the **open innovation paradigm**. While the concept was initially often seen as being driven by large companies able to manage significant intellectual property portfolios, the understanding of open innovation has broadened and it is no longer limited to considering the perspective of single entities (companies), but the interaction of multiple actors within regional ecosystems.

Creative Hubs appear to provide places and environments with a strong congruence with the open innovation paradigm and are used by policy makers to spark economic development around the CCIs, involving also other sectors. This includes more and more (1) fostering the interaction of CCIs with higher education and research organisations and (2) fostering cross-sectoral innovation partnerships linking the CCIs to other sectors.

Looking ahead

Over the past year, the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform and the newly established EIT Culture and Creativity have engaged in regular collaboration. In this context, we have reached out to Mag. Anja Zorko, developer and Head of [Centre for Creativity Slovenia](#), the first national platform for the development of Slovenia's creative sector and active contributor to the [EIT Culture and Creativity](#). Anja Zorko shared with us some challenges and opportunities ahead for the CCIs, well depicting state of play of the sector within the EU.

More comprehensive and integrated policy agendas for the CCIs are needed

Despite growing support in European policies, CCIs still face an ambivalent position within public policy frameworks, straddling cultural and economic policies. The cultural sector is still often overlooked as an integral part of the country's economy. Its multifaceted nature, connecting with various policy areas, necessitates comprehensive consideration beyond cultural policies (UNESCO, 2022). Currently, cases and examples of CCIs research-based evidence, support programs, funding examples, and different policy measures are scattered across various EU support programs, countries, regions, organizations. While much has been accomplished in recent years, fragmented development means that **policymakers and support organizations still lack a common entry point or platform where access to these different examples can be gathered and coherently presented.**

Therefore, the pivotal role of CCIs in innovation is often underestimated, particularly in designing strategies at different levels where innovation is often associated mainly with digitalization or technology. **There is a need for a comprehensive and integrated policy agenda for this sector – on national levels and in the wider European context.** Integrated policies, considering the unique characteristics of this sector and promoting partnerships among stakeholders, are essential. Formulating such policies is challenging. Addressing this gap requires robust political backing, stakeholder engagement, a defined system for policy implementation, clear responsibility delineation, and communication between different ministries within countries and different governments with varying levels of support for CCIs. (Mag. Anja Zorko)

The lessons learned from the Interreg Europe projects and community are in line with this claim for improved governance across policy areas. They clearly show the need for favourable political frameworks, fertile ecosystems, strong business support, and innovation-friendly infrastructures and environments for the CCIs.

CCIs can drive the digital, green and social transitions

The complex problems we face challenge established ways of doing, working and living. It is clear that we need a different way of living, working and creating. **We need new solutions, systems innovation and thinking, new skills and competencies, an interdisciplinary approach and new collaborative partnerships.** This is where the CCIs have a key role to play. Their 'soft' collaborative approach, a counterbalance to the 'unilateral' view of rationality in management, goes beyond and challenges established principles. With their sensitivity and willingness to experiment, critically rethink, challenge, disrupt and question the status quo, they serve as catalysts for change and drivers of innovation, development, social progress and well-being. With their remarkable ability to think differently, they are leading us towards digital, green and social transitions. Governments and policy makers should therefore understand that we need the CCIs to support these new disruptive partnerships - interdisciplinary collaborations and crossovers between art, culture, experimentation, science, technology, business and creativity - where seemingly disparate worlds listen, hear and learn from each other. **As we do today, we urgently need this paradigm shift to lead us to collaborations that allow us to envision and develop much needed transitions and a more sustainable and inclusive future for all, so that we can begin to create it.** (Mag. Anja Zorko)

While this policy brief focuses on the CCIs as an economic sector of its own, the experiences from the Interreg Europe community have made clear that **CCIs are at the heart of modern economies and societies.** Knowledge-intensive and based on individual creativity and talent, they generate considerable economic wealth. In economic terms, they show above-average growth and create jobs - particularly for young people - while strengthening social cohesion. The global trend is clearly showing increasing demand of CCIs and their increasing cross-sectoral contributions to almost any sector of the economy and policymaking.

Interreg Europe resources

Event learnings

- Webinar recording: [Cultural and Creative Industries: Towards a more social Europe](#)
- Webinar recording: [Cultural and Creative Industries: Towards a green and digital Europe](#)
- Webinar recording: [Creative hubs: support infrastructures for creative and cultural industries](#)
- Workshop recording: [The transforming power of cultural and creative industries](#)

Stories and articles

- [The booming market of the animation industry](#)
- [A time travel through the creation of creative hubs in Wallonia](#)
- [Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries](#)

Peer reviews

- [Better governance for Cultural and Creative industries](#)

Interreg Europe Programme

Interreg Europe is an interregional cooperation programme co-financed by the European Union. With a budget of 379 million euros for 2021-2027, Interreg Europe helps local, regional and national governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policies through interregional cooperation projects and its Policy Learning Platform services. The programme promotes good practice sharing and policy learning among European regions in 29 countries – the EU27, Norway and Switzerland. Interreg Europe contributes to the EU cohesion policy together with the other European Territorial Cooperation programmes known as Interreg.

Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform

The Policy Learning Platform is the second action of the Interreg Europe programme. It aims to boost EU-wide policy learning and builds on good practices related to regional development policies.

The Platform is a space where the European policy-making community can tap into the know-how of regional policy experts and peers. It offers information on a variety of topics via thematic publications, online and onsite events, and direct communication with a team of experts.

Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform expert services

Our team of experts provide a set of services that can help you with regional policy challenges. Get in contact with our experts to discuss the possibilities:



Via the [policy helpdesk](#), policymakers may submit their questions to receive a set of resources ranging from inspiring good practices from across Europe, policy briefs, webinar recordings, information about upcoming events, available European support and contacts of relevant people, as well as matchmaking recommendations and peer review opportunities.



A [matchmaking session](#) is a thematic discussion hosted and moderated by the Policy Learning Platform, designed around the policy needs and questions put forward by the requesting public authority or agency. It brings together peers from other European regions to present their experience and successes, to provide inspiration for overcoming regional challenges.



[Peer reviews](#) are the deepest and most intensive of the on-demand services, bringing together peers from a number of regions for a two-day work session, to examine the specific territorial and thematic context of the requesting region, discuss with stakeholders, and devise recommendations.

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