EUROPEAN CULTURAL
AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
INNOVATION POLICY PLATFORM

Crafts-led Innovation

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM POLICY LAB4

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Key Recommendations

The fourth *ekip* Policy Lab explored the challenges in crafts-led innovation and actions needed to foster the role of crafts in open innovation ecosystems in Europe. Based on the discussions with and input from participants in the Policy Lab as well as further refinement in the Community Review Workshop and background research, a series of recommendations were developed to foster crafts-led innovation and tackle its challenges, key among them are:

Develop a clear vision for crafts-led innovation and a unified cross-domain policy strategy at the EU level, adaptable to national and regional contexts:

- Adopting an inclusive open understanding of crafts, that considers the different ways how crafts are understood across European regions and cultures and highlights the multidimensional (economic, cultural, social,…) value of craft practices and its innovation potential in both B2B and B2C roles.
- Promoting the recognition of this diverse spectrum of crafts in innovation policies, beyond heritage and cultural policies. A flexible, artisan-oriented approach, which values both manual skills and emerging technologies, can help innovation policy frameworks capture the full potential of craft, unlock cross-sectoral collaborations and new markets. More visibility could be , enhanced by cross-collaborative initiatives, shared spaces and (financing) resources could be the catalyst of this recognition.
- Creating an open environment for **transnational dialogue with multilevel policymakers and stakeholders** to exchange knowledge & experience. Crafts councils of different countries could contribute to this dialogue (through for example the World Crafts Council Europe). To realise this, a working group with the relevant European Commission's Directorates-General (EAC, RTD, GROW,…) and (European) sector-led associations in which open innovation and entrepreneurial actors are involved should be organised.

Enhance education & training for craftspeople beyond their craft skills:

- provide resources for (lifelong) training for craftspeople via Erasmus+ or creative hubs (in support of lifelong learning) to adopt innovation competences as well as highlight in curricula the potential added value of artisans as an innovation actor in a multitude of contexts. Non-formal education, complementary to formal learning, could support this shift. Beside these innovation competences, enhancing business management, financial (literacy) skills, digital competencies, IP registration through (collective) trademarks, cross-sectoral networking, intermediation, entrepreneurship in sustainability and growth, application of digital tools… remain important to increase economic sustainability.

Support and strengthen structures & networks that bring together and represent craftspeople

- in all diversity, not only from a heritage-based approach, in dialogues on regulations and policies that affect the role of crafts in innovation at various policy-levels (from local to EU). Inspirational examples of better organised advocacy may be found in the UK, Germany, France, and in the Nordic countries. Encourage municipalities at local level to have dedicated bodies or representatives for crafts-led innovation. Involve CCI sectors in the innovation initiatives and agendas on different policy-levels..

Support the crafts sector in creating awareness (make use of research and data….) about the value and impact of crafts led innovation

- in all diversity, not only from a heritage-based approach, in dialogues on regulations and policies that affect the role of crafts in innovation at various policy-levels (from local to EU). Inspirational examples of better organised advocacy may be found in the UK, Germany, France, and in the Nordic countries. Encourage municipalities at local level to have dedicated bodies or representatives for crafts-led innovation. Involve CCI sectors in the innovation initiatives and agendas on different policy-levels..

Balance (craft-related) regulations to allow preservation as well as innovation:

- In some regins, regulations tie craft practices exclusively to heritage-based definitions, potentially stifling innovation. Encourage a spectrum from traditional to contemporary activities that allow craft practices to evolve while remaining deeply rooted in specialized knowledge and skills. Revise existing accreditations and develop new ones that are verified by crafts organisations and/or experts.

1 Introduction

The fourth *ekip* Policy Lab explored the challenges in crafts-led innovation and actions needed to foster the role of crafts in open innovation ecosystems in Europe. This report starts with a summarised dentification of what is understood by crafts-led innovation, followed by the key identified challenges and pathways for policy makers to stimulate an environment where crafts-led innovation can thrive. The report is further enriched with examples of the policy landscape and project mapping related to craftsled innovation.

To identify the challenges and opportunities associated with crafts-led innovation and formulate relevant policy recommendations an extensive literature review was done by *ekip* researchers[1] , as well as an online policy lab with crafts professionals, policymakers, key intermediaries, and researchers with expertise in the crafts sector and open innovation ecosystems was organised. The proposed policy recommendations were subsequently reviewed during an online community review session, after which they were refined and finalised.

> ***"Crafts-led innovation connects traditional skills with new, sustainable, and socially relevant solutions."***

2 Crafts-led innovation: definition and scope

Crafts-led innovation refers to the process of using artistic/traditional craft skills, knowledge, and methods as a foundation for developing new ideas, products, or services. Crafts (such as weaving, pottery, wood carving, leatherworking glass blowing...) can play a significant role in (frugal) innovation (frugal innovation involves creating high-quality solutions that deliver the greatest value at the lowest cost) by leveraging traditional skills and techniques to create cost-effective and sustainable solutions. Crafts can contribute to this by using resource constraints as an opportunity to innovate. Conversely, innovation can contribute to the preservation of traditional crafts and enhance their societal and economic value.

However, outdated perceptions of craftwork and craft cultures continue to limit the recognition of the crafts sector's potential to drive innovation. Conventional viewpoints shaped by industrialization, technological advancement, and mass consumption still evaluate crafts primarily through the lense of production efficiency and automation, overshadowing the inherent value of "handmade" skills.

When crafts are viewed as slow, labour-intensive, or non-digital, policy and innovation strategies often overlook their unique strengths. Crafts as a sector usually falls between different policy domains (culture, economy, tourism...) or gets lost in broader definitions of cultural and creative sectors, failing to acknowledge the intrinsically innovative characteristics of many craft practices. By contrast, emerging perspectives on poiesis-intensive innovation[2] underscore the importance of collaboration between human, non-human, and material elements, areas where crafts and craft methods excel.

The challenge lies in developing public policies and CCI frameworks that recognise and support the role of crafts-led innovation. Doing so can unlock new insights, broaden participation, and harness the distinctive power of craft-led innovation

[1] This report contains extracts from a more extensive Scoping Document on Crafts-led Innovation, which is online available in the *ekip* Knowledge Bank.

[2] This form of innovation relies heavily on tacit knowledge—knowledge gained through experience rather than explicit instruction. It is often associated with small-scale workplaces like workshops and laboratories, where learning occurs through shared practices and community involvement. The goal is to create products or processes that reflect a deep understanding of both technical and non-technical aspects, including values and objectives.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341459969_Grass_roots_case_studies_in_'poiesisintensive_responsible_innovation_PIRI

3 Current challenges and unmet needs

To organise and structure challenges related to the role of cultural and creative sectors (including crafts) in open innovation, a series of building blocks are used in ekip. which can be described as critical elements to establish open innovation ecosystems. Table 1 features the selected building blocks that are of relevance to crafts-led innovation.

Table 1: open innovation building blocks related to crafts-led innovation

BUILDING BLOCK	DESCRIPTION
Vision/goal setting	The extent to which there is a vision/goal setting present on the added value or role of crafts in an open innovation ecosystem
Competences	The extent to which skills, knowledge & attitudes (mindset) on crafts-led innovation are present
Infrastructures & networks	The extent to which physical/digital infrastructures are in place to support open innovation in this context
Financing	The extent to which access to funding and financing or innovation procurement is available for crafts-actors in open innovation
Regulations	The extent to which regulatory framework and governance models are helping or hindering the involvement of crafts in an open innovation ecosystem

Source: ekip

The following sources were used to identify and summarize challenges related to these building blocks:

- Background-research based on literature review, related Horizon projects and policy strategies
- A social listening exercise carried out on social media
- The outcomes of an ekip Policy Corner on crafts-led innovation
- The input of the participants in the policy lab on crafts-led innovation

3.1.1 Challenges related to vision/goal setting on the added value of crafts-led innovation

- **An outdated perception on crafts:** common understandings of craft and craft skills are based on 20th-century mindsets related to industrialization, technological advancement, and mass consumption, which value production efficiency, labor intensity, and level of digitization. These perceptions slight craft products and skills as slow, manual, labor-intensive, small batch, uneven, unstandardized, non-automatic, and non-digital. Still within the creative industries, creative industries policies and creative economies frameworks craft tends to remain in marginal roles, which also reflects in respective policy documents and academic publications
- **Lack of understanding and awareness of the value of craft innovation:** A main barrier to crafts-led innovation is a lack of understanding and appreciation of its value. Open innovation and collaboration require recognition of the value of craft skills and how their value can be optimized. There needs to be greater understanding of the opportunities for collaboration, among both craft practitioners and those in other sectors.
- **Objectifying craft as a passive target of innovation policy interventions:** addressing craft in connection to innovation can easily appear as imposing modern technology on traditional craft practices, objectifying craft as a passive target of innovation policy interventions and thus running the risk of losing the inherent innovation potential held within various craft practices. This may jeopardize the core of craft, which is the practice of crafts as a modus of making, production, and service. Traditional crafts may be seen as ancillary to innovation instead of advocating core practice and development.
- **Maintaining diversity of craft cultures:** Acknowledging the diversity of craft cultures instead of imagining the craft sector as a homogenous whole is a challenge. This involves maintaining opportunities to access open innovation processes for diverse practitioners whose work is of different scales, speeds, and motivations.

3.1.2 Challenges related to competences for crafts-led innovation

- There are **rather limited activities of collecting and analyzing crafts knowledge** for future generations and little attention in education to transmit this knowledge. The existence of crafts practices is endangered especially by modern ways of mass production of low quality and low skill products. It is very important to develop ways to secure and transmit crafts skills and preserve them in the long term. The need for an educational basis of crafts is related to the availability of education infrastructure, teachers etc.
- A challenge lies in **balancing the daily work of craftspeople with the drive to innovate**. For many craftspeople, the pressure of maintaining their traditional practices while also pursuing new approaches can create a difficult balancing act. The fear of departing from established routines, which can be intimidating for those who have built their livelihoods on them, exacerbates this tension.
- The **financial literacy of craftspeople** is an important point of attention. Knowledge about what funding opportunities do exist, is often lacking. There is an opportunity for intermediaries to provide support in this.
- **Digital divide among practitioners:** older generations of craftspeople often struggle with integrating digital tools into their practices. The digital world can feel overwhelming, and many craftspeople lack the skills or confidence to engage with digital platforms effectively. This divide hinders their ability to access wider markets, share their work, or connect with collaborators, creating an additional barrier to innovation and sustainability.
- **The need for soft skills:** Discussions increasingly highlight the importance of the soft skills that accompany learning through craft. Crafting encourages patience, attention to detail, and long-term satisfaction, counteracting the rush for quick fixes that pervades modern society.

> *"Crafts are still seen as outdated and rarely recognized as part of innovation and economic development."*

3.1.3 Challenges related to infrastructures and networks supporting crafts-led

- The **lack of accessible, free spaces poses** a significant challenge for craftspeople. While short-term "meanwhile-use" spaces can offer temporary solutions, they often fail to provide the stability needed for long-term development. Additionally, practical issues such as transportation difficulties further complicate efforts to meet and collaborate in these spaces.
- There is a **lack of spaces for convergences between traditional and new** craftspeople to generate synergies and enhance the benefits of intergenerational transfer.
- Better **communication and linkages are needed between sectors** to maximise the value of collaboration. Cross-sectoral collaboration often relies on passionate individuals or "fire souls" to drive initiatives forward. Still, the required infrastructure to facilitate such collaborations is frequently lacking. Furthermore, although very promising, specific or locally valuable strategies might be challenging to include into more general cross-contamination initiatives, therefore restricting their influence on creativity and cooperation.
- **Building meaningful and relevant networks** remains a significant challenge for many craftspeople who heavily rely on established contacts, because of the distributed nature of craftmanship, which sometimes makes it difficult to find the “right” contacts.
- There is a **lack of strength in the sectors’ institutional structures** within the European framework to increase the chances of success in advocacy towards European policy makers and provide a firmer basis for promoting initiatives on crafts-led innovation.
- **Trust and power imbalances in collaborations:** Collaborations between craftspeople and larger entities like industry or academia often reveal significant power imbalances. Artisans who are based on microbusinesses frequently fear being exploited or overshadowed by more powerful collaborators. Trust is difficult to establish in such contexts, particularly when craftspeople lack support in navigating these partnerships. Facilitators are often needed to balance power dynamics, protect the rights of craftspeople, and create equitable environments for cooperation.

3.1.4 Challenges related to financing crafts-led innovation

- There is a challenge in clearly defining crafts as to determine where they fit in terms of funding. Crafts are not only part of the arts sector but are also involved in other sectors. There now seems to be **too much pressure on arts funding** for all funding related to crafts. There is a change/openness needed in other policy domains to fund crafts (specifically related to innovation).
- The **high costs associated with maintaining environments and labs for traditional crafts,** along with the need for ongoing financial support, present significant barriers to innovation in the craft sector.

Reliable funding allocation is essential, and solutions like offering credit for tools and materials with interest-free repayment could ease the financial burden.

- Responsibility for **financing crafts lays in the hands of craftspeople themselves,** rather than being organised in a more systematic way. This creates a burden for finding sustainable solutions when it comes to financing craftsmanship and developing a sustainable ecosystem in which crafts are supported and connected.
- Craft practices are often **financed and educated on a project basis.** It is important to develop financial ways to safeguard craft practices which are at the risk to be lost.
- There is a need for more sustainable working conditions in crafts. The working conditions of craftspeople often do not provide **financial stability** and in recent years craftspeople faced **financial and liquidity problems** due to a contraction of demand within a context of a significant increase in raw material prices. A lot of craftspeople are occupied with several jobs to make a living and sustain their craft practices, which makes it difficult to develop a business with long term perspectives. This also involves including **remuneration** for those who are working in crafts and dedicate their **free time** to share their knowledge and execute voluntary work. It is an important way to show the value of those who have the skills and share their knowledge with others in the field

3.1.5 Challenges related to regulations affecting crafts-led innovation

- **Bureaucratic barriers** pose significant challenges for the craft sector, as regulations designed for large-scale production are often difficult to follow when dealing with unusual or traditional techniques and materials. Additionally, a lack of knowledge and understanding among policy makers and funding bodies further complicates the process, hindering the potential for innovation and growth within the craft industry.
- **Navigating and looking after intellectual property rights** presents major difficulties for the craft industry, which leaves especially artisans from indigenous and cultural minorities vulnerable to have their ideas replicated or exploited without appropriate recognition, approval, or compensation. This raises the question of how to effectively protect their work while encouraging innovation and collaboration.

> *"An EU-level vision and targeted policies could unlock the full potential of crafts-led innovation."*

4 Policy and R&I landscape

4.1 Current policy strategies and measures

Despite growing evidence one the economic and societal potential of crafts-led innovation, current (EU) innovation strategies and policies rarely pay attention to crafts. Within Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) policies, crafts are often marginalised—frequently reduced to a passing mention rather than being recognised as a (potential) dynamic contributor to innovation ecosystems.

A 2016 KPMG study commissioned by the UK Crafts Council identified a core barrier: a widespread lack of understanding and appreciation of craft's value in collaborative, cross-sector innovation. Recent national efforts, such as France's 2023 strategy for artistic crafts, mark important progress. However, they also underscore the fragmented nature of policy development—where craft, innovation, and CCI policies often operate in parallel rather than in coordination. This is also underscored in the mapping exercise[3] (2024) conducted in the Horizon project "Tracks4Crafts"[4], which explores how and where craft knowledge is being addressed across Europe and how these contexts shape craft-related policymaking. The findings reveal striking regional differences across Europe, where historical processes, social changes, institutions, political measures and economic structures have influenced the development of craft sectors at the national and regional level. There is no widely accepted uniform definition of crafts, but rather diverse interpretations, stemming from diverse craft cultures featuring a broad spectrum from traditional/heritage craft skills, artistic crafts, professional craftmanship to "makermovements". While some stakeholders advocate the need for a clear definition as a basis for working on specific policies and policy instruments, others believe that too strict a definition can also hinder innovation. In some regions, regulations tie craft practices exclusively to heritage-based definitions, potentially stifling innovation.

Following the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2023/2411 on 18 October 2023, craft and industrial goods can fully benefit from an EU-wide geographical indication (GI) protection scheme. As of December 2025, craft and industrial products will be fully covered under the EU-wide Geographical Indications (GIs) protection framework established by Regulation (EU) 2023/2411. This regulation extends GI protection to non-agricultural products by linking them to their geographical origin, ensuring they retain their distinctive qualities, reputation, and authenticity. To qualify for GI protection, producers must first agree on standardised product specifications and submit them to their national authority, except in cases where a derogation has been granted by the European Commission.

4.2 Past and present European R&I projects

Over the years several European funded research an innovation projects were conducted related to crafts. Earlier on projects emphasised the importance of crafts as part of Europe's cultural heritage, aiming to safeguard and promote this heritage in a changing context. An example is the RICHES[5] (Renewal, Innovation and Change: Heritage and Europe Society) project (2013-2016). The project explored how traditional knowledge and digital innovation could coexist. It recommended repositioning craft as an independent sector within the creative economy, strengthening support for makers, and improving skills ecognition and transmission across formal and informal educational systems.

Later on, projects increasingly highlighted an "innovation through heritage" approach, such as the Ilucidare-project[6] (funded under Horizon 2020), a project to promote and leverage cultural heritage-led innovation and diplomacy through the creation and activation of an international community of cultural heritage practitioners in Europe and beyond,

[3] https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/documents/downloadPublic?documentIds=080166e50b172d3e&appId=PPGMS
[4] https://tracks4crafts.eu/
[5] https://www.riches-project.eu/index.html
[6] https://www.heritageresearch-hub.eu/member/ilucidare/

At the moment several projects specifically focus on crafts through various angles. Some examples of ongoing projects:

- **Tracks4Crafts**[7] is a Horizon Europe project that reimagines the transmission of traditional craft knowledge. It uses high-tech environments like fablabs to support learning and certification while valuing co-creation and interdisciplinary research across eight craft ecosystems.
- **HEPHAESTUS**[8] fuses traditional crafts with cutting-edge technology to preserve heritage while enabling new business models and sustainable innovations. It is piloted in local ecosystems, such as Bornholm, Denmark, and seeks to create long-term tools for craft sector development.
- **Craeft**[9] is a research project that combines disciplines like cognitive science, haptics, and digitisation to support craft learning and innovation. It aims to make craft education more accessible, preserve lost techniques, and build digital networks for crafts professionals and the public.

Six ongoing projects have initiated a cluster (coordinated by network-organisation Mad'in Europe) in 2024, under the name of "CRAFTOUR". Together they plan to work on the implementation of joint policy recommendations for EU policy makers. A policy round table and a conference will be organised in November 2025.

CRAFTOUR is a cluster of 6 European projects on crafts coordinated by Mad'in Europe. Together they are going to work on the implementation of joint policy recommendations for EU policy makers. A policy round table and a conference will be organised in November 2025 and January 2026. CRAFTOUR was announced in Paris, in October 2024.

- **Craeft:** Craft Understanding, Education, Training, and Preservation for Posterity and Prosperity . https://www.craeft.eu
- **Colour4crafts:** Colour for Combining, Reengineering, Applying, Futuring, Transforming, Stretching. https://www.helsinki.fi/en/researchgroups/ bio-based-colourants
- **Tracks4crafts:** Transforming crafts knowledge for a sustainable, inclusive and economically viable heritage in Europe https://tracks4crafts.eu
- **Hephaestus:** Heritage in EuroPe: new tecHnologies in crAft for prEserving and innovaTing fUtureS. https://hephaestuscraft.eu
- **Culturality:** Cultural heritage in rural remote areas for creative tourism and sustainability https://culturalityproject.eu
- **MOSAIC:** Mastering job-Oriented Skills in Arts & crafts thanks to Inclusive Centres of vocational excellence https://mosaiceuproject.eu

CRAFTOUR works on five pillars: understanding & valorisation; authenticity & Safeguard, transmission, training & certification; economics and innovative and sustainable business models; and documentation and archiving. In each of the five pillars innovation is key. of 6 European projects on crafts coordinated by Mad'in Europe. Together they are going to work on the implementation of joint policy recommendations for EU policy makers. A policy round table and a conference will be organised in November 2025 and January 2026. CRAFTOUR was announced in Paris, in October 2024.

[7] https://tracks4crafts.eu/
[8] https://hephaestuscraft.eu/
[9] https://www.craeft.eu/

4.3 Related policy recommendations

In 2019, the European Crafts Alliance undertook a survey to increase understanding about **challenges facing the crafts sector**. The survey results offered the basis for a manifest and action plan 'Crafting Europe'. Recommendations include (among others):

- Ensure representation of the craft sector in all its dimensions through EU support programmes.
- Support measures that help to boost enterprise and access to marktes for craft businesses.
- Ensure that regulations are appropriate to the scale of craft businesses and increase access to professional development supports for craft professionals.
- Address the decline in training provision and transmission of skills.
- Work with European craft institutions to develop specific training supports that include new models of transmission between manner craftspeople and students.
- Undertake research to identify and quantify the economic, educational, cultural and social value of craft to Europe.
- Promote the recognition and protection of the craft sector through legislation.

In addition, the project of the similar name, Crafting Europe, (2019–2022) delivered an overview analysis, The Craftsmanship sector in Europe (2022). The study illustrates the contemporary framework of the sector and some of the key challenges, including the need to be recognised in and through public policies and policy making.

A 2023 Study into the Resilience of the Craft Sector in Europe[10] by the World Crafts Council Europe highlights **how the sector responds to challenges and opportunities** unique to its situation. Findings highlight the sector's resilience in the face of economic instability, shifting consumer behaviours and global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing war in Ukraine and Brexit. The study provides a series of recommendations, key among them being:

- The continuation of conversations across the European craft sector about resilience, what it is and how to build it.
- To undertake research into education and training requirements of the craft sector across Europe to inform how the sector can find solutions to the loss of educational pathways and preservation of skills. Networking, knowledge exchange and mechanisms for mutual support.
- Advocacy, infrastructure and awareness raising to increase the perceived value of craft amongst policy makers and the public.
- Coordinated lobbying for financial support for the craft sector.

Within the MOSAIC-project specific recommendations[11] were made related to **skills needs for the craft sector**, stressing education and vocational education and training should focus on skills in the personal, entrepreneurial and cooperation and collaboration and sphere, as well as expanding sustainability thinking[12] .

Meanwhile upcoming recommendations of the CRAFTOUR cluster should be considered as well by policymakers.

5 Pathways for EU policymakers to further stimulate crafts-led innovation

Based on the discussion from the Policy Lab as well as further refinement in the Community Review

Workshop and background research, recommendations were developed to tackle the identified challenges.

5.1 Addressing vision/goal setting on the added value of crafts-led innovation

Develop a clear vision for crafts-led innovation and a unified cross-domain policy strategy at the EU level, adaptable to national and regional contexts:

- Adopting an inclusive open understanding of crafts, that takes into account the different ways how crafts are understood across European regions and cultures and highlights the multidimensional (economic, cultural, social,…) value of craft practices and its innovation potential in both B2B and B2C roles.
- Promoting the recognition of this diverse spectrum of crafts in innovation policies, beyond heritage and cultural policies. and by fostering a dialogue with various domains (culture, economy, tourism, work…). A flexible, artisan-oriented approach, which values both manual skills and emerging technologies, can help innovation policy frameworks capture the full potential of craft, unlock cross-sectoral collaborations and new markets. More visibility could be enhanced by cross-collaborative initiatives, shared spaces and (financing) resources could be the catalyst of this recognition.

[10] https://wcc-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/A-Study-into-the-Resilience-of-the-Craft-Sector-in-Europe.pdf

[11] https://mosaiceuproject.eu/download/skill-needs-assessment-for-the-arts-and-craft-sector/

[12] https://mosaiceuproject.eu/download/environmental-sustainability/

- Creating an open environment for **transnational dialogue with multilevel policymakers**[13] **and stakeholders** to exchange knowledge & experience. Crafts councils of different countries could contribute to this dialogue (through for example the World Crafts Council Europe). To realise this, a working group with the relevant European Commission's Directorates-General (EAC, RTD, GROW,...) and (European) sector-led associations in which open innovation and entrepreneurial actors are involved should be organised.

Support at EU as well as other policy levels more research and data to articulate the innovative value and impact of craft. This would help policymakers, businesses, and society at large to better understand how the crafts sector contributes to broader innovation ecosystems. Three areas of research are particularly relevant:

- Research and data on real-life processes and concrete cases (products and services) to better understand the crafts sector and crafts-led innovation processes
- Research and data to better understand the impact of crafts in open innovation, thereby identifying indicators, that reflect this impact. These indicators could be incorporated and used in innovation metrics, to be applied in open innovation projects and communication on knowledge exchange platforms and events.
- Research and mappings of ecosystems supporting crafts-led innovation throughout Europe to identify collaborative opportunities within and outside the existing crafts clusters. The European Cluster Collaboration Platform[14] could play a role in this.

A dedicated research programme which includes systematic reviews of the holistic sector's impact could support the identification of **indicators, that reflect the impact (economic as well as broader) of all (sub)types of crafts.** These indicators could be incorporated and used in **innovation metrics**, to be applied in open innovation projects and communication on knowledge exchange platforms and events.

- Research and data should be put into **real-life processes and concrete cases (products and services) of crafts-led innovation**. These should be presented to policy makers on multiple policy levels and stakeholders involved in innovation initiatives, to show potential legacy of crafts within innovation projects.
- Research and data of craft should be complemented with **a broad mapping of crafts clusters** in Europe to identify collaborative opportunities within and outside the existing crafts clusters. Key actors:
- **Regional & national observatories for the crafts sector, universities, European Commission**... who share all findings in an overarching open-source platform to organise research and share findings efficiently.

Recognize on a sectoral and policy level that crafts-led innovation extends beyond technological advancements and its accessible and democratic characteristics foster the development of alternative models of innovation, such as material innovation (e.g.: application of mycelium), business model innovation (e.g.: value chain sustainability), and social innovation (e.g.: empowerment of women in rural communities). In addition, the influence of innovation on novel ways of transmission of crafts practices should be stressed.

Promote the value of craft in open innovation to different stakeholder groups beyond academic researchers: document and showcase successful craft-led innovation examples to shift perceptions on the added value of crafts in innovation.

Establish a central **EU-wide repository of craft-led innovation projects and businesses**, showcasing the diversity of craft practices. To the extent appropriate, this repository should preferably build on existing knowledge and cases from EU-projects under the Horizon and Creative Europe programme. An inspirational example might be the European Knowledge Valorisation Platform[15]. This platform includes practices, 'learning from experience' examples and relevant policies to transform research results into societal and economic benefits. In addition to the EU-wide repository, creating **arts/crafts communities on local level, existing of ambassadors** to build vision on local/ regional specificities, values of culture and possibilities could affect the promotion of crafts-led innovation. Both initiatives could complement and strengthen one and other.

- Highlight towards other sectors and policy domains the role of craft in enhancing innovation in sustainability (particularly in material reuse and upcycling), societal resilience and cohesion, by spreading successful craft business stories of innovation next to innovation projects and pilots in which crafts are involved.

[13] Between policymakers across the EU an Open Method of Coordination group could be a relevant instrument.
[14] https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/

[15] https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/eu-valorisation-policy/knowledgevalorisation-platform_en

Decoding Ceramics: an example of researching and documenting crafts knowledge for future generations

Decoding Ceramics is an initiative, developed as part of the Erasmus+ project **CRAFT**. It aims to gather, preserve, and share ceramic knowledge, ensuring accessibility for learners and educators at all levels. The initiative consists of two tools: **'decoding ceramics map',** an interactive map of 285 ceramics datasets, with relevant information on locations, artists information and techniques and **'decoding cards',** which offer step-by-step guidance on ceramic techniques, including required materials, time estimates, and creative applications. These resources are enriched with video demonstrations, expert tips, and insights into tools and materials. By making ceramic knowledge more structured and widely available, Decoding Ceramics helps safeguard traditional skills while encouraging innovation in contemporary practice.



Source picture: Decoding Ceramics

5.2 Stimulating innovation competences

Enhance education and training for craftspeople beyond their craft skills: provide resources for (lifelong) training for craftspeople via Erasmus+ or creative hubs (in support of lifelong learning) to adopt innovation competences as well as highlight in curricula the potential added value of artisans as an innovation actor in a multitude of contexts. Non-formal education, complementary to formal learning, could support this shift. Beside these innovation competences, enhancing business management, financial (literacy) skills, digital competencies, IP registration through (collective) trademarks, cross-sectoral networking, intermediation, entrepreneurship in sustainability and growth, application of digital tools… remain important to increase economic sustainability.

Raise awareness among craftspeople about the added value of their competences in innovative processes, techniques, methods, materials, and sustainability (e.g. thriftiness, material reuse and repair) and vice versa the added value for crafts practitioners in innovation practices (e.g.: application of sustainable practices to strengthen the economic resilience of artisans)

Engage younger generations: stimulate the (re)integration of craft skills into educational curricula to stimulate interest and manual and motoric skill development from a young age. Foster the introduction of new approaches by using technology and by opening up to a contemporary perspective of crafts that highlights its innovative potential through different forms of craftsmanship and making beyond heritage craft skills.

Master 4.0: Improvement of master craftsman exams

Master craftsman occupations are highly regarded and acknowledged in the EU countries. Master craftsman exams enable the career progression, opening craft business and taking apprentices. The aim of the Erasmus+ project "Master 4.0"[16] was to increase the usage of innovative approaches and digital technologies for teaching and learning as well as to promote the lifelong learning.

The project focussed on improving preparation and organisation of the master craftsman exam by improving exam questions and programmes in accordance with labour market needs and contemporary technological trends.

ERASMUS+
MASTER4.0

[16] https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/nl/projects/search/details/2019-1-HR01-KA202-060820

Example of scholarships for passing on craftmanship

With the scholarships for passing on craftsmanship, Flanders aims to stimulate craftsmanship rooted in tradition. The Flemish policy seeks to honour both masters and apprentices who dedicate themselves to this cause and to support them in transmitting and learning the knowledge and skills of a craft that is part of intangible heritage. From 2018, scholarships have been available for "masters" and "apprentices" to apply for together, for a maximum duration of two years and a total amount of up to €30,000. This allows masters to work intensively over an extended period with one or more passionate individuals eager to learn from them. In 2024, however, no grant round was planned. The government is exploring how it can continue to support craftsmanship in the future to give skilled professionals that extra boost.



Source picture: Vlaams Architectuurinstituut

5.3 Enhancing infrastructures & networks

Support and strengthen structures that bring together and represent craftspeople in all diversity, not only from a heritage-based approach, in dialogues on regulations and policies that affect the role of crafts in innovation at various policy-levels (from local to EU). Inspirational examples of better organised advocacy may be found in the UK, Germany, France, and in the Nordic countries (e.g. the UK Crafts Council or the Swedish Crafts Centre). Encourage municipalities at local level to have dedicated bodies or representatives for crafts-led innovation. Involve CCI sectors in the innovation initiatives and agendas on different policy-levels.

Support knowledge- and experience-sharing on crafts-led innovation through communitybuilding: provide support for networks and communities where craftspeople can share experiences, tools, and knowledge. Bottom-up initiatives, often supported by local authorities or cross-sectoral partnerships, can help address isolation and accelerate innovation. Strengthen the ties between these physical hubs and digital platforms to support collaboration processes. Incorporate the swarm-based approach to support knowledge-sharing on European level. This is a problem-solving technique that relies on individuals that follow decentralised rules and interact locally to achieve a global objective.

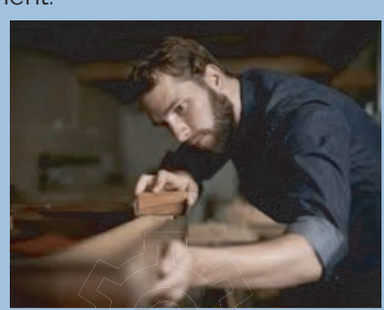
Support the development of stronger networks:

- Encourage interaction between craftspeople and other innovation actors (in tourism, business, science, ...).
- Encourage intergenerational exchange of knowledge.
- Establish platforms for knowledge exchange between traditional and new fields of craft and local industries.
- Develop a stable cross-country open source initiative to gather data and information from previous crafts projects to build on (e.g.: observatory).

Example of a dedicated strategy: the National Crafts Policy in France

In 2023, the French government established a national strategy to promote arts and crafts, in conjunction with private-sector stakeholders to develop a strategic industry contract. This initiative aims to implement a cohesive and sustainable economic and cultural policy in support of fine crafts. At its heart, this comprehensive strategy seeks to strengthen, preserve, and elevate arts and crafts professions, fostering sustainable growth, safeguarding cultural heritage, and enhancing international recognition. The national strategy brings together key organizations and institutions, including the National Institute of Crafts (Institut National des Métiers d'Art), an Associated Partner of MOSAIC, as well as the Chambers of Trades and Crafts, Bpifrance, Business France, the Heritage Foundation, the National Association of Living Heritage Enterprises (ANEPV), the French Institute, and the Territorial Bank.

By encouraging collaboration between public and private actors, the strategy aims to equip the arts and crafts sector with the resources and capabilities needed for meaningful structural development.



Source picture: Luxus +

Strengthen the role of local and regional collaborative innovation infrastructure (such as incubators, living labs, shared makerspaces, workshops/studios) in opening for and supporting craftsled innovation. An important precondition for this recommendation is that creative hubs should be acknowledged as innovation actors in the innovation ecosystem. A platform/overview mapping these types of infrastructures in the EU could help make them more visible.

Foster place-based innovation by integrating local crafts into broader economic and cultural initiatives.

5.4 Tackling financing for crafts-led innovation

Support the crafts sector in creating awareness (make use of research and data….) about the value and impact of crafts led innovation to attract business, investment and funding (for example through innovative public procurement). Define the economic impact areas in which investors and funders relate to (e.g. material innovation, sustainability, competences, production processes…) and evolve fast over time.

Combining craftsmanship with innovation through public procurement: restoration roof of the Notre-Dame

Ateliers Perrault was entrusted with restoring the roof of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris after it was devastated by a fire in 2019. This crafts company, which dates to the 18th century, specialises in restoring historic buildings. Skilled artisans from across France, including small-scale craftsmen who have preserved the techniques used by the cathedral's original 12th-century builders, participated in the restoration. While modern tools such as electric saws, drills, clamps, screws, and nails could have sped up the process, there was a strong commitment to preserving traditional craftsmanship and outsource the execution of the restoration to the party that fully masters traditional methods rather than to parties that could execute the restorations fastest. The roof was reconstructed using the same historical methods to ensure safety. If it is building the same way, there is no risk damaging the cathedral by trying something new. To meet the ambitious five-year deadline, these traditional methods were seamlessly integrated with advanced computer design technology..

Encourage financial and cultural sustainability models that include fair remuneration for artisans and develop tools that help to establish balanced cooperations in innovation projects with other parties, e.g. via checklists for contracts, model agreements or raising awareness on important clauses in terms and conditions. Recognise and invest in the development of an ecosystem (skills, regulation, research…) in which these models and their ability for innovation can be created.

Creatives Unite: a central hub for info on financing options and guidance in IP

Creatives Unite is an online central hub for the Cultural and Creative Sectors across the EU and beyond. The platform connects artists with the broader creative ecosystem by amplifying their voices and compiling valuable information on creative opportunities, mobility schemes, events, best practices, research, and useful tools—all in one place. Creatives Unite is continuously evolving. Notably, the Creative FLIP consortium has introduced the So You Need Money tool, which outlines various financing options for cultural and creative professionals and organisations. Other key resources include My Intellectual Property, which provides guidance on intellectual property rights, and This Is How We Work, a comprehensive mapping of cultural and creative working conditions within the EU.



Source picture: Creative FLIP

Make existing innovation funding schemes more inclusive towards craftspeople:

- By using an inclusive language in funding calls that also include and appeal to craftspeople.
- By opening funding instruments for processes and knowledge from the craft sector and communities, not only new products.
- By making evaluators familiar with the added value of craft in innovation
- By reducing bureaucratic workload for applicants, by anticipating on digital and language challenges, and revising transient accreditations

Support collaborative funding schemes and alternative funding instruments to strengthen transnational, -regional and cross-sectoral crafts-led innovation.

5.5 Regulations

Balance (craft-related) regulations to allow preservation as well as innovation: In some regions, regulations tie craft practices exclusively to heritage-based definitions, potentially stifling innovation. Encourage a spectrum from traditional to contemporary activities that allow craft practices to evolve while remaining deeply rooted in specialized knowledge and skills. Revise existing accreditations and develop new ones that are verified by crafts organisations and/or experts.

6 Methodological note

The policy recommendations were co-created using the *ekip* Policy Lab methodology.[17] The methodology designed for the development of policy recommendations as part of a Policy Lab is divided in three consecutive steps:

1) Scoping and identification of the problem: the first step is the identification of the problem and its scoping. The topic is identified and scoped via desk research, interviews with stakeholders and the input from the different consortium partners. As part of the Policy Lab preparatory work, a scoping document is shared with the participants to prepare them ahead of the day and to ensure a common understanding among participants. The scoping documents for this policy are available at add link to ekip knowledge bank section on scoping docs this policy lab

2) Policy formulation as part of the Policy Lab: The Policy Lab is a moment of co-creation with the participating stakeholders. The goal of the policy formulation session is to develop, refine and propose together with the participants different policies for the challenges at hand. More information on this Policy Lab is available at add link to ekip knowledge bank section on this policy lab.

3) Community review workshop of the recommendations: after concretising the set of recommendations they were further reviewed in an online workshop which involved participants from the policy lab as well as other stakeholders. This workshop presented the recommendations to the stakeholders and invited them to fill the gaps with information that may have been missing from their perspective.

[17] Deliverable D10.1 Methodology of Policy Labs

7 Appendixes

Agenda of the Policy Lab

Online session 1: introductory session on crafts-led innovation (6 February 2025)

About the European Cultural and Creative Industries Innovation Policy Platform (ekip)

Setting the scene:

- Crafts-led Innovation – Elisa Kraatari (ekip - Humak University)
- The many faces of crafts in Europe - Prof. Bert De Munck (Tracks4Crafts – University of Antwerp)
- The Bornholm crafts ecosystem – Marta Gasparin (Hephaestus), David Christensen & Dorthe Paulsen (Bornholm)

Group discussion on challenges related to crafts-led innovation

Online session 2: workshop on designing policy recommendations (20 February 2025)

- Introduction & short recap of session 1
- Breakout discussions in three groups on vision/goal setting, competences, infrastructures & networks, finance and regulations

Online community review workshop (11 March 2025)

- Introduction and short recap
- Presentation of the recommendatons & interactive group discussions in three rounds

> *"Stronger networks, modern training, and cross-sector cooperation are essential for growth."*

Participant list

Last name	First name	Country	Organisation
Abramsson	Görel	Sweden	Region Blekinge
Achu	Blessing	Lagos	360Creative Innovation Hub
Albertelli	Aline	Belgium	b.creative / KEA European Affairs
Asry	Karim	Spain	Espacio Open
Bergman	Marjanna	Switzerland	UNHCR
Bervoets	Vic	Belgium	University of Antwerp
Björk	Bertil	Sweden	National Swedish Handicraft Council / Swedish Society of Crafts and Design
Bucksch	Rickard	Belgium	European Commission
Calleja	Glen	Malta	Arts Council Malta
Callender	Lisa	Jamaica (	ProTradeConsult
Christoforidou	Despina	Sweden	Industrial Design, Lund university
Clerix	Sofie	Belgium	Bokrijk
Crombie	David	The Netherlands	HKU University of the Arts Utrecht
De Groot	Julie	Belgium	Universiteit Antwerpen
Demertzi	Aggeliki	Greece	SYMBOLO
D'hoore	Laura	Belgium	University of Antwerp
D'Itria	Erminia	Italy	Politecnico di Milanp

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Dvalishvili	Maka	Georgia	Georgian Arts and Culture Center
Frías	Sergi	Spain	Coboi lab. The policy lab of Sant Boi deLlobregat City Council (Barcelona MetropolitanArea)
Găman	Miruna	France	Fondation des Sciences du Patrimoine
Garcia Nunez	Regina	Belgium	Mad'in Europe
Hakala	Aili	Finland	Kioskit Kansalle
Hansen	Külli	Estonia	Tartu Centre for Creative Industries
Hazejager	Kelly	The Netherlands	Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision
Hertz Jansen	Malte	Denmark	Maker
Holmberg	Lena	Sweden	Lund university
Hoti	Lulzim	Kosovo	Future by Lund
huygens	ils	Belgium	UAntwerpen
Jerie	Charlotte	Belgium	Goethe-Institut
Kocani	Besnike	Kosovo	UN-Habitat Kosovo
Kouzmine Karavaïeff	Johanna	Belgium	ifa laboratory
Krivokapic	Jelena	Belgium	Mad'in Europe
Kuehnlein	Andreas	Germany	House of Manus

Last name	First name	Country	Organisation
Lindeblad	Peter	Sweden	Ingka Services AB
Long	Xavier	France	Institut pour les savoir-faire français
Lupu	Ruxandra	Cyprus	University of Cyprus
Malmström	Bodil	Sweden	Lund University/ekip
Matiova	Alexandra	Slovakia	Creative Industry Košice, n.o.
Matsin	Ave	Estonia	University of Tartu
Micallef	Elton	Malta	Malta Crafts Foundation (MCF), European Crafts Alliance (ECA)
Miguel Baumann	Laura	Spain	European Crafts Alliance
Mikic	Hristina	Serbia	Institut za kreativno preduzetnistvo i inovacije
Monumentum Natura	Ars	Romania	Ars Monumentum Natura
Nadimi	Mutaleni	The Netherlands	Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision
Noll	Laura	Switzerland	Zurich University of Applied Sciences
olmeti	giuseppe	Italy	Italian Association of Cities of Ceramics (AiCC) and European goruping of cities of Ceramics (AEuCC)
Östin	Thea	Sweden	Kalmar läns Hemslöjd
PAP	David	Hungary	FabLab Budapesz
Parnis	Karl	Malta	Malta Crafts Foundation
Pazaitis	Alex	Greece	P2P Lab

Last name	First name	Country	Organisation
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Popovic	Maryna	Ukraine	Handicraft Chamber of Ukraine
Poprawski	Marcin	Finland	Humak University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki
Revelli	Barbara	The Netherlands	ELIA
Rizou	Styliani	Greece	Centre of Research and Technology Hellas (CERTH)/ Information Technologies Institut
Roedenbeck	Friedrike	Sweden	National Swedish Handicraft Council
Saikaly	Fatina	Italy	World Crafts Council
Scott	Katarina	Sweden	Future by Lund
Silisty	Lina	Cyprus	Third Places Creative Consultancy
Soondra	Linda	Sweden	Konsthantverkscentrum (the Swedish Crafts Centre)
Stoy	Lennart	Belgium	Technopolis Group
Tjarve	Baiba	Latvia	Latvian Academy of Culture
Trojan	Lubomira	Poland	University
Wiberg	Karin	Sweden	Svensk Form
Zeng	Zhoudi	Switzerland	UNHCR (MADE51)