

# Cross-sectoral cooperation and innovation within Creative and Cultural Industries – practices, opportunities and policies within the area of the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture

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**Project Epilogue**



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This Policy Brief follows two online Wrap-up Events<sup>1</sup> marking the completion or final stage of most of the project activities. In many respects this document represents a publicly available epilogue to the project which officially closes in April 2021.

# 1. Legacy Web Resource

One important legacy of the project will be a web resource ([www.ndpccrossinno.eu](http://www.ndpccrossinno.eu)) which contains many of the deliverables of the project. It is hoped it will be useful to existing and future CCI cross-sectoral collaboration and innovation projects and initiatives both within and outside the Northern Dimension region. Similarly we hope it will be helpful and relevant to policymakers.

# 2. The Project

The project had as its objective to carry out an in-depth analysis of CCI cross-sectoral collaboration and innovation activity in the Northern Dimension region and the potential for future growth in terms of opportunities both within and outside the region. This work and the activities it produced took place in the context of the development of NDPC's strategy for 2021–2024. An underlying theme was addressing CCIs' contribution to sustainable development through collaborative innovation.

The project ran from January 2020 to April 2021 and its deliverables included mapping, an analytical study, Experts' Focus Groups, Policy Briefs, documentation of case studies, showcasing of projects, social media campaigns and the legacy web resource mentioned above.

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<sup>1</sup> The first took place on 11 February and was for the Steering Committee of the NDPC. The second took place on 11 March 2021 with over 70 invited CCI specialists and other experts participating.

# 3. The Analytical Study 'Collaboration and Innovation'

At the heart of the project was the analytical study 'Collaboration and Innovation' which has provided the basis for defining the potential for CCI cross-sectoral innovation in the Northern Dimension countries. It focuses on initiatives from the region and related international opportunities. Involving over 100 contributors, the study analyses the data of 121 case studies from the 11 countries.

In particular the study identifies:

- ✚ A vibrant regional cross-innovation context
- ✚ Seven key trends relevant to policy-makers
- ✚ A general model of the cross-innovation process
- ✚ Three types of tangible innovation impact
- ✚ Specific challenges and solutions for innovative collaboration in 3 domains
- ✚ The profile of key stakeholders

The seven key policy recommendations are:

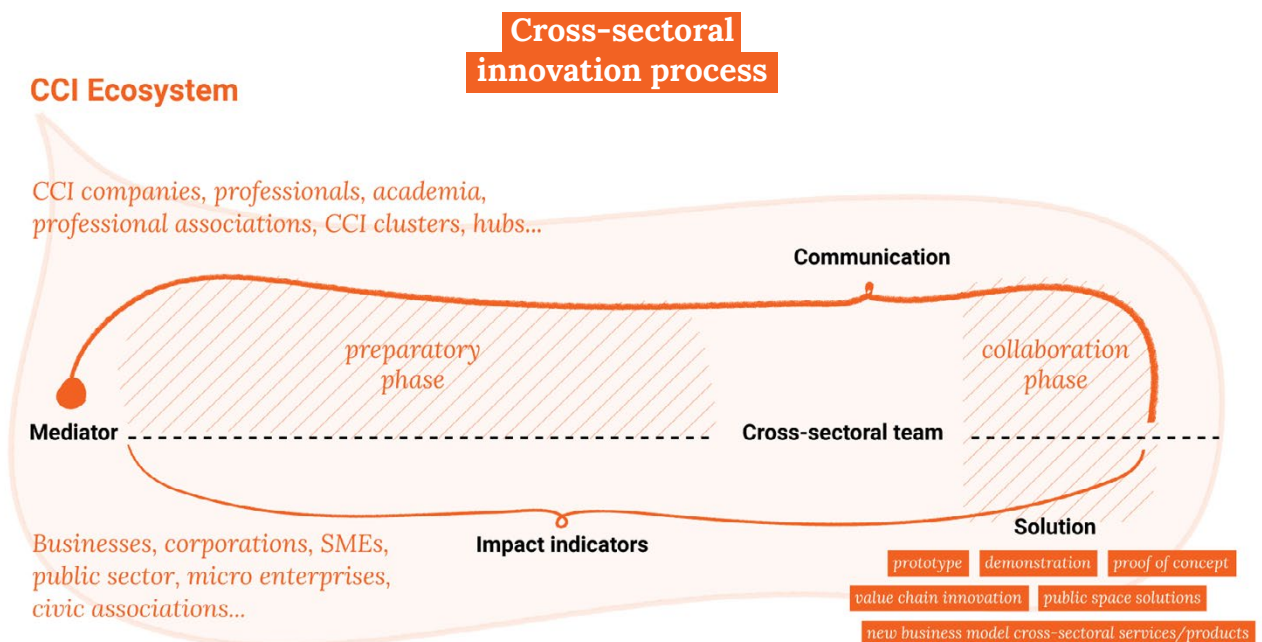
- ✚ Connectivity is the key to the preparatory phase of cross-sectoral innovation teamwork;
- ✚ CCIs' roles as mediators or initiators of cross-sectoral innovation to be better understood;
- ✚ Multilevel approaches should embrace innovation risks taken by diverse partners;
- ✚ A broader definition of CCI innovation and its impact (including 'soft' innovation) to be adopted;
- ✚ Attention needs to be given to long-term assessment of impact and tracking of results;
- ✚ A broader vision of cross-innovation in relation to sustainable development goals (SDG) is timely;
- ✚ Legal frameworks to be developed to facilitate CCIs' involvement in cross-sectoral innovation.

On the basis of the 121 cases documented by the project it was evident that the conclusion can be drawn that there is clear potential for sustainable growth related to cross-sectoral innovation. The structure of the study was based on three specific domains – 'Connectivity', 'Innovating Traditional Industries' and 'Health and Well-being' – distinguishing the innovation impact related to each. In the domain of 'Connectivity' for innovation the impact is strongly associated with innovations solving a unique business problem. The second domain, 'Innovating Traditional Industries' addresses a context that alters the way 'traditional' businesses operate. The 'Health and Well-being' domain demonstrates impact on new types of businesses and services that depart from the CCI base of competences.

Fifteen inspiring stories about what is meant by impact and how it is achieved and measured in each of the three domains can be found on the project web resource with detailed information about the 121 documented case studies being found in the Annex 1.

The key contribution of the study has been its attempt to answer the question ‘How to create a successful cross-innovation process?’. This issue has been the object of discussion in all of the six online events (four Experts’ Focus Groups and two Wrap-up Events) held between March 2020 and March 2021. The study has proposed a general model that may serve as guidance for others and inform any future support programmes.

The image below illustrates the fact that cross-sectoral innovation initiatives typically result from a process of collaboration via establishing a cross-sectoral team.



CCI collaboration for innovation, a cross-sectoral innovation process general model

Another common trait is that the preparatory phase demands considerable attention and resources and is crucial to the success of innovation initiatives irrespective of the domain of activities. Three fundamental activities complement this model:

- ✚ the role of a CCI mediator
- ✚ development of impact indicators
- ✚ communication activities

These three fundamental activities begin at the outset of the preparatory phase before the actual collaborative innovation process starts. The focus on impact assessment, dissemination and communication continues after

the solution has been found. It is estimated that from the point of establishing a 'proof of concept' or a 'prototype' or 'demonstration' there is a period lasting between 2 to 5 years to reach a level where broader economic impacts can be traced after the actual collaborative process has finished. It should be noted that the project found that most initiatives are fully aware of this fact concerning the life-cycle of a collaboration. There is both valuable and interesting experience of this process in the Northern Dimension countries as well as examples of development of methods of impact assessment. The study provides useful guidance on this and other clear challenges that have been overcome in the process of collaborative innovation.

The understanding of 'innovation' has developed in recent times from technological product innovation and technological process innovation to a broader range of equally important types of innovation, including service innovation, business model innovation, organisational innovation and disruptive innovation. This widened recognition of what constitutes innovation i.e. 'soft' innovation as well as the 'hard' innovation that has developed alongside the digital revolution. The study seeks to underline the fact that innovation is not just about 'technological' solutions, outcomes and products.

Finally, the study shows that a rich innovation context is one where the CCIs interact with diverse and multiple players - public institutions, businesses, not-for-profit entities, research centres etc. This means that while supporting the cultural and creative sectors to grow remains vital, alongside that stimulating collaborative innovation processes is extremely important.

## 4. The Policy Briefs

One very interesting aspect of the project was the process of developing four Policy Briefs in addition to this one. The Policy Briefs are both exploratory and explanatory documents which were informed by four very productive, thematic Experts' Focus Group events. A total of 70 experts, specialists and experienced professionals participated in the Experts' Focus Groups and their contribution to the evolution of the Policy Briefs was invaluable both at a collective and individual level.

The Policy Briefs themselves, while intended as a contribution to the NDPC's emerging strategy for 2021–2024, were intentionally produced with a much wider audience in mind and to stimulate further thinking in four areas of cross-sectoral collaboration and innovation that the project had identified as particularly important. The first Policy Brief was intended to look at the issue of relationship development which is fundamental in beginning any cross-sectoral innovation journey. A key issue is the CCI sector making itself known and communicating what it can offer to other social and economic sectors and players so that matchmaking can work in both directions. Addressing four issues shaped the core of this document: CCI cross-sectoral cooperation before and after COVID-19; what drives cross-sectoral relationships and innovation?; what interventions are needed to stimulate increased cross-sectoral activity?; what are the main barriers or obstacles inhibiting cross-sectoral relationships? Two of the key elements

that emerged in discussion of this domain are the fact that different sectors have different 'languages' which present barriers to matchmaking. This in fact was both a theme and an issue which continually came up.

This in turn was linked to the second key issue which recurred frequently – the need for 'mediation' in one form or another. While the project came across different forms of 'mediation', the fact is it is an undeveloped area where further specific research and knowledge-sharing is needed. Given that a majority of CCIs are micro or small businesses they do not normally have the resources to do in-depth research on another sector. To take a specific example, the project identified Serious Games and Gamification as an area with enormous growth potential but for a CCI to engage in a collaborative innovation project in the medical, health and well-being sector there will almost certainly need to be an 'intermediary' playing a key role.

The next Policy Brief focused on CCIs' interaction with traditional cultural sectors and their practices and also on education. The starting point was addressing the question 'How traditional are 'Traditional industries' and what are the survival scenarios for CCIs and 'Traditional industries' in the post-Covid-19 world? Further specific questions were addressed including 'How can CCIs, cultural sector 'traditional industries' and the education sector educate each other and how can the common interest be identified?' 'How effective is the CCI sector at communication and advocacy?' 'How can the benefits of cross-sectoral cooperation and innovation between CCIs, cultural sector' traditional industries' and the education sector be stimulated, recognised and evaluated or measured? The most pressing issue that has emerged in terms of innovating traditional industries is the need for imaginative support and inducement mechanisms which enable individual businesses, organisations and creative individuals to explore and engage in cross-sectoral activity.

The third Policy Brief and related Experts' Focus Group focused on the interplay of culture, arts, health and well-being. It is clear that the area of health and well-being, both at an individual and societal level especially in the COVID-19 context is one of the richest potential areas for CCI collaboration and innovation. The 2019 WHO report in particular and other research should prove to be a trigger in terms of increased promotion of cross-sector collaboration and innovation between the culture, arts, health, social welfare and well-being sectors. There is an issue however that given the small-scale and fragmented nature of much, if not most of the CCI sector, there is a serious problem for it to proactively follow and engage with the academic and other research being produced. In terms of the NDPC Strategy 2021–2024 it was specifically recommended in this third Policy Brief that it should be a priority area with the NDPC working in partnership with its counterpart the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS).

The fourth Policy Brief that was produced looked at Serious Games (SG)/Gamification and the cross-innovation potential of those areas in relation to the Cultural Heritage, Education, Medical, Health and Well-Being sectors. The possibilities of using SG and gamification cross-sectorally are countless and the boundaries of SG/gamification can and should be significantly pushed outwards into various areas. The generally good, and in some cases really excellent, support being given to the development of the games industry in the Northern Dimension region is focussed on entertainment games or games as a generality. There seems to be little or limited awareness that the SG sector, while having much in common technologically with the entertainment sector, is fundamentally quite different i.e. it is important to draw attention to the quite differing needs of the SG sector and the entertainment games sector in terms, for example, of incubation of new businesses and any other targeted support.



## 5. Experts' Focus Groups

Four online thematic Experts' Focus Group events acted as a backbone to the project. The use of the groups was instrumental in capturing the knowledge of those already engaged in cross-sectoral innovation.

The events were equally important for reaching out to stakeholders interested in, or already supporting, such initiatives and those who seek to be informed by their results. In general, the project team has found the online Experts' Focus Groups model to be a successful approach. A recommendation for future projects may be that certain national or industry-specific online networking events such as these could be useful to integrate in the mix, in order to increase interaction from the very start of a project.

## 6. Flagship Case Studies and the Social Media Promotional Campaigns

The outreach activities of the project specifically addressing a broader audience included fourteen flagship cases being published on social media. They were meant to inspire and inform as well as increase the focus on cross-sectoral collaboration and innovation.

In addition, social media promotion was used to address other project activities culminating in a large-scale online campaign to promote the findings of the project in the project's last weeks. It showed that paid campaigns and promotional content could serve similar projects well in the future, especially if a strategy is developed for the entire duration of the project timeline. That perhaps is a lesson to be learnt, notwithstanding the success of this end-of-project campaign.

## 7. The Case Studies

The 121 case studies represented a very important part of the raw material which the project used to produce its results and findings. Even with all the COVID-19 distortions, there was in general a high level of cooperation and commitment from those who were approached to be potential case studies. As explained above, for the analytical study the case studies were grouped into three domains.

## 8. The Wrap-up Events

The first of the two Wrap-up Events was targeted specifically at members of the NDPC Steering Committee. It was a very positive occasion, forward-looking and with lively discussion based on study by the members of the documentation the project had provided. It has led to follow-up including to further thinking and action about how the project results and findings can be further disseminated and used.

The second Wrap-up Event, where the key outputs were publicly presented, involved 70 participants from the NDPC partnership countries and also international stakeholders such as WIPO, the EC and international organisations.

## 9. Feedback from the Second Wrap-up Event

Because of the number of participants and the desire of the project team to make the event interactive rather than a one-way presentation, a successful experiment was adopted. This involved use of EasyRetro, an online tool primarily designed for running agile retrospectives and improving the quality of meetings especially for multi-located teams. It basically is a chart with various columns where one can place questions and comments and team members can respond, vote and so on.

For this Wrap-up Event we prepared 4 column headings related to questions about the project and study as follows:

- ✚ Ideas, comments inspired by the project and the study?
- ✚ Cross-innovation will be one of the priorities of the NDPC strategy 2021–2024. What type of interventions should it undertake?
- ✚ Stakeholders at whom to address the study? List them below. Events or discussion forums where these findings could be useful?
- ✚ Want to stay in touch with everyone here? Leave your email address, organisation, country and your focus of interest to reach out + Future events of interest to everyone.

What then happened when we reached this stage of the event was that everyone simultaneously could respond to the questions.

This very simple approach produced a lot of feedback in a democratic way as everybody had a chance to express their perspectives, opinions and wishes simultaneously which would otherwise have been impossible with seventy participants. Because there were so many responses the project team focused on a representative selection and gave their answers or comments with a promise that those that were not able to be covered in the time available would receive an email response later.

The purpose of the fourth question was two-fold. First to further consolidate the CCI cross-sectoral collaboration network the project had created and secondly to encourage this group to engage with NDPC in the future if they were not already in active contact.

## 10. **NDPC Strategy 2021-2024**

The project confirmed that there is great future potential in CCI cross-sectoral collaboration and innovation which will be even more important than in the pre-COVID-19 period because there will be a need for many CCIs to find new business models, income sources and funding streams. It is therefore appropriate that CCI cross-sectoral collaboration should be at the heart of the NDPC's 2021–2024 Strategy. With its new EUNIC funding which will help strengthen its staff base and fund targeted interventions, the project concluded through the policy brief activities that in terms of NDPC's 2021–2024 Strategy, the two most promising areas of particular relevance are firstly CCIs and the Health and Well-Being agenda working in partnership with the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS). The second area is being active in promoting and developing the cross-sectoral innovation potential of Serious Games and gamification.

