f

ekip Policy Lab #4

Crafts-led Innovation

Scoping Paper

Contributors:
Elisa Kraatari, Humak University of Applied Sciences
Lena Holmberg, Lund University
Carlo Vuijlsteke, IDEA Consult
Tille Peters, IDEA Consult
Isabelle De Voldere, IDEA Consult
Lennart Stoy, Technopolis Group

Contents

1 Short introduction

This scoping document offers a look into the contemporary status of craft as a sector and a field of artisan practice in Europe. Composed as part of the ekip project, the document focuses on the interrelation between craft and innovation and policies respectively while acknowledging craft as a subsector of Cultural and Creative Industries CCIs and a sector in its own right, connected with several other policy sectors such as trade and industry policies, cultural, and education policies.

The document studies the current policy landscape especially for *crafts-led innovation*, delivering a policy vision for strengthened opportunities for actors of the craft sector to actively participate in CCI and open innovation ecosystems and also instigate innovation processes together with other sectors and fields of activity. To achieve such a goal the document starts from recognizing and articulating main policy problems and challenges.

2 Policy Problem

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.

The key policy problem regarding the crafts sector and possibilities to crafts-led innovation are the **out-dated attitudes and perceptions about craftwork and craft cultures** and how those translate in the ways craft is heard, understood, and located in both cultural and innovation policy development at large. **Craft and its roles in and for innovation need to be better recognised in and through public policies and in CCI policymaking**.

Despite the recent rise in the popularity of craft-practices (Hackney et al. 2022; Jakob & Thomas 2017), common understandings about craft and craft skills may still largely build on mindsets about developments in industrialisation, technological advancement, and mass consumption that would largely build on visions about unlimited financial growth, consumption, and exploitation of nature (cf. Greenhalgh 1997, 40–41; Forty 1986 [2005], 11–28; Adamson 2013). Within this kind of viewpoint, crafts and craft skills would tend to be measured and reviewed against e.g. production efficiency, labour intensity, use of materials, and level of digitalisation. Accordingly, craft products, practices, and/or skills have often been slighted as slow, manual skills demanding, labour-intense, small batch, uneven or unstandardized, un- or non-automatic, and non-digital.

Recently, the complexity of the concept of craft has been discussed in the HEPHAESTUS[1], an EU Horizon project building future for craft, listing factors such as "the difficulty of framing craft in one specific sector" and the "complex and evolving policymaking context" contributing to the difficulty of the concept (Gasparin et al., 2024, 21). It was also noticed that the lack of "a univocal definition of craft" might ensue challenges especially for "academia and policymaking" as it

[1] https://hephaestuscraft.eu/

makes it harder "to understand its relationship" with other sectors and to "develop effective strategies" for it. While it is not exceptional that a phenomenon of the lived world would not match well with the schemes and logics of policymaking, it is applaudable that the HEPHAESTUS came up with a three-point approach to craft that acknowledges the importance of achieving better understanding of the complexity of the concept but also offers the following "working definition of craft":

Craft as the form of manufacturing – from Latin: manus (hand) and facere (making) - in which the components of manual work, mastering of tools and technique, knowledge of the materials meet with an intentional symbolic value, and become an object. This ranges from individual productions in small ateliers to component productions in larger manufacturing processes. (Gasparin et al. 2024, 22–23.)

For some reason the definition appears to omit the person in the making process and rather illustrates a passive "coming of an object" without the participation of a human mind and human skills. Indeed, while mechanisation, automation and digitalisation have been increasingly applied especially in high-end and highly skilled craftwork, the idea of deleting the "hand-made" part of craft has repeatedly been served as an "innovation" to several craft-practices. At the same time, in contemporary industry or innovation policy strategies, craft as a sector is hardly recognised or singled out. Rather, the informed reader would conclude that expressions Creative Industries (CI) or Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) also cover diverse craft-practices. (See e.g. Scotland's National Innovation Strategy 2023; Building a stronger Single Market 2021) .

The industrialism-oriented approach to "develop" craft-practices into something else (mechanised, automated, digitized) jeopardizes losing the elementally innovative ontology that many craft-practices hold within. As a reaction, increasing attention has been paid to *poiesis*-intensive innovation that, among other things, appreciates interaction between human and non-human and material elements and being exposed to and tolerating unknown through experimentation and play (Coeckelbergh 2018; Grasseni 2023). Here, **the approach of a crafter along with craft methods and skills can prove to be invaluable for achieving new insights about innovation as open, interactive and multimodal processes.**

From this arises also the question how to better include and involve and to incite different craft actors (crafters, educators, curators and managers, promoters and interest advocators) to participate in innovation ecosystems and processes.

Material innovation in crafts – the application of ishi-haze by Takuro Kuwatas

The Japanese artist Takuro Kuwata, develops material innovation processes by experimenting with ancient production methods. His practice is rooted in Japanese crafts techniques. By the application of ishi-haze to facilitate semi-controlled explosions of stones in clay or kairagi to create imperfections within the glaze, he creates bursting stones and broken glases, acting as methaphors for erupting volcanoes and earthquakes.

Source picture: Nathan Mullis

2.1 Definition

In general, the definition of 'craft' as a concept, just like the concept of 'work', can take many forms depending to the context, in which it is used. Craft, translating as diverse craft cultures, traditional / heritage craft skills and traditional craftmanship, artistic crafts and artistic craftmanship, professional craftmanship and amateur crafting, takes innumerable forms, both contemporarily and historically.

While craft activities are universal as inherent to humans with opposable, long thumbs, craft is also highly culture-dependent up to the concepts referring to it that are used in different languages that may accordingly hold various cultural historically intense etymological backgrounds. All in all, **definitions of craft are transient, temporal, and bound to surrounding societies and cultural contexts**. This was also pointed out in the recent project deliverable of the *Tracks4Crafts* project which finds that "the notion of crafts and the availability of data in each European country varies hugely. Historical processes, social changes, institutions, political measures and economic structures have influenced the development of craft sectors at the national level." (Cominelli & Vecchio 2024, 15). Indeed, the age-old roles that craft have in and for human civilizations and societies may help to understand the difficulties in defining craft in contemporary societies, in which several craft-practices are being continued among the numerous parallel developments involving industrial, mechanical, technological, and digital development processes, to name a few.

In contemporary Europe, a recent defining initiative is the international Charter of Artistic Craftmanship that was started in 2008. In addition to giving the fundamental definition to 'creative craftmanship' based on the age-old history of craft-practices, the Charter covers key values that 'artistic craftmanship' contains, namely the economic, cultural, and social values. In addition, the Charter articulates that "The sectors of traditional and artistic workmanship and their respective activities are defined in accordance with the European classification of economic activities, NACE rev.2 published in the Journal Officiel of 20th December 2006. " The point refers to the Regulation (EC) No 1893/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 that was published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* on 30 December 2006 that establishes the statistical classification of economic activities NACE Revision 2. The reference to the NACE classification (*Nomenclature statistique des activités économiques dans la Communauté européenne*) is noteworthy, because it directly positions craft-practices in the context of contemporary policymaking and development especially at the EU level. It is also an outspoken goal of the Charter to do so. Along with the key definitions, the document includes a section for *Proposals Towards a European political course for Artistic Handicraft* that appear as policy goals detailing that "Political, strategic and action lines must therefore be defined at European and international level, specially conceived for supporting, protecting, enhancing and promoting the artistic handicraft sector".

Among these proposals, the Charter claims that (point 3, *Research and Innovation*) "a new concept of innovation should be defined, that is compatible with the dimensions and characteristics of artistic craft companies. Alongside the classic innovation regarding the product or technology, this new concept involves innovation of the cognitive and organisational processes required to create innovation that is lasting and not sporadic." (The International Charter [2017].)

This defining step is interesting especially from the perspective of the ekip project. Considering the definition of craft in this project and in the context of policy development in and for the cultural and creative industries, **craft is here understood as part of the CCIs acknowledging**

the diversity of craft cultures and practices and that crafts contain practices and skills that hold value and potential for innovation processes. For creating a CCI-led innovation policy platform, aspirations to "redefining craft around innovation" is considered important to better understand the relevance of contemporary craft sector for contemporary economy and policy developments (see Jakob & Thomas 2017, 498).

2.2 Short history

In the heyday of industrialisation (stretching well into the 21st century and still on-going) craft or manual skills intensive work has been likely to translate as a problem in industry or national economy policies, as something that should be tamed and solved. The background for the marginal and diluted value of craft in current policy in most if not all European countries lies in the historical longue durée of work, production, and economic thinking in Europe since, at least, the 18th century.

Despite this on-going marginalisation throughout the 20th and the early 21st centuries, craft has maintained some political relevance in employment and industrial policies. Still, the intertwined cognitive and manual processes involved in craftwork have been valued mostly among crafters, pedagogists, and, more recently, brain researchers (Huotilainen et al 2018; Hartzell et al 2021).

Through the more process-oriented perceptions about craft and craft culture, the topic has been present in educational, cultural heritage, and cultural policies. For example, in Sweden and Finland, craft (*sloyd* or *slöjd*) continues to be an obligatory subject of study in children and young people's basic education. The emergence of Cultural and Creative Industries as a field of policymaking since the late 20th century has paved way also for craft culture and craftwork as relevant and more or less acknowledged parts of the field. This, however, has also influenced the ways how craftwork and craft culture are framed in respective policies.

2.3 Challenges & opportunities

The project Crafting Europe, (2019–2022) delivered an overview analysis, "The Craftsmanship sector in Europe" (2022). The study clearly 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 policymaking. As part of the project results reporting, the table below shows opportunities and threats in the craft sector in Europe (Crafting Europe, the Craftsmanship Sector in Europe 2022, 78).

Opportunities	Threats
Good image and growing demand for European craft products abroad.	Long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic: Contraction of demand within a context of a significant increase in raw material prices.
Increased interest in purchasing innovative and quality craft products.	A notable increase in raw material costs.
Potential for growth in the demand for artisanal products by the restaurant and hotel industry.	The technological gap in the use of virtual tools, which limits the use of the online sales channel, more effective promotion, and more efficient management of suppliers.

Greater integration with the tourism Sector. Possibilities for diversification of handicraft activity through offering complementary services such as courses or learning experiences.	The high weight of contributions to social security systems: health care, unemployment insurance, pensions, etc.
Development of craftsmanship through new ways of working: incorporation of technology, collaborative spaces, flexibility, and shared workstations.	Financial and liquidity problems due to the decrease in demand.
	Lack of financial and organisational support from public administrations.

Table 1: Opportunities and threats in the craft sector. Crafting Europe, the Craftsmanship Sector in Europe 2022, 78.

While these results give an overview of various opportunities and threats in the craft sector and do not focus on crafts-led innovation as such, they nevertheless can be seen as advisory for mapping down challenges and opportunities also for this end.

Open innovation through making

To break down the major policy problem into more nuanced issues, the ways how craft-practices are seen and understood should be reconsidered. Here, the already established fields of craft-related research can contribute with both theoretical and practice-based outcomes. For example, Coeckelbergh (2018) offers a philosophical grounding to knowing, making, and innovation, building a bridge between the notions of *techne* and *poiesis*. According to him, understanding technological innovation "as a poetic, participative, and performative process" would allow apprehending the connection between technological innovation and artistic practices "not as a marginal or luxury project but instead as one that is central, necessary, and vital for cultural-technological change." Such conceptualisation would not only support "a different approach to innovation but has also social-transformative potential and implications for ethics of technology and responsible innovation."

Similar tones can be found in Grasseni (2023) with special attention to 'futuring' craft-practices. Grasseni (2023, 2) recognises the attitude of "associating craft and skilling with heritage and the past tout court" and points out that the relevance of craft and skills to future-making is hardly noticed while conventional "R&D envisage and invest on enviro-tech systems apparently devoid of skills, bodies, and learning". Instead, Grasseni focusses on 'futuring' craft-practices, "skilled practice that expresses an intrinsic vision of making futures through what is being produced". With examples of craft and skills related to fromagerie and gardening she highlights that both involve appreciation of non-human forms of life and that the 'multispecies perspectives' are intrinsically tied to the how-to, the craft and skill: "Growing, weeding, salting, scrubbing and ripening, entail material skills" (Grasseni 2023, 3).

The craft industry, particularly in sectors like textiles and material fabrications, has been identified as an area where open innovation can thrive (Li, 2023, Raya et al., 2021, Trilsbeck et al., 2019). Craft entrepreneurs often display high levels of creativity, innovativeness, and openness to new approaches, which are key enablers of open innovation (Hoyte, 2018). Opportunities to make the most of low-tech approaches while adopting novel technologies to adapt to changing

needs abound. Two examples here include 3D printing clay to create artificial reefs (Trilsbeck et al., 2019) and using textiles to create robot skins that can feel (O'Sullivan, 2024).

Gauntlett's *Making is Connecting* (2018) highlights the inherent value of the making process itself, rather than just the final product, emphasizing the networked power of creativity. Gauntlett argues that:

- Making is connecting because you have to connect things together (materials, ideas, or both) to make something new;
- Making is connecting because acts of creativity usually involve, at some point, a social dimension and connect us with other people;
- And making is connecting because through making things and sharing them in the world, we increase our engagement and connection with our social and physical environments (18.)

This usefully situates the **role of making within open innovation ecosystems as the means by which novel ideas, processes and products are created**, through an inherently collaborative and social process: networks of ideas, materials and skills that result in new things.

Make-A-Thek

Modular Library Makerspaces for Heritage Crafts Innovation and Digitization reimagines public libraries as inclusive and accessible innovation hubs by incorporating modular makerspaces. These spaces will equip communities with the tools and resources needed to explore circular approaches to fashion and crafts. This Horizon project fosters co-creation by blending traditional heritage crafts with digital fabrication technologies, promoting both sustainability and cultural preservation. Aligned with the principles of the New European Bauhaus (NEB)—sustainability, inclusion, and aesthetics—Make-a-thek transforms libraries into collaborative spaces where people from diverse backgrounds develop creative solutions for greener living and the transition to a circular economy.

Source picture: Nathan Mullis

Low-tech crafts and innovation

At the level of everyday experience, 'low-tech' is considered as a technique, technology or method that is either considered "old" or prevalent, as something already known, or as technically simple, sometimes simply as opposite to 'high-tech' (referring to e.g. computers, micro-chips, digital and web-based devices and applications, and complex materials). Dependence to the surrounding techno-cultural context and development is essential to how a 'high-tech' solution of an era may solidify into a 'low-tech' as the cases of, for example, the bicycle and the land-line telephone illustrate.

However, a contemporary, early 21st century reading of 'low-tech' is more future-oriented and involves philosophical, environmental, and social aspects. These may include values or principles such as sustainability thinking or principles of practice or accessibility. Based on such values also perspectives to innovation may appear as more diverse. A low-tech mindset, according to Kris De Decker (s.a.), "refuses to assume that a new technology is inherently better

than the one it replaces. A low-tech approach also questions the criteria which make us decide whether or not something is 'better' than something else."

Through the critical look into what is considered a better technology, an improvement, or indeed as an innovation, the low-tech perspective has raised more and more interest around the world. At the same time, it has, for example, brought growing attention to the increasing dependence of many technological appliances to consistent electricity supply and production and expensive, rare and/or environmentally harmful ores.

According to the Low-Tech Lab (What Are Low-Techs, s.a.), low-tech refers to "objects, systems, techniques, services, know-hows, practices, behaviours, and even ways of thinking that use technique and technology according to three principles", namely usefulness, accessibility, and sustainability.

This means that **the low-tech approach can well be highly innovative while emphasizing values such as social equality, psycho-social quality of life and environmentally sound solutions** instead of digital-technological advancement or financial growth per se. For example, according to the Low-tech Lab, the principle of accessibility reflects that "a low-tech must be one that as many people as possible can make their own – both technologically and financially. As such, you must be able to make it and/or repair it locally, so its functioning principles must be simple to understand, and its costs adapted to a large part of the population." (What Are Low-Techs, s.a.)

In this way, the low-tech approach and perspective grow closer to manual and especially craft skills. This may well include heritage craft skills but is by no means limited to the production of heritage craft objects. Rather, the possibilities of heritage craft skills are reviewed against contemporary problems, challenges, and needs. Thus, when the mastering of craft skills is combined with e.g. technical and social imagination and the values and ambitions of sustainable development it may well ensue innovations that are accessible to more people and that respond to essential needs and problems even in circumstances of limited access to energy, electricity, or other infrastructure.

Activating pedagogy for Ceramic Education Futures

Across Europe, expert ceramic knowledge is dispersed—found in universities, research centers, museums, and specialized industry hubs like Delft, Faenza, Stoke-on-Trent, and Selb. Ceramics departments are sustained by small, dedicated groups of experts who preserve centuries-old traditions. However, they rely on attracting students while heritage manufacturers struggle to maintain traditional craftsmanship, often depending on cultural tourism as their primary revenue source.

The CRAFT initiative was designed to support the retention and transmission of ceramic knowledge. It achieved this by mapping intangible ceramic expertise, developing innovative pedagogical methods through teaching cards enriched with multimedia resources and instructional materials, and creating an open-access online knowledge repository. Additionally, CRAFT facilitated three short-term joint staff training workshops (C1–C3) to equip ceramic educators with cutting-edge teaching methodologies.

At the core of the project is Decoding Ceramics—a comprehensive knowledge and skills repository. This groundbreaking online platform integrates mapped knowledge and pedagogical resources, making ceramic education more accessible than ever before. It stands as the first open-access initiative of its kind within the crafts sector.

Source Picture: Decoding Ceramics

Policy challenges

Following a probing into scholarly article publications on the topics of craft and innovation, it appears that attention to the interconnections between the two continues to be on the rise, especially when innovation is motivated by other factors than purely business-led interests. These may include the social and ecological aspects of sustainable development and mitigating the various consequences of climate change. As a result, the following points should be considered.

- Since the rise and increasing development of CCI policies, craft as a sector or a category has been more often included into definition of CCIs and CCSIs. However, still within **the creative industries, creative industries policies and creative economies frameworks, craft tends to remain in marginal roles, which reflects in respective policy documents and academic publications** (Jakob & Thomas 2017, 498).
- Addressing craft in connection to innovation often inflicts the idea of imposing modern technology on traditional craft-practices and thus "making craftwork more innovative". While it is clear that many technical and social inventions and innovations can be beneficially applicable also in various craft-practices, this also underscores **the challenge that craft is objectified as a passive target of (innovation) policy interventions.** This runs the immediate risk of losing the inherent innovation potential that various craft-practices hold.
- Akin to the risk of objectification is the risk of instrumentalising the craft sector and craft cultures through innovation policy rhetoric in ways that would jeopardize the core of craft i.e. the practising of crafts as a modus of making, production, and service. This means **the challenge or risk that especially traditional crafts would *only* be seen as ancillary to innovation** instead of advocating the core practice and development respectively.
- Another challenge may lie in rather rigid practices of innovation that yet would not acknowledge the value of crafts-led actions for open innovation process.. More attention should be paid to how craft, craftwork, craft-practices, craft culture, heritage crafts, etc. are being defined in different contexts. The different aspects of craft (e.g. manual, cognitive, *techne, poiesis*) help to detail, how the topic is approached and framed. In the context of advocating open innovation processes, it would be fruitful to conceptualise craft, for example, through the terms of *techne* and p*oiesis* (instead of as a modus of production) in order to articulate its value for the quintessentially cognitive process that is called "innovation". The craft sector demonstrates unique and innovative solutions that can lead and inspire other industries toward more sustainable and equitable models of production.
- Furthermore, acknowledging the diversity of craft cultures instead of imagining craft sector as a homogenous whole is important. This involves the challenge of maintaining the opportunities to access e.g. open innovation processes for diverse practitioners whose work is of very different scales, speeds, and motivated by different aims and ambitions. This would translate as **the need to value the multiplicity of craft skills within different elements of the creative industries**.

Concrete challenges for the European, national, regional, or local innovation systems are:

- There is a need for policies, financial mechanisms and statistical recognition that will bring benefits both to craft advocating organisations, policy planners and decision makers, but comprehensive data on the exact size and economic impact of the craft sector across Europe, which hampers the development of supportive policies and initiatives.
- It could be helpful to relate the political framing of craft to that of framing sustainable development and climate change mitigation actions. As the calls for climate action or stopping the ecocide (destruction of the environment by humans), also the call for promoting craft culture holds the need to invert and reinvent some of the fundamental rationales that

a lot of current policies have been based upon (for example, unlimited growth, production, and consumption).
- Encouragement from the hierarchically higher levels is indispensable, i.e. the example must be set at the EU level with access to incentives to regional and local levels.

In response to each barrier, also policy recommendations were formulated in this study.

Related to barrier 1:

- Investing in enhanced activity to showcase and publicise the value of, and opportunities for, craft innovation through cross-sector collaboration.
- Brokering and co-ordinating business-to-business collaborations between craft experts and businesses from other sectors, with lead bodies in engineering, technology and manufacturing.
- Ensuring that development of industry strategies on, for example, manufacturing, synthetic biology and additive manufacturing involves makers and materials experts in order to harness the opportunities of cross-sector innovation and fully realise the benefits of new technologies.

Related to barrier 2: Offering innovation vouchers or competitions to facilitate and incentivise business-to-business collaborations between craft and other sectors.

Related to barrier 3:

- Developing the 'fused' education agenda to ensure that all levels of the education system support students to develop their creative, practical talents alongside their scientific, technological and enterprise skills.

Facilitating the collaboration between businesses and other sectors at a local level, potentially through Local Enterprise Partnerships, local authorities and growth hubs.

Policy opportunities

- New perceptions and insights about craft and craft cultures through their roles in open and/or *poiesis*-intensive innovation processes can be achieved. Here, the approach of a crafter along with craft methods and skills can prove to be invaluable for achieving new insights about innovation as open, interactive and multimodal processes.
- Craft production can be re-invented anew in Europe. "New craft" refers to types of work between traditional manufacturing and creative industries. The approach allows to conceive of craft as more innovative and individual than especially "traditional crafts" have often been understood and yet offering a clearly tangible perspective to creative industries. Even as a term, "new craft" is an emerging and developing part of local economies in many European cities, of which the initiative Cities of Making (CoM) is a palpable example.
- Increasing discussions and analysis about the roles and loci of craft within cultural and creative industries and their opening towards innovation, social, and economic and sustainable development policy agendas help to gain new insights about craft in the 21st century and provides a lens through which to explore and negotiate CCI policies in general.

Better factory

As part of the S+T+ARTS initiative, this program offers a structured approach for manufacturing SMEs to collaborate with artists in developing innovative and customized products. Simultaneously, it equips SMEs with the technology needed to evolve into cyber-physical systems, transforming them into Lean-agile production facilities capable of producing both new, personalized items and existing products. Better Factory connects key players from Europe's technology, art, and innovation sectors to establish an integrated innovation framework and a European network to deliver a standardized solution, empowering manufacturing SMEs to design, produce, and build services around new and customized products.

Source picture: De Waag

Policy Statements

In 2019, the European Crafts Alliance undertook a survey to increase understanding about challenges facing the crafts sector in general. The survey results offered the basis for a manifest and action plan *Crafting Europe* that includes the following goals:

- *Recognise the contribution that craft makes to our European society, heritage, culture and economy.*
- *Celebrate this rich creative sector which values the human connection to the world around us and shows the way forward for sustainable development in local economies.*
- *Provide appropriate support and legislation to enable the sector to develop commercially.*
- *Build the future of the sector through appropriate training provision to ensure transmission of skills to young people.*
- *Stimulate every kind of innovation to ensure the evolution of craft.*
- *Raise awareness of the sector in order to promote, preserve and protect European craft heritage that has been passed down through generations.*

3 Policy vision

In her foreword to the 2016 research document *Innovation through Craft: Opportunities for Growth*, Annie Warburton, then creative director of the Crafts Council UK, confirmed that innovation in various craft-practices is nothing new, nor the dissemination of craft-based innovations into and across other fields. At the level of everyday innovation and policy development work such approaches nevertheless remain rather obscure. Back in 2016 Warburton saw that collaborative open innovation had been accelerating over the recent years and pointed to the then UK governments' increasing attention to the creative industries' economic contribution. An important connector between open innovation and creative industries would thus be, according to Warburton, the notion on '*fusion*': "the combination of creative, technological and enterprise mindsets" that is made possible through collaboration

between and across different sectors. However, it appears that a key challenge for increasing the role of crafts in open and cross-sectoral innovation processes lies in the lack of knowledge: "While the Crafts Council has tracked, profiled and driven trends in craft innovation for several years, we know that **with current national statistics it is not possible to reflect the full value of craft**, especially that value generated through collaboration in other sectors. Further research was necessary." (Warburton 2016, 2.)

As commissioned by the Crafts Council, KPMG investigated innovation through craft, "to determine what, if anything, stands in the way of realising its full potential and, on the basis of its research, to identify potential policy actions to help overcome any such barriers." The barriers found through the investigation fell into three broad areas:

- lack of understanding of the value of craft innovation,
- positive externalities and a degree of risk that lead to underinvestment in innovation by individual firms,
- and underinvestment in craft education and skills.

These barriers were addressed with seven recommendations to, for example, support opportunities for cross-sector collaboration, to facilitate and incentivise business-to-business collaborations between craft and other sectors, and to ensure that all levels of the education system support students to develop their creative, practical talents alongside their scientific, technological and enterprise skills (see section 4.1 in this document).

3.1 Objectives

Based on the literature study for this scoping note, a policy vision would visualize as a situation, where:

- The value and opportunities that craft and craft-based practices and processes bear and can contribute to innovation are understood and appreciated especially within the CCI policymaking but also broadly in policy sectors.
- Data and information production and collection about the craft sector and respective activities have been brought to forms that serve the planning and development in the sector in general and as part of CCI and innovation policies especially. Rich and comprehensive data entities also feed to the sound applications of AI at interfaces of craft sector and other sectors of activity.
- The value of investing in craft skills and their transfer through generations is appreciated and investments (in both economic and other forms) have been brought to sound levels.
- The economic, social, and cultural risks and factors that currently incapacitate European craft sector from being vivid and active participant in CCI and open innovation ecosystem, have been recognised, acknowledged and mitigated through implementation of different policy instruments.

The policy vision of the 2016 *Innovation through Craft, Opportunities for Growth* investigation, according to the Crafts Council UK was: "Currently most innovation through craft happens through happy accident. Our vision is to move, via strategically focused investment and the actions identified by KPMG, to an established culture of open innovation and collaboration. The potential rewards are great: improved productivity, development of new products and services, and differentiation of UK output, enabling us to access new global markets and reap both social and economic benefits." (Warburton 2016, 3.).

3.2 Stakeholder needs

Key factors that can even be read as stakeholder needs, a part of case studies in the 2016 investigation into Innovation through Craft: Opportunities for Growth (2016, 5–6):

- **Communication:** Better communication and linkages are needed between sectors to maximise the value of collaboration.
- **Awareness:** Open innovation and collaboration require recognition of the value of craft skills and how their value can be optimised.
- **Awareness and communication:** Dialogue between sectors is needed to access the value from untapped craft talent.
- **Funding:** To add most value, Government funding should be aligned to truly innovative processes.
- **Funding:** In order to achieve valuable innovation breakthroughs, funders of craft innovation need to be open to risk-taking.
- **Skills:** Craft skills bring a different way of thinking and a different way of problem solving, and the approach of craft practitioners to innovation and problem solving is complementary to more technical STEM skills. This can help to generate innovation in new areas.
- **Recognition:** There needs to be greater understanding of the opportunities for collaboration, among both craft practitioners and those in other sectors.
- **Business skills:** Makers need to develop enterprise skills and experience to commercialise ideas.

4 Policy landscape & trend analysis

4.1 Policy context

In addition to the recognised overall problem of innovation strategies, in which the conception of innovation often is rather rigid and narrow in the sense that they typically focus on high-technology and digitality, another challenge for crafts-led innovation can been seen in generic CCI strategies and even in CCI innovation strategies in that they typically leave craft-practices to a marginal role, sometimes as not more than a term in a list of creative activities the notion of CCI is seen to cover. This was successfully phrased in the KPMG study *Innovation through Craft*:

"*Despite evidence of the economic opportunity associated with craft innovation and the positive impacts collaborative, open innovation and cross-sector innovation can deliver, our study suggests that one of the main barriers to this activity taking place is a lack of understanding and appreciation of this value.*" (*Innovation through craft*, 2016, 40).

The key problem, the lack of understanding, or, alternatively, old-world perceptions of craft may also reflect in that the few policy strategies that address craft, do so exclusively. While the new French strategy on craft from May 2023 (*Stratégie nationale en faveur des métiers d'art*) surely is a remarkable achievement in the field of craft policies in Europe, it also makes it easy to perceive the demarcations and separations between different topics and interests for policy development. Innovation policies, CCI policies, and, e.g. craft policies seldom seem to overlap.

This key problem reflects in that the general popularity of craft-practices as pastime activities or the activity of crafts practitioners in promoting practices that apply crafts (such as crafts-led innovation) do not correlate as initiatives at levels of policymaking and policy documents. The interests, visions and conceptions that are shared among crafters, craft connoisseurs and enthusiasts do not easily break into the frameworks of CCI or other fields of policymaking. This

is remarkable especially from a historical perspective, as transnational studies and comparisons that hailed from governmental and administrative levels and that focussed on craft industries hardly are a new phenomenon (Kraatari 2016, 133–148). Truly, the need for organised action, well-articulated policy changes, and advocacy work calls for revitalisation and re-definition of craft policies in contemporary contexts and frameworks of policy development.

Policy and R&I landscape analysis

Among other goals, the HEPHAESTUS project set out to study and describe current European policies on craft but came to notice rather the absence of such policies, and, against this finding, pointed out the risks of consequences that the lack of policies might have: "The absence of policies that promote the protection and reproduction of the unique skills and know-how that characterize the craft industry exposes the whole industry to the loss of competencies and talents that are almost impossible to replace, especially in niche production and traditional or artistic crafts." (Gasparin et al., 2024, 7; 17.) This is a highly relevant conclusion as it articulates the astounding policy gap of nonexistence of policies that would address specifically crafts. However, in the very recent years, more policy documents, development projects and overview studies on the craft sector have increasingly emerged. In the following is collected some recent initiatives that vary from national policies and studies to policy recommendations produced through EU and other projects.

French national strategy on crafts (2023)

The shortage of European craft policies finds some compensation through the recent French strategy on craft (SNMA, *Stratégie nationale en faveur des métiers d'art*, 2023). This is a joint effort between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Economy of France that channelled 340 million euros to support and promote the crafts sector in France over a three-year period, 2023–25. With the vision to restructure the crafts sector by 2025, the SNMA aimed to cooperate with various organizations and institutions, including the National Institute of Crafts (Institut National des Métiers d'Art), 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 fostering new synergies between public and private actors, the strategy aimed to provide the sector with the necessary means and capabilities to achieve real structural development.

The SNMA was built upon five main pillars, each addressing a specific aspect of the crafts sector. The five main pillars were listed as:

- Axis 1: Promoting Crafts among the Young
- Axis 2: Training and Transmitting Excellence in Crafts
- Axis 3: Anchoring Crafts at the Heart of Regions
- Axis 4: Supporting Research, Innovation, and Creation
- Axis 5: Developing Crafts Internationally

Through Axis 4, the SNMA addressed the aspect of supporting research and innovation in the crafts sector with four measures. First, by guiding actors of the sector to **better find innovation support** in their regions. This would answer the need to see more crafts professionals among the applicants for various existing innovation support and funding schemes. Secondly, the

strategy called **developing applied research for the crafts sector**. That the SNMA pays attention also the cultural heritage value of crafts is apparent in the measure for **preserving endangered craft professions through the digitization of techniques** and sees as an opportunity the creation of a digital archive of techniques that would collect and conserve endangered skills by digitizing traditional methods and techniques. Lastly, the SNMA recognises the role of the **craft sector in driving the ecological transition**, although the emphasis is strongly on supporting the changes needed in various craft-practices so that those would, for example, consume less energy and engage in principles of circular economy. In general, it would be apparent that the SNMA document does not recognise or phrase the opportunities of crafts-led innovation as such. (SNMA 2023, 32–34.)

In addition to this, the third axis of the SNMA with the focus on crafts at the regional level is especially noteworthy, considering the opportunity to strengthen links between craft policies, CCI policies, and general regional development policies and there, as part of European cohesion policies. the Smart Specialisation programme. The SNMA looked forward to supporting local craftmanship ecosystems with three million euros to open ten new craft hubs (*manufactures de proximité*). (SNMA 2023, 25). Furthermore, the strategy highlighted the need to develop crafts tourism and to strengthen the use of *EPV* (*Entreprise du Patrimoine Vivant*) label, a sign that craft entrepreneurs can apply for to be distinguished as practising living cultural heritage, a conception connected to the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Moreover, the strategy makes notice of the developing of the European label for Geographical Indications. (SNMA 2023, 24–31.)

Geographical indications for craft and industrial products in the EU

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. Adopted on 18 October 2023, this regulation extends intellectual property protection to non-agricultural products by linking them to their geographical origin, ensuring they retain their distinctive qualities, reputation, and authenticity. By creating a unified EU title, the regulation prevents the misuse of GI-protected names for similar products produced outside the designated geographical area, helping to combat counterfeiting both online and offline. Additionally, it facilitates international recognition of EU GIs and allows non-EU producers to apply for protection if they meet EU requirements. 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.

A study on craftmanship in the Netherlands and its innovative power (2021)

At the request of the Netherlands' Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (OCW), the study "The Innovative Power of Crafts, Craftsmanship, and Design" (2021) was conducted in autumn 2021, to ensure a meaningful and well-supported allocation of funds made available to strengthen the innovative capacity of the craft sector. At the core of this study was a series of dialogue sessions with stakeholders from the sector: craftsmen, designers, museum directors, vocational trainers, fund representatives, civil servants, and industry representatives were called to discussions about opportunities and challenges in the sector.

The document delivered recommendations to support the crafts sector. Of these, especially recommendation 3 focussed on crafts-led innovation: "leveraging the innovative power of crafts more effectively by fostering sustainable collaborations". The recommendation underscores the

opportunities the collaboration with artists; companies; educational institutions; regional and local administrations; and with other countries could engender. All in all, to better harness the innovative power of crafts, it is seen as necessary to structurally foster collaboration between crafts and other sectors, both domestically and internationally. It is also pointed out that these collaborations could offer opportunities for more work and new possibilities.

The study pointed out that previous collaborations between craftsmen and, for example, designers, companies, museums, and educational institutions have taken place. However, many collaborations have fallen short of potential and have often been temporary in nature. Whereas this is a loss for the crafts themselves, it would be so also for the society. The study further adds that addressing various societal issues, such as climate change and the housing crisis, crafts could make a valuable contribution to solutions. For example, sustainable design, local production, and material reuse are age-old principles of crafts that are now being applied in contemporary solutions by designers and manufacturing companies.

"Crafting Europe" (2019)

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'. 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 policymaking.

In summing its results, the study gives well-structured recommendations both for crafters, interest organisations, and policy makers alike:

"Based on the results obtained and the context in which the sector operates, it is possible to suggest some recommendations, which will have to be nuanced according to the context of each market:

- In this sense, it is important to emphasized that the sector as a whole, represented both by the associations and by the artisans themselves, must make a firm commitment to the development of technological tools, not only those that can be integrated into the production processes, but also those that are aimed at better integrating artisans with their potential clients.
- Associations should make a greater effort to create spaces for convergences between traditional and new artisans, in order to generate synergies and enhance the benefits of intergenerational transfer.
- The sector must make efforts to project its activity towards international markets, not only in the European sphere, but also beyond Europe. The key to this will be the strengthening of the associations and the creation of spaces in which collaboration will allow the development of economies of scope and scale in this sense.
- In accordance with the above, it is essential to strengthen the sectors' institutional structures within the European framework. This will increase the chances of success in negotiations with the European administration and will provide a firmer basis for promoting initiatives to expand business opportunities.
- It is essential that the public administrations, at all levels, commit themselves with the development of the artisanal sector, not only due to its importance in the productive

context of their respective countries, but also because of the cultural and social connotations that characterize it and differentiate it from other economic sectors.

- A key aspect to be addressed by the governments is the fiscal and legal condition of the artisan, which will not only provide labor stability, both during the working life as well as from the moment retirement starts, but will also encourage the incorporation of new artisans, making their activity more robust in aggregate terms. It is a matter of creating the conditions for a sector as special as the artisan to gain muscle in a changing and increasingly competitive environment.
- It is important that the sector, through its associations, develop a systematic activity of collecting and analyzing information on craft activity. This will enable the sector to gain visibility in the eyes of the administrations, while creating a framework for citizens and potential customers to have a clearer and deeper understanding of what artisanship represents. In this sense, a great contribution would be the creation of common communication strategies, both at national and European level."

"Innovation through Craft: Opportunities for Growth" (2016)

The study commissioned by the UK Craft Council offers an interesting response from the crafts perspective to collaborative open innovation and an introduction into the roles craft can have in innovation. The study built on a survey and case studies that also involved interviews. This brought to conclusions that innovation and collaboration that involves craft could be beneficial not only for craft practitioners but to other industries. The study emphasises the importance of awareness raising about the value of collaboration with the crafts sector in innovation: "Raising awareness of the opportunities for physical-meets-digital in the context of the evolving industrial landscape is likely to garner more interest in collaboration craft and industry and enhance the mutual understanding of opportunities that can be unlocked by bringing together the different skill sets." (*Innovation through craft* 2016, 40.)

The document delivered suggestions to actions that were grouped to three main areas. Regarding the first area, awareness raising, the following four actions were presented:

- **Action 1**
  Investing in enhanced activity to showcase and publicise the value of, and opportunities for, craft innovation through cross-sector collaboration. [...]
- **Action 2**
  Brokering and co-ordinating business-to-business collaborations between craft experts and businesses from other sectors, with lead bodies in engineering, technology and manufacturing working together with [public interests and intermediary bodies].
- **Action 3**
  Ensuring that development of industry strategies [...] for example, manufacturing, synthetic biology and additive manufacturing involves makers and materials experts in order to harness the opportunities of cross-sector innovation and fully realise the benefits of new technologies.
- **Action 4**
  Developing the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as network hubs for driving innovation and collaboration between craft and industry, with encouragement and support from RCUK and through craft-focused creative economy research and knowledge exchange schemes [...].

Action 5 focussed on the need of financial support, as the study notes that the craft sector faces particular challenges in achieving funding for innovation and applications of craft wider in industries. Therefore, "Providing incentives, potentially in the for of innovation vouchers, would help to offset some of the risk involved and encourage greater take-up of activities tp stimulate new innovation spillovers from craft into other industries" (ibid., 41).

- **Action 5**
  Offering innovation vouchers or competitions to facilitate and incentivise business-to-business collaborations between craft and other sectors. Such schemes [...] would be expected to add most value if accessible to the small and micro-enterprises that can drive innovation.

Finally, the document draw attention to skills improvement in a way that invokes association of the intertwined nature of the economic and cultural sustainability of craft cultures as it is noted that the "future pipeline of people with craft skills is fundamental" not only for the cultural and technical continuation of craft and craft-based innovation, but also for the economic values that build upon those. However, craft skills benefit from other skills including e.g. different business skills, communication skills, and skills in digital technologies. The study indeed suggests that "the greatest economic value is to be achieved when different skillsets are fused together" (ibid., 42).

- **Action 6**
  Developing the 'fused' education agenda to ensure that all levels of the education system support students to develop their creative, practical talents alongside their scientific, technological and enterprise skills. [...] encouraging greater cross-pollination between the arts, sciences and business at university level.
- **Action 7**
  Facilitating the collaboration between businesses and other sectors at a local level, potentially through Local Enterprise Partnerships, local authorities and growth hubs, with support [...] to ensure business support, training, advice and mentoring is fit for purpose.

RICHES – Renewal, Innovation and Change – Heritage and European Society (2013–2016)

RICHES was a project co-funded by the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration, "Bringing cultural heritage and people together in a changing Europe and finding new ways of engaging with heritage in a digital world. "

The research conducted in the RICHES project framework showed that in the process of shifting towards knowledge-based economies, established, traditional knowledge is relevant and can coexist productively with new knowledge. It was seen that rather than undermining its status, digital technology and the maker movement has served to reposition craft in the economy and contribute to increasing the value of craft products.

To widen the scope of these positive impacts, a series of recommendations were provided for three key aims, on 1) craft as a sector, 2) the makers, and 3) craft skills:

- Key aim 1: (Re)position craft as an independent sector of the creative economy and build synergies with other cultural and economic sectors.

    - 1.2. "Position craft beyond the maker and workshop-based paradigm as a stepping stone to widening craft influence and interventions in manifold economic domains, from fashion and design to tourism and architecture."
- Key aim 2: Strengthen the position of makers in the creative economy, with a focus on supporting individual and collective business models and capitalising on the potential of localities with a strong craft tradition.
- Key aim 3: Encourage the transmission, recognition and accreditation of craft knowledge and skills gained through various formal, informal and non-formal learning approaches.
    - 3.1. "Encourage links between informal educational organisations (e.g. Fab Labs, museums), the formal education sector and appropriate industry sectors, to identify in-demand skills and changes in skills, and balance the educational offer in response to job market potentials and requirements."

Examples of ongoing R&I projects and networks

The crafts-led approach to innovation appears as relevantly new and as invert to the more common approach of delivering especially technological and digital innovation into craft-practices. Whereas of the latter, the more common approach, there are several examples especially at the level of various development projects, there are not that many examples of current policy measures on promoting crafts-led innovation. However, some of the previous and on-going projects can be seen as measures that induce also crafts-led innovation approaches.

Ongoing European projects

Tracks for Crafts

Tracks4Crafts (co-funded by the European Union) focuses on the transmission of Traditional Crafts Knowledge (TCK) to advocate the societal and economic value of crafts. The project pays special attention to learning within collaborative physical spaces such as fab labs and maker spaces that invite craftspeople to engage in knowledge exchange, making also use of digital technologies in the processes. Tracks4Crafts fosters networks that promote the significance of TCK within broader economic and societal contexts, such as through the CHARTER alliance.

The project builds on experimental research in eight craft ecosystems, where new learning processes are tested. They also explore the potential of technology in sharing TCK as open-source knowledge, thus more accessible and adaptable.

HEPHAESTUS

The Horizon Europe project HEPHAESTUS aims to research, preserve, and simultaneously innovate the craft sector to foster a cutting-edge, creative, and sustainable, technology-driven economy rooted in cultural heritage. The project sees that integrating traditional craft techniques with digital technologies can open new dimensions foo e.g. restoration while expanding opportunities for innovation in business models and product development. HEPHAESTUS aims to stimulate new markets and new entrepreneurial frameworks, along with interdisciplinary collaborations between crafts and the cultural and creative industries hoping to

influence craft ecosystems across Europe. The project brings together diverse actors including heritage sites, cultural institutions, policymakers, businesses, and further stakeholders.

Craeft

The Horizon Europe project Craeft seeks to deepen understanding of craft making activities underlining how the processes involve care, judgment, and dexterity. The project builds on anthropology, knowledge representation, cognitive science, art history, advanced digitization, audiovisual and haptic immersivity, and computational intelligence. With the interdisciplinary approach, the project hopes to seize "the multifaceted nature of crafts as living and evolving heritage, a sustainable economic activity, and a medium of intellectual and artistic expression" . The project also involves digitisation of craft-practices.

Craeft aims to advocate craft education and training and brings to fore different digital tools, including craft-specific simulators and immersive technologies. This approach allows "embedding haptic intelligence into digital design processes" and in this way the project hopes to connect "tacit knowledge with computer-aided craft-specific design tools".

Craeft community

The aim of this online platform, initiated by Mad in Europe is to invite crafts professionals and associations, policymakers, educators, economists, consumers and young people to share their experiences, best practices and recommendations to build a comprehensive picture of the crafts sector, including its obstacles and opportunities that support both product-based ans service-oriented traditions.

Source picture: Craeft

MOSAIC

The project MOSAIC – Mastering job-oriented skills in arts & crafts thanks to inclusive centres of vocational excellence (Erasmus+ funded) aims to advocate up-to-date education and training in arts and crafts that and that responds better collaboration needs between companies and VET (Vocational Education and Training) centres and to strengthen internationalisation and the up-take of digital methodologies and tools in VET. In its research activities, the project focussed, for example, on the potential of social and cultural innovation that arts and crafts hold but that has largely remained untapped and therefore explored, how arts and crafts could better respond the emerging societal needs and changes.

Cities of Making

Cities of Making (CoM) is a research project (funded by JPI Urban Europe) that explores the future of urban based manufacturing in European cities. The project focuses on the consequences of offshoring on European cities and how those are confronted simulatenously by different phenomena, such as changes in the employment marketembrace of new technologies and adjustments following from this in industries. It is seen that "urban centres play an important role

in nurturing new forms of green urban manufacturing, based on a clean, knowledge- and labour-intensive manufacturing sector".

The project has ran experiments in London, Rotterdam and Brussels with a combination of strategic and action research. We've learnt from experiences in London, Rotterdam and Brussels. The project developed typologies, practices, and policies focusing especially on public and private stakeholders to bring "new life into their manufacturing communities".

DigiSTEAM

DigiSTEAM is an academic research project, led by the University of Helsinki and the University of Eastern Finland, which explores the role and potential of crafts in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) education and teacher training. The project aims to integrate craft-based learning within the broader STEAM framework, emphasizing its capacity to enhance creativity, problem-solving, and hands-on skills. By focusing on the intersection of craft and digital learning, DigiSTEAM seeks to foster a more inclusive and equitable approach to education, promoting diverse learning methods that cater to a wide range of students and teachers.

INTERCRAFT

The INTERCRAFT project, an Erasmus+ KA2 Cooperation Partnership, aims to to foster social inclusion of individuals from migratory backgrounds in the local communities. The project promotes a structured exchange between young migrants, social workers, and local craftsmen, and aims to establish "a new model of shared value that enhances cultural and professional collaboration among these groups". Through innovative education methods the project seeks to foster the links between the skills the individuals already have with local industries, also improving mutual knowledge exchange and prospects for employment.

Related networks

European Craft Alliance

The European Crafts Alliance (ECA) is a well-established network with nearly 40 member organisations from over 20 European countries. The members consist of various national, regional, local, and sector specific craft organisations. The alliance aims to foster collaboration among its members, and offers opportunities for co-creation, knowledge exchange, skill development, and innovation within the craft sector. The ECA is a non-profit organization "committed to promoting knowledge sharing, growth, preservation, and the valorization of crafts" holding the recognition that "crafts are an essential part of society, embedded in education, the economy, cultural heritage, and sustainable development". Together with its member organisations, the alliance advocates "the importance of crafts as a fundamental aspect of cultural, social, and economic well-being". The organisation participates in international cooperation programs and engages with policymakers at international, political, and administrative levels. The European Craft Alliance is co-funded by the EU

The World Crafts Council – Europe

The WCC Europe aims to strengthen the status of crafts in European societies as a vital part of their cultural and economic life and support networking among the craftspeople. The objective is to increase awareness and appreciation of crafts and traditional craftsmanship at every level of society.

Crafting Europe

The CraftingEurope project, supported by Creative Europe, holds series of training initiatives to strengthen the capacity of the crafts sector across Europe. The project aims to equip craft professionals with skills needed for successful employment and adapting in changing operational environments. The project activities include expert training, tutorials, seminars, and webinars and supports collaborations between makers and designers. The project also addresses through a research component "the lack of comprehensive data on the economic value of the craft sector in Europe". This builds on the observation that "the absence of detailed analysis has resulted in gaps in knowledge, value recognition, and awareness at local, regional, national, and European levels". To bridge this gap, the project aims to deliver a cohesive understanding of the sector's economic impact.

Mad'in Europe

Mad'in Europe began its activities in 2023 with the aim of providing sustainable and meaningful support to European micro-businesses operating in crafts and heritage aspiring to foster growth and resilience in the sector.

The main activities of the initiative are to offer assistance to professionals in European crafts and heritage conservation especially through a dedicated platform excahnge and knowledge sharing. Mad'in Europe sends a newsletter and in other ways "raises awareness about the value of heritage professions and encourages wiser consumption habits". The Mad'in Europe team seeks to actively exchange with policy makers and institutions in Europe and collaborates in various European and EU-funded projects. In addition, the initiative has joined international networks, such as the World Crafts Council Europe, the Heritage Alliance 3.3, and the New European Bauhaus.

CRAFTOUR

Mad'in Europe is the coordinator of a cluster which is gathering 6 European projects on crafts. 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.

Involved projects

- **Craeft:** Craft Understanding, Education, Training, and Preservation for Posterity and Prosperity . https://www.craeft.eu/
- **Colour4crafts:** Colour for Combining, Re- engineering, Applying, Futuring, Transforming, Stretching. https://www.helsinki.fi/en/researchgroups/ bio-based-colourants
- **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/

- **Tracks4crafts:** Transforming crafts knowledge for a sustainable, inclusive and economically viable heritage in Europe https://tracks4crafts.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.

Source: Mad'in Europe

European Association of Building Crafts and Design

The EACD association (Europäische Vereinigung im gestaltenden Handwerk, der Baukultur und Denkmalpflege) aims to preserve and promote building crafts and design in Europe. Its goal is to combine traditional craftsmanship with modern design methods and to foster high-quality education in the field. The association promotes research on sector-related problems and possibilities that are of common interest for its members. Also, the EACD advocates the publicationof studies about vocational and advanced training, and in addition recommendations and statements as well as information and the exchange of information.

4.2 Future trends

Throughout the 21st century, interest into contemporary craft has grown, foremost among craft enthusiasts, promoters and active hobbyists. While the pandemic COVID-19 incited more and more people to learn and develop their hand in different craft-practices, it would also seem that the new wave of craft culture is best seen and most strongly experienced among those who already are devoted to the cause, as the enthusiasm does not seem to correlate largely in levels of policymaking and development. This may, however, change as the value of craft-practices with their different aspects including the cognitive and the manual, the technic, the poetic, the practical and aesthetic aspects is better and more widely appreciated among actors and researchers from different fields. As seen in this scoping note, a few strategy goals and even more recommendations direct to such development, while several projects, networks and organisation continue to advocate the value and societal significance of craft, in its multitude, around Europe.

Crafts-led innovation and the social listening exercise

As part of *ekip* project activities on studying the topic crafts-led innovation, a social listening exercise was conducted to collect together and analyse ongoing discussions and exchanges concerning crafts and craft cultures on social media. The key takeaways from this exercise delivered the following points that illustrate a vision of future trends of crafts-led innovation:

- **Craft-driven innovation is steadily gaining momentum**, especially over the past year. Emerging keywords like 'modern craftsmanship' and 'new materialism' show that the topic is dynamic and evolving on social media.

- Modern craftsmanship is evolving **by applying traditional techniques to contemporary materials.**
- Craftspeople are **increasingly combining their time-honored knowledge with material research**, seeking innovative ways to push the boundaries of craftsmanship. This integration of emerging materials and tradition is opening up new possibilities and expanding the horizons of the craft world.
- Time-tested techniques are becoming **a source of inspiration for sustainable practices**. Drawing inspiration from ancient, frugal practices, the craft sector is rediscovering a form of sustainability rooted in simplicity and time-tested methods. It's about reinterpreting traditional approaches through a contemporary lens, blending modern goals with established expertise. In this way, sustainability in the craft sector is not just a trend but a return to the roots of mindful creation — one that aligns with a growing global movement toward slow, purposeful consumption.
- Innovation in craft transcends geographical and temporal boundaries. Conversations around local craft knowledge are undergoing a shift. While these traditions often draw strength from specific cultural and geographic roots, practitioners are now seeking **innovation through the blending of different local expertise** and the sharing of knowledge, encouraging more open community dialogues.
- What we can learn from craft extends beyond practical skills; it encompasses resilience and a transformative mindset. Craft skills encompass a broad spectrum of manual and fine motor abilities, but discussions increasingly highlight **the importance of the soft skills** that accompany learning through craft. In an era where speed and immediate results are the norm, the mindset inherent in crafting fosters resilience and a culture of quality. Crafting encourages patience, attention to detail, and long-term satisfaction, counteracting the rush for quick fixes that pervades modern society.

References

Adamson, Glenn. 2013. *The invention of craft*. Bloomsbury.

Coeckelbergh, Mark. 2018, "The art, poetics, and grammar of technological innovation as practice, process, and performance", *AI & Soc* (2018) 33:501–510, DOI 10.1007/s00146-017-0714-7 URL: https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s00146-017-0714-7.pdf

Cominelli, Francesca. & Vecchio, Clara. 2024. *Report on the state of the art of traditional crafts knowledge transmission (tck), including examples across and beyond Europe*. Deliverable D2.1 of the project Tracks4Crafts (HORIZON-CL2-2022-HERITAGE-01, 101094507). Available online: https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101094507/results

Decker, Kris De, s.a. Available online, URL: https://www.krisdedecker.org/ (accesssed 15 Nov 2024)

Forty, Adrian. 1986 [2005]. *Objects of Desire. Design and Society since 1750.* Thames & Hudson. London.

Gasparin, Marta, Beye, Andrea, Macciò, Enrico, Jacobsen, Lea & Bustamante, Margot. 2024. *Report for policymakers with strategies for sustainable craft ecosystem management and heritage preservation.* Deliverable 1.2 of the project Heritage in EuroPe: new tecHnologies in crAft for prEServing and innovaTing fUtureS (HEPHAESTUS). Available online: https://zenodo.org/records/12671338

Gauntlett, David. Making Is Connecting the Social Power of Creativity, from Craft and Knitting to Digital Everything. Second expanded edition. Newark: Polity Press, 2018.

Grasseni, Cristina 2023, "Skill, craft, and poiesis-intensive innovation", Form Akademisk, Vol.16 Nr.4, BICCS 23, 2023, 1-8, DOI: https://doi.org/10.7577/formakademisk.5415

Greenhalgh, Paul. 1997. The history of craft. In: Peter Dormer (ed.) *The Culture of Craft*. Manchester University Press, Manchester, New York. 20-52.

Hackney, Fiona, Onions, Laura, Rogers, Gavin, Figueiredo, Deirdre & Loveday, Mary. 2022. Maker-centricity and 'edgeplaces of creativity': CARE-full making in a CARE-less world. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* vol. 25 (6), 1572–1596. URL: https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494221136612

Hartzell Jennifer W., Yaguda, Susa & Boselli, Danielle. 2021. Knitting to improve cognition and reduce stress in cancer survivors: A pilot study. *Journal of Clinical Oncology* 39, https://doi.org/10.1200/JCO.2021.39.15_suppl.e24049

Hoyte, C. (2018). Artisan entrepreneurship: a question of personality structure? *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 25(4), 615-632. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijebr-02-2018-0099

Huotilainen, M., Rankanen, M., Groth, C., Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, P., & Mäkelä, M. (2018). Why our brains love arts and crafts: Implications of creative practices on psychophysical well-being. *FormAkademisk*, 11(2). https://doi.org/10.7577/formakademisk.1908

The International Charter of Artistic Craftsmanship. [2017] Available online: https://www.carta-internazionale-artigianato-artistico-en.pdf (accessed 25 January 2025).

Jakob, Doreen & Thomas, Nicola J. 2017. Firing up craft capital: the renaissance of craft and craft policy in the United Kingdom, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Vol 23 No 4, 495–511, Available online: https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2015.1068765 (accessed 13 December 2024).

Kraatari, E. (2016). *Domestic Dexterity and Cultural Policy. The Idea of Cottage Industry and Historical Experience in Finland from the Great Famine to the Reconstruction Period*. Jyväskylä Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Research 544. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä. Available online: https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-6456-6 (accessed 31 March 2025).

Li, J. (2023). A systematic integration study of traditional hand-weaving techniques in Lingnan region in the context of deep learning. *Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences*, 9(1). https://doi.org/10.2478/amns.2023.2.01389

O'Sullivan, K. (2024). Edinburgh charts the path for a creative future. *FutureScot*. https://futurescot.com/edinburgh-charts-the-path-for-a-creative-future/

Raya, Alia Bihrajihant, Andiani, Riesma, Siregar, Abi Pratiwa, Prasada, Imade Yoga, Indana, Fairuz, Simbolon, Theresia Gracia Yunindi, Kinasih, Agustina Tri, Nugroho, Agus Dwi (2021). Challenges, open

innovation, and engagement theory at craft SMEs: evidence from Indonesian batik. *Journal of Open Innovation Technology Market and Complexity*, 7(2), 121. https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc7020121

Trilsbeck, M., Gardner, N., Fabbri, A., Haeusler, M., Zavoleas, Y., & Page, M. (2019). Meeting in the middle: hybrid clay three-dimensional fabrication processes for bio-reef structures. *International Journal of Architectural Computing*, 17(2), 148-165. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478077119849655

What Are Low-Techs, s.a. Available online, URL:https://lowtechlab.org/en/low-techs (accesssed 15 Nov 2024)

World Crafts Council Europe. (2023). *A study into the resilience of the craft sector in Europe*. World Crafts Council Europe. https://wcc-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/A-Study-into-the-Resilience-of-the-Craft-Sector-in-Europe.pdf