

RESTART_4Danube

**Boosting cREative induSTries in urbAn Regeneration for a
stronger Danube region**

O.T1.1

**Common strategy on creative urban regeneration for
the Danube Region**

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List of Abbreviations

ASP	Associated Strategic Partner
CCI	Cultural and creative industries
DR	Danube region
DTC	Danube Transfer Centre
DTP	Danube Transnational Programme
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EUSDR	EU Strategy for the Danube Region
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HER	Higher Education and Research
LAP	Local action plan
PA	Priority area
R&D	Research and development
R&I	Research and innovation
S3	Smart specialisation strategies
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise

1 Executive Summary

European cities are increasingly aware that urban regeneration strategies should encompass an integrated approach tackling economic, social & environmental aspects. Yet, they face challenges in developing a culture that generates public-private synergies and in boosting existing economic sectors by fully exploiting the growth potential offered by creativity.

Common strategy on creative urban regeneration for the Danube region, developed in the frame of RESTART_4Danube project, elaborates the strategic orientation for the further development of the Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI) sector and its better integration in the Urban regeneration processes in the Danube region. The comprehensive analysis of the current framework conditions and assessment of the regional needs and challenges, provided the consistent basis of the definition of the Vision as well as the classification of the specific Intervention areas with concrete recommendations for action.

In this scope, RESTART_4Danube Common strategy defines five substantial Intervention areas and provides 17 Recommendations for actions. The concrete implementation of the recommendations by the CCI sector stakeholders should pave the way towards an strengthened creative ecosystem that drives economic growth and supports sustainable urban regeneration processes in all Danube region countries.

2 Introduction

General context

The number of Urban regeneration initiatives promoted by European cities is rising. The new status quo is that Urban regeneration strategies should encompass an integrated approach, engaging at the same time a wider range of actors. Cities face challenges to develop a culture that generates public-private synergies to promote small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and simultaneously promote creative urban communities. They need to tailor their Urban regeneration policies to local specificities and assets and integrate local stakeholders.

Major challenges in these processes are reflected in the:

- (1) **Lack of cooperation at the different levels** - between the public and private sectors, between the CCI sector and other industry involved in the Urban regeneration processes, but also between stakeholders across countries (and/or regions)
- (2) **Insufficient coordination at institutional level** – whereas the political leadership plays a decisive role and therefore requires a stronger policy background in order to achieve the consistent coordination
- (3) **Insufficient innovation capacities of SMEs** in the CCI sector – due to the traditional ways of handling the business and inadequate engagements in Innovation & Technology Transfers activities with other actors of the Innovation ecosystem.

RESTART_4Danube Project

RESTART_4Danube Project brings together a multi-disciplinary quadruple-helix partnership of 17 Project Partners and 8 Associated Strategic Partners (ASPs) to create the Common strategy on creative urban regeneration for the Danube Region. This Common strategy shall pave the way towards an strengthened creative ecosystem that drives economic growth and supports sustainable Urban regeneration processes in all Danube countries. Furthermore, the Common strategy notably draws on the analyses of the CCI sector and Urban regeneration by the RESTART_4Danube Project partners. It outlines a vision for a joint agenda and proposes the future actions of Danube countries. In this scope, 5 Intervention areas and 17 Recommendations for actions to take, in order to enhance the capacities of cities and municipalities to unlock the potential of CCIs and facilitate local and regional development through a stronger involvement of the CCI sector in (sub)urban regeneration processes are presented.

Main Concepts

Pure urban regeneration activities intend to improve physical infrastructure, sites and buildings that are in decay. In the process of urban regeneration, the aim is mostly to impart a “facelift” to the older buildings, making them look better, be more stable, and give them a new functionality.

However, by implementing Urban regeneration projects over the years, it became clear that it is important to keep other goals in mind as well in order to be consistent with the European priorities and to solve problems as efficiently as possible. For example, during the implementation period of 1989–1993, the EU decided to fund 33 urban pilot projects with the aim of stimulating the social and economic developments in determined urban areas¹. The main lessons learnt from the implementation of the projects in this funding period were that urban regeneration policies should follow sustainable development strategies, and they should regard the physical environment as much as the wellbeing of the people and the nature alike. Moreover, because the challenges faced in the urban regeneration processes were too complex, the best way of tackling them was through an integrated approach.

Sustainable Urban development/regeneration should enclose four main dimensions: the economic and institutional spheres, environment, and society alike. Sustainable urban regeneration exhibits integrated traits when it takes into account aspects regarding all of these four dimensions and integrates them in urban regeneration activities². The best way to support a model of integrated and sustainable urban development is striving for a collaboration between quadruple helix actors: policy makers, Research & Development (R&D), industry and civil society.³

¹ See: Article 10 European Regional Development Fund, Urban Pilot Projects, Annual Report 1996, Summary: aei.pitt.edu/46112/1/report_1996_urban.pdf

² See: Sustainable regeneration in urban areas, URBACT II capitalisation, April 2015. Online: [04_sustreg-web.pdf \(urbact.eu\)](http://04_sustreg-web.pdf(urbact.eu))

³ See the 2010 paper of the EU Committee of the Regions (“[Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on The Role of Urban Regeneration in the Future of Urban Development in Europe](#)”), presented in the 85th plenary session

Digitalisation or digital transformation has turned out to be a valuable support for CCIs. Already before the COVID-19 pandemics (in 2019), a research paper from the European Parliament⁶ clearly shows that digitalisation has an enormous impact on the CCI sectors as consumers have easier access to them combined with lower costs. Most of the creative industries deemed digitalisation processes either necessary or advantageous to develop a new business model that better corresponds to the age and needs of the consumers.

The usage of digit(al)isation got sped up with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic at a global scale. Many of the smaller actors involved in CCIs saw digitalisation as their only chance of survival. Moreover, the digit(al)isation process backed the increase in income for providers of digital leisure content and information like online news, movie and music providers (e.g., digital newspapers, Netflix), video games, and businesses that facilitate online shopping (e.g. Amazon). During the lockdowns, they experienced a substantial increase in subscriptions and sales.

However, there is also a downside to the digitalisation process. Technological advancements nowadays got so far, that e.g., artificial intelligence and machine learning represent a real threat to smaller or newer businesses, that were not able to transfer their business model to a digital one so quickly. Next to the almost unsurpassable competition that digital technologies entail, they were also not enough – not even for those sectors who managed to use them in order to survive – to compensate for the losses that the cancellation of physical events and in-person visits (e.g., to museums, exhibitions, event tourism as a related sector to the CCIs) generated.

How can CCIs contribute to Urban regeneration or why is creativity and CCIs important for suburban regeneration

Already in the 1990s, cultural policies made their way into the spotlight of urban and economic development because the influence of culture on economic activities in cities became undisputedly evident. The cultural dimension with aesthetic aspects slowly became interwoven also with social aspects. Nowadays, culture is to be regarded next to the other aspects defining a well-functioning society in an integrated sustainable approach of urban regeneration, sustained by EU urban policies⁷.

Furthermore, the EC stipulates the importance of local and regional development strategies to integrate cultural and creative industries, so that they would “... promote traditional cultural assets and cultural heritage, stimulate the development of creative businesses, support investment in infrastructure and in human capital as well as bring spill-over effects into the wider local economy.”⁸ The integration of the CCIs in strategies for development complies to the European Commission’s Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) for regional economic development.

⁶ Research for CULT Committee - Culture and creative sectors in the European Union – Key future developments, challenges and opportunities. Online: [Research for CULT Committee - Culture and creative sectors in the European Union – Key future developments, challenges and opportunities - Think Tank \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁷ The International Journal of Urban Planning of the University of Napoli, TRIA, June 2017. Copyrights: International Journal of Urban Planning.

⁸ See: [Culture in cities and regions | Culture and Creativity \(europa.eu\)](#)

CCIs have various positive effects on economic and social developments:

- **Key driver of growth for the whole European economy** (643 billion EUR turnover in 2019 in EU-28 - 4.4% of EU GDP)
- **Key player to improve and redesign the economic structure** (i.e. through creation of new business models, jobs and turnovers, in the role of a strong demander of goods and services)
- **Strong intersectoral linkages & impact beyond their own sector** (tourism, high-tech industries, digital industries, transportation and telecommunications)
- **Supporting an innovative and open-minded environment**
- **Key role in building up a strong(er) social cohesion** between different social and cultural classes (by creating a liberal, diverse and inclusive environment)
- **Can be used for more sustainable development & growth** (e.g. reuse of old or vacant infrastructure).

After a short presentation of the objectives and audience of the strategy (Section 3), the document will detail the methodology and framework used for the elaboration of the strategy (Section 4). Diving deeper into the content, Section 5 will highlight the challenges, weaknesses, needs and policy niches identified. This presentation of the current situation of CCI sector and Urban regeneration processes in the Danube region provides the background, motivation and rationale for the Common strategy. Section 6 will constitute the main bulk of the document with the elaboration of the common vision and the 17 recommendations. These recommendations address the whole Danube region while taking into account the diversity of the countries within this macro-region. The last two sections will address the dissemination strategy and outlook for the strategy (Section 7) and draw conclusions (Section 8).

3 Objectives and audience of the Common strategy

The main objective of the Common strategy on creative urban regeneration for the Danube region (thereafter Common strategy) is to **elaborate recommendations and measures to undertake** in order to:

- **Strengthen the regional Creative ecosystem** through increased cooperation and synergies between stakeholders (at local, national & international levels)
- **Improve framework conditions & policy instruments** to enable a new model of Urban regeneration involving CCIs (in other words to better embed CCI sector in urban planning and processes)
- **Encourage/strengthen entrepreneurship and support CCI SMEs** (innovation capacities, skills, competences & resilience)
- **Unleash the full potential of CCI sector** – especially in the aspects of sustainable (sub)urban regeneration and (sub)urban development.

With the provision of the concrete Recommendations for actions, the Common strategy also aims to support the **implementation of the European Union Strategy for the Danube region (EUSDR) and its Action plan**, by supporting the transfer of good policymaking practices across the region and by contributing to the achievement of several objectives and targets.

The Common strategy addresses all relevant actors of the creative ecosystem in the different Danube (partner) countries including:

- **Policymakers, public authorities and municipalities**

Inherent to the character of this strategy, first addressees are policymakers, public authorities and municipalities (with a focus on medium-sized cities) who ought to take inspiration from the recommendations and measures presented in this document. Their evaluation and acknowledgement of proposed measures is furthermore fundamental for facilitating the implementation of the strategy since they have the means to:

- a) provide necessary funding,
- b) amend and improve the legislative framework,
- c) develop and implement local Urban regeneration projects,
- d) support participatory and co-creation processes.

- **Priority Area (PA) coordinators**

Coordinators of the EUSDR Priority areas (PA) are important as well as they build the bridge between this strategy and the superordinate EUSDR. Their acknowledgement and support of recommendations made herein is paramount for their transfer into actual action across the Danube region.

- **Academic actors (Higher Education institutions, schools)**

As some of the recommendations consider the entrepreneurial culture as well as business and innovation management education in academia, their involvement in reviewing and implementing some of our recommendations/proposals is important as well. Higher education institutions can furthermore work as a driver and connecting point between policy makers and SMEs but also attract talent and further investment.

- **(Business) Support Organisations**

Support organizations play an important role in developing delivering entrepreneurship policy and innovation support programmes. Often, state-funded in the Danube region, support organizations (e.g. Regional Development Agencies) are commissioned to implement programmes for supporting entrepreneurship and corresponding economic development in their region.

- **CCI companies (especially SMEs)**

This group is in the focus of the Common strategy, although they are not the addressees, but rather beneficiaries of the measures presented here. Moreover, they are important stakeholders for

reviewing the implementation of the Common strategy and assessing its practicality and effectiveness.

- **Civil society**

Alike the SMEs, civil society (NGOs, different types of civil organisations) play a significant role, especially when talking about the social and environmental impacts of the Urban regeneration. There is also a strong connection between the different types of CCI sector actor and their interactions with the civil society which need to be considered.

4 Methodology and framework of the strategy

The Common strategy on creative urban regeneration for the Danube region is based on primary and secondary sources. It combines desk research and primary data and information gathered during exchanges with stakeholders and experts from the fields of CCIs and Urban regeneration by all Project Partners. The Common strategy integrates the results of various exchange formats with stakeholders on the regional and transnational level. Project Partners initiated a **broad consultation process**, involving stakeholders from economy, administration, policy and academy who shape the opportunities and chances of the CCI sector as well as Urban regeneration.

The contributions of these actors gathered during local group discussions (conducted within the landscape screening process between September and December 2020), local dialogue events (in the form of “Policivil workshops” in February-June 2021, “Study visits” between September 2021 & June 2022 and “City-study tours” in June-July 2022), transnational (policy) dialogue workshops (which took place in April 2021, April 2022, June 2022 and July 2022) and the final conference in November 2022 built the basis for and fed this Common strategy, along with desk research conducted by RESTART_4Danube partners.

List of the dialogue events organized by the RESTART_4Danube Consortium

- 9 local Policivil workshops
- 2 Transnational Policy dialogue workshops
- 2 Transnational workshops
- 5 Study visits
- 2 City-study tours
- 1 Final conference

The Common strategy is the result of a **participatory and iterative process**. It was **developed in two stages**:

- **STAGE (1)** - Key outcomes of the group discussions together with desk research and expertise within the consortium formed the basis of a first draft or **Mid-term strategy**, that was devised in December 2021. This Mid-term strategy was based on a SWOT analysis

(detailed in Chapter 4) that helped to identify needs and weaknesses to be addressed, as well as Intervention areas for which we developed a number of recommendations.

The mid-term strategy served as working document that was discussed with a wide spectrum of stakeholders – in particular policy-makers, CCIs – during the second policy dialogue workshop in April 2022, a speculative design workshop in June 2022 and another transnational workshop during the Creativity World Forum in July 2022.

- **STAGE (2)** - A revised version was presented in November 2022 at the RESTAR_4Danube Final conference and the **Final strategy** presented here integrates the feedback from the final conference. While the Common strategy provides an overarching frame for the entire Danube region, the situations in the individual Danube countries vary a lot – be it in terms of the regulatory frameworks, cultural settings or mindset.

The Common strategy on creative urban regeneration for the Danube region covers – at its name suggests – the **Danube macro-region**. Though it concentrates on the 11 partner countries (Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Ukraine), its Vision and Recommendations address the entire region.

The graph below (Figure 1) depicts the framework and the different steps of the Common strategy drafting process.

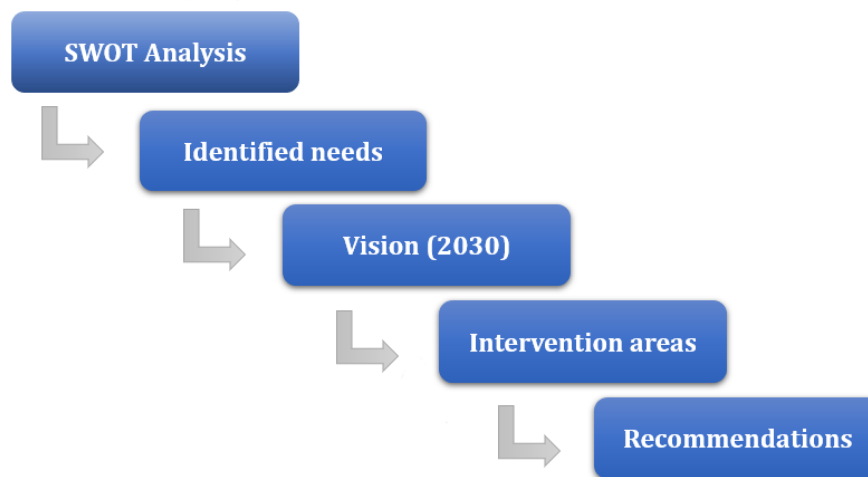


Figure 1: Framework of the Common strategy drafting process

5 Current situation in the Danube region

As one of the first project activities, the current situation in the Danube region has been elaborated by the RESTART_4Danube Project partners.⁹ In order to make the assessment of the CCI sector

⁹ See: RESTART_4Danube D.T1.1.1 - Danubian baseline study (Status quo, challenges, needs) – 10 (local study of each country), available at: [RESTART_4Danube - Interreg Danube \(interreg-danube.eu\)](https://www.interreg-danube.eu/restart-4danube)

ecosystem of the Danube region (in selected 11 countries, being Project Partners in the RESTART_4Danube project), a social fields approach was used, since it is an only approach that enables joint assessment of:

- (1) Innovation potential
- (2) CCI's Ecosystem
- (3) Attitudes towards cooperation and collaboration
- (4) Values and perceptions towards creativity and entrepreneurship
- (5) Impacts of COVID-19.

A final overview of the CCI sector ecosystem of the Danube region shows somehow homogenic picture with similar dynamics on all compared levels.

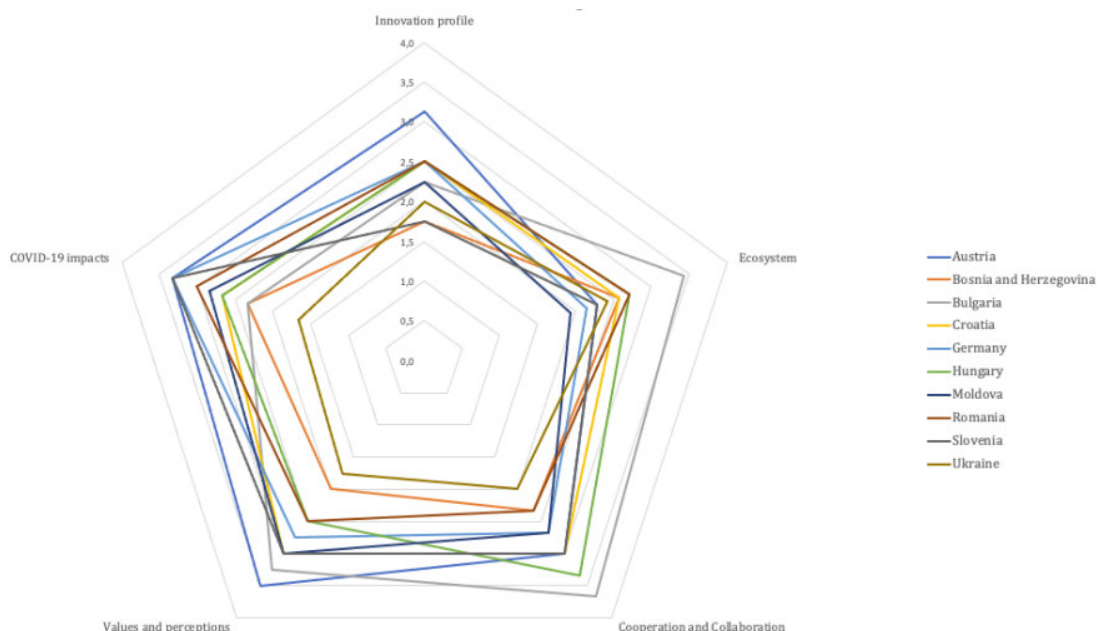


Figure 2: Scores on overall status of CCIs in Danube region

It has been acknowledge that best scores on **innovation profile** are belonging to the Carinthia region in Austria, and modest assessments in B&H and Slovenia with other countries ranging in between. When it comes to CCI's ecosystem, the most favourable conditions are detected in Bulgaria, and the least favourable conditions are detected in Moldova. Values for other countries range from 2,1 to 2,7 showing potential to increasingly improve the existing ecosystems.

In terms of **collaboration and cooperation**, the best scores are detected in Bulgaria and Hungary, with overall values higher than those evaluating CCI's ecosystem. Lowest scores on collaboration and cooperation are noted in Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania and also Germany.

When discussing **values, the attitudes towards creativity and entrepreneurship** along with attitudes towards learning and competition were discussed. The start-ups in the field of CCI's were discussed also. The scores show, the most favourable attitudes are detected in Austria and

Bulgaria, but also in Moldova, Croatia and Slovenia. Lowest scores are detected in Ukraine, Romania and Germany.

Lastly the **impacts of COVID-19** were assessed where the scores ranged lowest in Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina to highest noted in Austria, Slovenia, Moldova and Croatia. In all countries the main conclusion was, the COVID-19 had big impacts on further separation of the cultural and creative sectors. Creative sectors with high access to digital technologies actually experienced large amounts of growth.

Beside the assessment of the CCI sector ecosystem of the Danube region, created on the joint assessment of five integrated levels and in order to further elaborate on the current state of the region, the SWOT analysis has been performed. The SWOT analysis present the synthesis of the single SWOT analysis' presented in five RESTART_4Danube Local Action Plans, elaborated in five different countries/regions.¹⁰ The following analysis has especially being significant, as based on it, the Vision and Intervention areas – Recommendations for actions for the further advancement of the CCI sector in the urban regeneration process in the Danube region have been defined.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Extremely favourable geographical location and territorial positioning of the whole region	Difficult access to finance/capital for CCI SMEs including insufficient information on available funding
Positive public opinion related to CCI sector	Lack of financial stability notably due to strong grant dependency, lack of assets and capital → CCI less attractive for financial institutions and investors
CCI sector as one of the domains of RIS3	Long term financing and thus long-term planning of growth are at a disadvantage in general for CCI
Rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the Danube region	Limited absorption of EU funds
Tourism as significant generator of the demand in CCI sector	The association in the sector (including for marketing and commercialisation) is very low, as well as the new efficient technologies
Large number of SMEs and NGOs in the CCI sector with increasing economic indicators	Weak entrepreneurial skills of CCI actors
Relatively positive social climate towards environment protection → important factor for the urban planning and regeneration	Brain & Start-up drain → migration of talented young people to other regions & countries
Cities in the Danube region being recognized as European Capitals of Culture (e.g. Rijeka in 2020, Novi Sad 2021)	Limited know-how regarding option to increase the innovation potential (especially referring to SMEs)
Diversity of the CCI sector → Capability of connecting different actors	Medium-sized cities are in general less successful in attracting high value-added,
Existing transfer and implementation of the best practices among the stakeholders in the	

¹⁰ See: Single SWOT Analysis available at RESTART_4Danube Local Action Plans, available at: [RESTART_4Danube - Interreg Danube \(interreg-danube.eu\)](http://RESTART_4Danube - Interreg Danube (interreg-danube.eu))

<p>region through the implementation of the EU funded projects</p>	<p>creative activities, innovative services and young talents</p> <p>Mostly insufficient institutional and infrastructural support for the development of CCIs</p> <p>Lack of connection and cooperation between stakeholders in the CCI sector → often not involved in urban planning and processes</p> <p>Fragmented CCI sector with no unified and comprehend development strategy</p> <p>Unused (industrial/historical) sites/spaces</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p>
<p>CCIs as a crosscutting sector in the EUSDR and its Action Plan → Different Priority Areas support the sector in direct or indirect way</p> <p>Positive development regarding the I&TT and cooperation among the academia and private/industry sector in the past years</p> <p>High interest of stakeholders in local/regional tradition, CCI sector and tourism for new products and services</p> <p>Increase of the digital skills during the COVID 19 pandemic → IT development especially for CCI sector, digitalization in all sectors</p> <p>New working models such as remote working and digital communication → Increasing mobility of skilled professionals</p> <p>Integration of the CCIs in the major funding framework programs of the European Commission (e.g. Horizon Europe)</p> <p>Encouraging cultural dialogue and the active participation of young people in civil society</p>	<p>Lack of institutional support and monitoring systems</p> <p>Lack of uniformed legislation</p> <p>Challenges for public finances due to ageing society (social security)</p> <p>Improper infrastructure and underdeveloped CCI ecosystem → especially considering Quadruple Helix actors</p> <p>Growing inequalities in the region as well as growing global competition</p> <p>COVID crises: reduced economic and social activity, rising inflation, deaths of enterprises, staff cuts → Cultural sector especially affected.</p> <p>Traditional way of thinking, especially in the lower Danube region → non-entrepreneurial mindset as a consequence of the past political and social systems</p> <p>Poor railway connections in the Region</p>

Figure 3: SWOT Analysis for the CCI sector in the Danube region

6 Common vision and fields of intervention

This Common strategy on creative urban regeneration set out the Vision, priority areas for intervention and related Recommendations for action to further empower and stimulate growth

of the CCI sector in the Danube Region. The overall aim is to maximise and leverage strengths, take advantage of opportunities, and address areas of improvement to ensure that, the CCIs in the scope of the Urban regeneration, are at the forefront of economic growth for the Danube region over the next 10 years and beyond.

In this scope, the Common strategy sets the Vision as:

Danube region is home to a highly skilled, innovative and well connected local/regional ecosystems for CCIs with an integrated strategy, providing a variety of options for collaboration, as well as financing prospects for the Quadruple Helix Actors.

CCIs play a substantial role in the Urban regeneration processes and by the utilization of innovation potentials (especially by SMEs) actively contribute to the economic growth and wellbeing of the society and nature.

Furthermore, the Vision foresees a Danube region in which:

- the **CCI sector fragmentation has been reduced** through strengthened industry-government-academia cooperation (#9)¹¹
- the **local and regional ecosystems for CCIs** are strong, vibrant and well connected (synergies and networking among stakeholders within and across the ecosystems) (#11, #13, #16)
- public authorities devise **holistic regional strategies involving and supporting CCIs** (#10, #14)
- public authorities use **cultural planning and co-creation project as a method to involve CCIs in urban regeneration processes** (#9, #12, #17)
- **Sustainable placemaking projects** have become a standard approach for public authorities as a way to integrate available industrial/historical sites in urban planning (#12)
- CCI entrepreneurs and creative people have **access to innovative (technological and physical) infrastructure** for their development (#13)
- CCI enterprises will have the choice between **varied funding sources (private, public)** in their start-up and scale-up phases (#1, #2, #3, #4, #5)
- The **innovation capacities and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills of CCI actors** is significantly improved thanks to creative centers, practical educational curricula and lifelong learning education (#6, #7, #8, #13, #15)
- the number of **CCI enterprises (especially SMEs) that are investment-ready** has doubled (#6).

¹¹ Numbers in brackets refer to the Number of the related Recommendation(s), defined in the Chapter 7

This Common strategy elaborates 17 Recommendations whose implementation in the course of the next 10 years would lead to the development of a strengthened Creative ecosystem that unleashes the potential of the CCI sector: not only increases the economic share and gross value added of this sector in the national and European GDPs but also increases its involvement in urban regeneration policies and supports sustainable development strategies for the entire Danube region.

Based on the SWOT analysis presented in Chapter 5, RESTART_4Danube Consortium identified **five Intervention areas**:

- (1) Diversification and support in **Access to finance**
- (2) Expansion and availability of a bigger variety of the **Capacity-building** programs
- (3) Facilitation and support the **Cooperation** among the Quadruple Helix actors of the CCI ecosystem
- (4) Contribution in the further improvement of **Infrastructures**
- (5) Further enhancement of the **Framework conditions** on the local and regional level.

As summarised in the Figure 4 below, each Intervention area has 2-5 Recommendations. Each of the defined Recommendation addresses at least one element of the Vision, one Intervention area and it addresses at least one identified weakness.

Intervention Areas	Recommendations				
Access to Finance	#1 Improve information flow and visibility about funding/investment opportunities	#2 Support more private capital / private funding programmes for CCI companies – especially in early stage	#3: Make crowdfunding a known and accessible financial source for CCI SMEs	#4 Develop or improve access for CCIs to public funding programmes (especially outside capital / major cities)	#5 Create synergies between EU funding and regional support to CCIs
Capacity Building	#6 Develop support programmes to strengthen capacities and skills of CCI SMEs	#7 Strengthen entrepreneurial spirit/competences and digital skills of young people/students in curricula of educational institutions – notably in CCI sector	#8 Support assessment of innovation capacities of CCI companies		
Cooperation	#9 Develop cooperation (projects) involving different institutions, actors and stakeholders	#10 Develop interdepartmental and cross-sectoral coordination for urban regeneration processes	#11 Create and/or strengthen networks & clusters of CCIs stakeholders (local, national, European levels)		
Infrastructure	#12 Develop (sustainable) placemaking projects – in co-creation process with citizens and different stakeholders	#13 Develop creative centers (creative incubator and accelerator programmes / co-working and co-sharing spaces)			
Framework conditions	#14 Develop holistic regional strategies for CCIs (covering industrial, cultural and innovation aspects)	#15 Develop public support programmes for CCIs/startups	#16 Strengthen organizations and infrastructures supporting creatives / CCI SMEs	#17 Reduce bureaucracy / increase flexibility of local & regional authorities	

Figure 4: RESTART_4Danube Common Strategy Intervention areas and respected recommendations

The Intervention areas reflect the afore-presented weaknesses and shortcomings of the Danube region. Furthermore, the formulated of the Recommendations in the five Intervention areas are significantly relying on the outcomes of the RESTART_4Danube D.T1.3.2 Urban Green Papers which are aiming to present concrete ideas to strengthen (entrepreneurship of) CCIs via improving the framework conditions i.e. in capacity building, the physical and digital infrastructure and the regeneration of places, the use of implementation of creative business incubation opportunities, clusters and networks, the importance of access to finance and at least the great importance of good governance processes to arrange strong positive spill over effects for the whole ecosystem.

The paragraph below summarizes the main weaknesses and opportunities detailed in chapter 5 and the related Recommendations (number in brackets) that are detailed in the next chapter.

Weaknesses

- Lack of connection and cooperation between stakeholders (#9, #11, #12)
- Unused (industrial/historical) sites/spaces (#12)
- CCI sector often not involved in urban planning and processes (#12, #14)
- Difficult access to finance/capital for CCI SMEs (#2, #3, #4)
- Lack of financial stability notably due to strong grant dependency, their small size, lack of assets and capital, and higher business risks that render CCI less attractive for financial institutions and investors (#2, #4)
- Poor entrepreneurial skills of CCI actors (#6, #7, #13, #14)
- Brain & startup drain → migration of talented young people to other regions & countries (#13, #15, #16)
- Medium-sized cities less successful in attracting high value-added, creative activities, innovative services and young talents (#4, #13, #15).

7 Recommendations

Intervention area 1: Access to finance

CCI sector is characterized by micro to small and potentially medium companies. Alike the other sectors, for the organisations in the CCIs sector, especially for Start-ups and SMEs, financial support is needed to allow the accomplishment of the innovative ideas, to be able to act, to innovate and to develop. The EU Commission states, *However, various studies on cultural and creative sectors highlight the fact that access to finance currently is a core barrier to further development.* In addition to the common barriers to access to finance for SMEs in general, several studies point to specific characteristics of SMEs in the CCI sector that reinforce the problem of access to finance. These refer to: basic characteristics of CCS activities; characteristics of firms and

entrepreneurs within the CCI and specific market conditions.¹² Being in general more content-driven than commercially oriented, CCI sector SMEs especially, need more assistance and incentives to easier access the different types of funding.

Objective of the Intervention area

- Increase visibility about existing funding
- Diversify funding sources for CCI SMEs
- Increase investment-readiness of CCI SMEs
- More options for (CCI) SMEs/self-employed to apply for funding

Recommendation #1: Improve information flow and visibility about funding and investment opportunities on all levels (local, regional, national, European)

Relevance and background: The CCIs sector resonates as particular in terms of being perceived as artistic and stereotypically not financially well off. However, the stereotypes need to be broken down, and CCIs could be perceived as entrepreneurs who are well aware of funding potentials and investment opportunities. It is of the high relevance that the all interested parties, and especially SMEs obtain a timely and comprehensive information regarding the funding opportunities on all levels.

Addressed weaknesses: Difficult access to finance/capital for CCI SMEs including insufficient information on available funding

Element of the vision addressed: CCI enterprises will have the choice between varied funding sources (public, private) in their start-up and scale-up phases

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Policymakers, public authorities, municipalities, support organizations
- **Beneficiaries:** CCI companies (SMEs)

Implementation level: Local, national, regional, international (through the different types of the cooperation projects)

Recommendation #2: Support more private capital / private funding programmes for CCI companies – especially in early stage

Relevance and background: For CCIs, it is more difficult to acquire capital and funding because of the sectoral structure. Access to finance is essential for CCIs to further strengthen their role as engine of economic growth, innovation and job creation in Europe¹³. Especially, private investors shall feel safe and comfortable - corruption and forms of extortion must be eliminated in this

¹² European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Survey on access to finance for cultural and creative sectors : evaluate the financial gap of different cultural and creative sectors to support the impact assessment of the creative Europe programme, European Commission, 2015, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/65344>

¹³ EU-Commission. Survey on access to finance for CCIs. URL: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d6e546f6-a284-445b-b70f-dbc9ee20ae37/language-en/format-PDF/source-search>

sense. Private investors, like philanthropes, business angels and venture capitalists are also interested in possible profitable investment opportunities. Furthermore, the Danubian countries are actively developing entrepreneurial, start-up, and scale-up ecosystems. In those activities, the CCI sector should also be included to increase the possibility of support for private funds and other investment possibilities. Especially early stages, similar to start-up stages, are essential and require assistance.

Addressed weaknesses: Difficult access to finance/capital for CCI SMEs; Lack of financial stability render CCI less attractive for financial institutions and investors

Element of the vision addressed: CCI enterprises will have the choice between varied funding sources (public, private) in their start-up and scale-up phases

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Private investors
- **Beneficiaries:** CCI companies (SMEs)

Implementation level: Local, national, regional

Recommendation #3: Make crowdfunding a known and accessible financial source for CCI SMEs

Relevance and background: Crowdfunding could become a promising option in the future, also in regards to the CCI sector, as it is gaining importance, especially in the Start-up ecosystems. There are separate crowdfunding exchanges that could be activated for this purpose. However, usually only small amounts of financial means can be raised. Financial and content-related support is conceivable through applications and competitions. These can be interesting especially for small CCIs (one-person business) and Start-ups, as they tend to involve smaller amounts and investments. Furthermore, there is an increasing trend of the availability of the online platforms, toolkits and networks are available, which offer information¹⁴.

Addressed weaknesses: Difficult access to finance/capital for CCI SMEs; Lack of financial stability render CCIs less attractive for financial institutions and investors

Element of the vision addressed: CCI enterprises will have the choice between varied funding sources (public, private) in their start-up and scale-up phases

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Private investors
- **Beneficiaries:** CCI companies (SMEs)

Implementation level: Local, national, regional, international

¹⁴ See: Institute of Network Culture's Crowdfunding Toolkit, <https://networkcultures.org/moneylab-toolkit/>

Recommendation #4: Develop or improve access for CCIs to public funding programmes (especially outside capital / major cities)

Relevance and background: In practice, Urban regeneration projects are mostly funded by the city or municipality and in coordination with the regional management, by state and/or federal funds. Outside major cities, the CCIs sector is deemed more negligible in scale, and all the above-mentioned sectorial issues become more evident. Smaller towns should pay even more attention to the sector's potential. On one side, different structural funds are offered at EU level to strengthen regional specialisation and to strengthen individual sectors, while the different EU funding programmes, proved the opportunities for the collaborative projects on the EU level. Still, the public-funded programmes should be made equally available.

Addressed weaknesses: Difficult access to finance/capital for CCI SMEs; Limited absorption of available EU funds; Small and medium-sized cities less successful in attracting high value-added, creative activities, innovative services and young talents

Element of the vision addressed: CCI enterprises will have the choice between varied funding sources (public, private) in their start-up and scale-up phases

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Policymakers, public authorities, municipalities, support organizations
- **Beneficiaries:** CCI companies (SMEs), all stakeholders in the sector looking for the sustainable financing options

Implementation level: Local, national, regional, international (through the different types of the cooperation projects)

Recommendation #5: Create synergies between EU funding and regional support to CCIs

Relevance and background: All financial instruments play an important role in the growth of CCIs. The financing instruments can and should be supplemented and coordinated with each other. They can also be tailored to the different lifecycle phases, especially when talking about SMEs in CCI sector. In the course of the development cycle, some financial instruments become more important than the others. There are good subsidies for Start-ups and for foundations, but few subsidies for the growth and sustainable development of CCIs. In this sense, it is necessary to have more coordinated approach on all levels, especially to support the different development phases of the companies and provide broader options for financing. Utilization of different financing mechanisms (both public and private) should be simplified and more transparent for the possibly beneficiaries.

Addressed weaknesses: Lack of financial stability notably due to strong grant dependency, their small size, lack of assets and capital, and higher business risks that render CCI less attractive for financial institutions and investors

Element of the vision addressed: CCI enterprises will have the choice between varied funding sources (public, private) in their start-up and scale-up phases

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Policymakers, public authorities, municipalities, support organizations
- **Beneficiaries:** CCI companies, all stakeholders in the sector looking for the sustainable financing options

Implementation level: Local, national, regional, international

Intervention area 2: Capacity-building

Investment in people is needed to enable the Danube region to progress sustainably and to further grow, prioritising knowledge and inclusion. Targeted support for research infrastructure stimulates excellence and deepens networking between knowledge providers, companies and policy makers. RESTART_4Danube activities have revealed severe skills gaps, and several activities are recommended to nurture and grow the CCIs sector. In this sense, entrepreneurial “creative” thinking must be developed at a young age, and be encouraged at all stages of professional development and implementation. Arise from this, new opportunities taking place in the field of or in cooperation with CCIs, especially in the education sector. Furthermore, an important factor for capacity building is cooperation. Capacity building means that not only spaces, buildings and technologies are made available, but also that a community is created and grows, or a culture of exchange and networking. Besides the exchange of R&D, universities, their students and CCIs, partnerships between CCIs and Public authorities (e.g. municipalities) should be built. CCIs need support from local authorities, which can create incubators, co-working spaces, support local associations and involve experts in the development of innovative strategies at the local and regional level.

Objective of the Intervention area

- Strengthen the innovation capacities and skills of CCI SMEs
- Adopt entrepreneurial “creative” thinking already in the education phases
- Increase entrepreneurial knowledge/skills of CCI actors
- Better connect creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship – Reduce misfit between theoretical knowledge and market needs/dynamics
- Incubators (as well as networks and clusters) can provide dedicated training and educational workshops

Recommendation #6: Develop support programmes to strengthen capacities and skills of CCI SMEs (business & managerial skills; marketing skills; digital skills; IP management)

Relevance and background: CCIs sector actors exhibit critical levels of knowledge and skills requested to operate in the Danube region's developing markets (and globally). Skills related to

business operation and management are missing, marketing skills are vague, and some exhibit poor digital skills and low levels of IP management. Considering this, there is a need for an integrated approach and coordinated implementation of the support programmes (through mentoring, coaching, skills development workshops and events), to help the CCI actors - especially SMEs, to increase their knowledge and capacities in general to become more competitive on the market.

Addressed weaknesses: Weak entrepreneurial skills of CCI actors; The involvement in the sector (including for marketing and commercialisation) is very low, as well as the application of the new efficient technologies

Element of the vision addressed: The number of CCI enterprises (especially SMEs) that are investment-ready has doubled; The innovation capacities and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills of CCI actors is significantly improved

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Public authorities, support organizations
- **Beneficiaries:** CCI SMEs and all other CCIs sector stakeholders

Implementation level: Local, national, regional, international (through the different types of the cooperation projects)

Recommendation #7: Strengthen entrepreneurial spirit/competences and digital skills of young people/students in curricula of educational institutions – notably in CCI sector (e.g. art academies / study programmes in CCIs)

Relevance and background: Study and school programs/education programmes should cover the expectations of the students/employers in the field of CCIs and awake an entrepreneurial spirit in young people. Hence, the development of specific and diverse curricula and training programs should be prioritised to develop capacities in and for the creative industries or a creative economy. They also acquire entrepreneurial and economic knowledge. Furthermore, the use of digital services is continuously increasing and at this point, it is essential to integrate new concepts of new working options and distance learning into the framework conditions. Through digital concepts, it is possible to participate without being directly on site. With the intention of taking advantage of these opportunities, CCIs need to develop new skills, in order to expand innovative production and distribution methods and new business models.

Addressed weaknesses: Weak entrepreneurial skills of CCI actors; Brain & Start-up drain → migration of talented young people to other regions & countries

Element of the vision addressed: The innovation capacities and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills of CCI actors is significantly improved

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Public authorities in a cooperation with Educational institutions (and Support organisations)

- **Beneficiaries:** Young entrepreneurs, Educational institutions (schools, universities), CCI companies (SMEs)

Implementation level: Local, national

Recommendation #8: Support assessment of innovation capacities of CCI companies

Relevance and background: CCI companies are creative, but in order to innovate, innovation potential needs to be assessed. Not all CCI companies can innovate in the same manner, and it is crucial to develop mechanisms, e.g. innovation support programmes and tools for assessing the innovation capacities and further assist in the implementation of the measures leading to the increased capacities. Here, the collaboration among the Public authorities and support organisations is crucial, since this way the direct needs of the companies can be addressed – by joint development, tailoring and implementation of the instruments aimed at this purpose. Furthermore, there is a need of the companies (SMEs) sensibilisation in regards to the advantage of this kind innovations support programmes and building more trust among the innovations ecosystem actors.

Addressed weaknesses: Limited know-how regarding option to increase the innovation potential (especially referring to SMEs)

Element of the vision addressed: The innovation capacities and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills of CCI actors is significantly improved

Target group :

- **Implementers:** Public authorities, support organisations
- **Beneficiaries:** CCI companies (SMEs)

Implementation level: Local, national, regional, international (through the different types of the cooperation projects)

Intervention area 3: Cooperation

CCI sector, at times, seems scattered and not well connected. However, the desire is to contribute towards networking and community creation that can exchange information, best practices and skills when necessary. Strengthening local and regional ecosystems for CCIs, supporting co-creation processes and creating a sense of ownership between involved stakeholders are proper paths to the community that will reduce fragmentation and strive for cooperation on all levels. Particular emphasis is also on triple/quadruple helix cooperation, focusing on academia-industry spillovers. Besides, a stronger cooperation between CCIs and other sectors, experts, coaches, scientists and companies can also be successfully developed via networks and clusters. The spatial proximity to partners and competitors can bring advantages for the development known as

agglomeration advantages. These advantages of proximity foster the formation of clusters and networks, being an important platforms enabling cooperation.

Objective of the Intervention area

- Strengthen the local and regional ecosystems for CCIs
- Support co-creation processes and create sense of ownership between involved stakeholders
- Reduce CCI sector fragmentation through industry-government-academia cooperation
- Promote and strengthen the cooperation through the networks & clusters of CCIs

Recommendation #9: Develop cooperation (projects) involving different institutions, actors and stakeholders

Relevance and background: Cooperation demonstrates the ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse people or teams, make compromises, build consensus in decision-making, assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the opinions and contributions of individual team members, from a position of firm self-identity.¹⁵ Transnational and/or International cooperation projects aim at addressing the shared challenges and developing the solutions which are generating the common good, including economic, social, environmental aspects. Furthermore, cooperation among the different actors – triple or quadruple helix approach is a pursuit for the continuous growth in a sustainable way.

Addressed weaknesses: Lack of connection and cooperation between stakeholders; Fragmented CCI sector with no unified and comprehend development strategy,

Element of the vision addressed: The CCI sector fragmentation has been reduced through strengthened industry-government-academia cooperation; Public authorities use cultural planning and co-creation project as a method to involve CCIs in urban regeneration processes

Target group:

- **Implementers:** All stakeholders in the sector
- **Beneficiaries:** All stakeholders in the sector

Implementation level: Local, national, regional, international (through the different types of the cooperation projects)

Recommendation #10: Develop interdepartmental and cross-sectoral coordination for urban regeneration processes

Relevance and background: RESTART_4Danube endeavours have shown that Urban regeneration processes deserve special attention, and while engaging CCIs, the urban regeneration should be undertaken strategically, coordinated and with the inclusion of all stakeholders of the quintuple helix. At this point, Public authorities should play a crucial role in

¹⁵ [Mission #5 - Cooperation | UNICEF](#)

connecting the different sectors, i.e. Urban regeneration and CCI sector, but also connecting different parts of the innovation ecosystem. This integrated approach requires a devoted strategy and action plan development, coordination and continuous monitoring of the activities.

Addressed weaknesses: Fragmented CCI sector with no unified and comprehend development strategy

Element of the vision addressed: Public authorities devise holistic regional strategies involving and supporting CCIs

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Public authorities
- **Beneficiaries:** All stakeholders in the sector

Implementation level: Local, national, regional, international

Recommendation #11: Create and/or strengthen networks & clusters of CCIs stakeholders (local, national, European levels)

Relevance and background: CCI sector is strongly fragmented and dominated by micro-enterprises and self-employed persons. In addition, CCI actors are not very well connected among each other and in this sense, all actions striving for more inclusion and networking are recommended. There are numerous options in becoming a part of a strong network – on a local, regional and international levels. Some examples for regional and international networking include, e.g. Danube Transfer Centres (DTC) Network¹⁶ - with an expertise in the field of business Internationalization and Innovation and Technology transfer in the different sectors, including CCI as well or Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)¹⁷ – which includes national contact and advice points dedicated to the SMEs. The main aim is to support SMEs in the implementation of their innovative ideas and to grow internationally. Moreover, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network¹⁸ offers cities opportunities to participate in creative and sustainable urban regeneration.

Addressed weaknesses: Lack of connection and cooperation between stakeholders; Fragmented CCI sector with no unified and comprehend development strategy

Element of the vision addressed: The local and regional ecosystems for CCIs are strong, vibrant and well-connected

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Public authorities, Support organisations
- **Beneficiaries:** CCI companies (SMEs), All stakeholders in the sector

Implementation level: Local, national, regional, international

¹⁶ Danube Transfer Center Network. URL: <https://steinbeis-austria.eu/danube-transfer-center>

¹⁷ Enterprise Europe Network. URL: <https://een.ec.europa.eu/>

¹⁸ UNESCO Creative City Network. URL: <https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/creative-cities-map>

Intervention area 4: Infrastructure

Physical infrastructure is exceptionally important for the integration of CCI sector in the processes of Urban regeneration. Many cities and localities can take advantage and re-purpose old industrial buildings, where innovative ecosystems can be located, e.g. Start-up communities. The development of technological infrastructure in this regard is in place, so that provided spaces and locations can be put to their creative use. Also, CCIs and creative individuals/citizens need physical (and digital) spaces to test or implement their visions. Especially cities but also rural areas (as an important part of functional spaces or city regions)¹⁹ need to establish organized creative places e.g. in the form of open technology labs or makers spaces, because citizens or SME's often don't have physical and financial resources for the requested infrastructure (e.g. 3D printers, special software, microscopes, learning environments or special equipment).

Objective of the Intervention area

- Provide physical and innovative spaces/infrastructure for CCIs and creative young entrepreneurs, individuals/citizens
- Develop technological infrastructures, especially in medium-sized and smaller towns
- Make the most of available industrial/historical sites

Recommendation #12: Develop (sustainable) placemaking projects – in co-creation process with citizens and different stakeholders

Relevance and background: Developing joint projects in co-creation with civil society is one excellent way to initiate the integration process and stimulate social innovation in the areas. Examples of the European Capital of Culture initiative have already resulted positively in many Danubian cities, therefore, future promotion and application similar initiatives like this would contribute to the to the long term change.

Addressed weaknesses: Lack of connection and cooperation between stakeholders; Unused (industrial/historical) sites/spaces; CCI sector often not involved in urban planning and processes

Element of the vision addressed: Sustainable placemaking project have become a standard approach for public authorities; Public authorities use cultural planning and co-creation projects as a method to involve CCIs in urban regeneration processes

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Public authorities
- **Beneficiaries:** All stakeholders in the sector

Implementation level: Local, national, regional, international

¹⁹ Bloomberg – The Rise of the Rural Creative Class. URL: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-01/what-makes-a-rural-creative-hub-innovation-and-the-arts> (10.10.2022); Smart Village EU-Commission. URL: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages/smart-villages-portal_en

Recommendation #13: Develop creative centres (creative incubator and accelerator programmes / co-working and co-sharing spaces)

Relevance and background: Alongside physical infrastructure, policy-makers should strive to develop communities and centres evolved around communities. This way, a creative ecosystem, similar to the entrepreneurial ecosystem, can flourish, with stakeholders of the sector enjoying the knowledge transfer and other networking spill over effects. Such programmes include creative incubators, accelerator programmes, and co-working or co-sharing spaces.

Addressed weaknesses: Poor entrepreneurial skills of CCI actors; Brain & startup drain → migration of talented young people to other regions & countries; Medium-sized cities less successful in attracting high value-added, creative activities, innovative services and young talents

Element of the vision addressed: The innovation capacities and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills of CCI actors is significantly improved; CCI entrepreneurs and creative people have access to innovative (technological and physical) infrastructure for their development; The local and regional ecosystems for CCIs are strong, vibrant and well-connected

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Public authorities, Municipalities
- **Beneficiaries:** CCI companies (SMEs), Young entrepreneurs, Civil society (including individuals and citizens)

Implementation level: Local

Intervention area 5: Framework conditions

The overall objective of the Intervention area is to improve framework conditions for the inclusion of CCIs in Urban regeneration processes. Alongside the intent of the intervention, the site is to contribute towards the encouragement of cultural planning, strengthening support and involvement from local authorities to CCIs on the one hand, and stimulating competition(s) both among and for CCI SMEs on the other actors. In order to further develop and to increase the positive effects, ideal framework conditions are necessary for CCIs and must be actively shaped. Through local development strategies, e.g. such as the Local Action Plans, developed by the project partners of RESTART_4Danube as creative placemaking approaches, stronger cultural and creative crossover effects can be achieved. Such development concepts in the context of Urban regeneration processes relies on the power of culture and creativity to transform the life of a local community and make a region more attractive for people to live and work there. It considers and encourages the engagement of the local community in artistic and cultural experiences, events and creative projects, and, in some cases, community investment and funding.

Objective of the Intervention area

- Encourage cultural planning on local and regional level
- Strengthen support and involvement from local authorities to CCIs

- Stimulate competition(s) both among and for CCI SMEs
- Use the industrial legacy (for cross-sectoral and spillover effects)
- Overcome budget limitations and pressures via decentralized/co-creation/bottom-up projects

Recommendation #14: Develop holistic regional strategies for CCIs (covering industrial, cultural and innovation aspects)

Relevance and background: Key role of local authorities should be to provide the holistic and unified strategic approaches and related catalogue of actions/measures in addressing the identified needs and challenges in the specific area and/or sectors. This also refers when talking about better integration of the CCI sector actors and stakeholders in the Urban regeneration processes. Especially in the smaller and mid-size cities, this kind of the documentation can be implemented in a shorter terms if there is a clear vision and goals set for the future. Some of the measures could for instance include: making the vacancies available or rent buildings, create creative incubation programmes, provide co-working spaces, support local associations, involve CCI in development of strategies; support more R&D in CCIs; play a key role in shaping innovation, entrepreneurial and startup sector/ecosystem.

Addressed weaknesses: CCI sector often not involved in urban planning and processes; The local and regional ecosystems for CCIs are strong, vibrant and well connected (synergies and networking among stakeholders within and across the ecosystems)

Element of the vision addressed: Public authorities devise holistic regional strategies involving and supporting CCIs

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Public authorities
- **Beneficiaries:** All stakeholders in the sector

Implementation level: Local, national, regional

Recommendation #15: Develop public support programmes for CCIs/start-ups (e.g. creative incubation programmes, co-working spaces, R&D opportunities, competitions)

Relevance and background: Many EU funding programs are supporting especially the development of the Creativity²⁰, but all major funding programmes, such as Horizon Europe, Interreg support the CCI sector and its stakeholders as well. Furthermore, Creative business incubators do not only provide physical space and equipment but also expertise and know-how to its beneficiaries, as well as personal connections/networking opportunities (at local and international levels). There is a need for the stronger promotion of the advantages of the programs

²⁰ See: European Commission, Culture and Creativity, [European cooperation projects | Culture and Creativity \(europa.eu\)](http://european-cooperation-projects.eu/culture-and-creativity)

and dedicated campaigns, especially towards SMEs how they can benefit from such funds and support mechanisms.

Addressed weaknesses: Brain & startup drain → migration of talented young people to other regions & countries; Medium-sized cities less successful in attracting high value-added, creative activities, innovative services and young talents

Element of the vision addressed: the innovation capacities and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills of CCI actors is significantly improved

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Public authorities
- **Beneficiaries:** CCI company (SMEs) and all stakeholders in the sector

Implementation level: Local, regional, national, international

Recommendation #16: Strengthen organizations and infrastructures supporting creatives / CCI SMEs

Relevance and background: The stakeholders working with CCIs need to upgrade skills where the CCIs require the most support. Support is needed in the administrative field, so the featured recommendation refers to recommendation no.17, but they mostly need help developing entrepreneurial skills. Infrastructure enabling gaining those skills along with physical infrastructure for work is appreciated.

Addressed weaknesses: Brain & startup drain → migration of talented young people to other regions & countries

Element of the vision addressed: The local and regional ecosystems for CCIs are strong, vibrant and well-connected

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Public authorities, Support organisations
- **Beneficiaries:** CCI company (SMEs) and all stakeholders in the sector

Implementation level: Local, regional, national, international

Recommendation #17: Reduce bureaucracy / increase flexibility of local & regional authorities

Relevance and background: The issue of bureaucracy on the different levels is quite evident in many Danube region countries. CCI companies, support organisations, young entrepreneurs experienced many difficulties with local/regional/national authorities due to complicated and long lasting bureaucracy procedures. In many cases this leads to the dissatisfaction of the possible beneficiaries. Even though, the mindset of local and regional authorities, sometimes detected as not completely flexible, did not contribute towards problem-solving and for this reasons, the possible collaborations are not established. To address this issue, there must be efforts, on one

had side by the Public institutions in regard to the simplification of the procedures and on the had side, by the possible beneficiaries in the sense of understanding and respecting the foreseen process.

Addressed weaknesses: Improper infrastructure and underdeveloped CCI ecosystem → especially considering Quadruple Helix actors

Element of the vision addressed: Public authorities use cultural planning and co-creation projects as a method to involve CCIs in urban regeneration processes

Target group:

- **Implementers:** Public authorities
- **Beneficiaries:** All stakeholders in the sector

Implementation level: Local, regional, national, international

8 Dissemination strategy and outlook

This RESTART_4Danube Common strategy on creative urban regeneration is strongly embedded in the wider European context, but it especially refers to the EU Strategy for the Danube region (EUSDR), which is the basis and framework for the transnational actions in RESTART_4Danube.²¹ The EUSDR formulates a common vision for greater cooperation and growth in the Danube countries, aiming to create synergies and coordination between existing policies and initiatives taking place across the Danube region. It is therefore a central reference point for any cross-border initiative such as RESTART_4Danube, its priority areas and targets providing for a common horizon and guidance.

The EUSDR addresses a wide range of issues, which are divided among 4 pillars – strengthening the region, connecting the region, protecting the environment and building prosperity – and further differentiating the topics of the pillars, among 12 priority areas. RESTART_4Danube works especially towards the targets listed under Priority Area 3: Culture and Tourism, Priority Area 7: Knowledge Society, Priority Area 8: Competitiveness of Enterprises, Priority Area 9: People & Skills and Priority Area 10: Institutional capacity and cooperation. The actions of the above-mentioned Priority Areas, which are particularly relevant for this strategy, are listed in the box below.

²¹ See <https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/EUSDR-ACTION-PLAN-SWD202059-final.pdf>

Table 1: EUSDR Priority Area actions addressed by the Common strategy

Priority Area	Concerned Action	How it is addressed in the Common strategy
PA3	Action 5: Promote and encourage the development of the cultural activities and creative sectors	<p>Given the aim of this strategy, which is to increase the role and unlock the potential of the CCI sector in urban regeneration, all recommendations directly or indirectly contribute to promote and encourage the development of the creative sectors</p> <p>Recommendation #9 (develop cooperation projects involving different institutions, actors & stakeholders) addresses the need to strengthen cooperation and synergies between stakeholders notably industry/companies and R&D/HER within the creative sector and across sectors (e.g. with cultural or touristic sectors)</p> <p>Recommendation #12 (develop sustainable placemaking projects) aims at enhancing cooperation between stakeholders given that these projects should be based on co-creation process but also at involving and strengthening the cultural and creative sector</p>
PA3	Action 6: Promote cultural heritage in the Danube region	<p>Recommendation #12 (develop sustainable placemaking projects) aim at preserving physical infrastructure such as identity buildings and heritage sites while supporting the economic development and diversification of activities of the concerned areas/cities</p>
PA7	Action 4: to increase awareness & visibility of science and innovation in the Danube region	<p>Recommendations #8 (support assessment of innovation capacities of CCI companies), #13 (develop creative centres) and #16 (strengthen organizations and infrastructures supporting creatives/CCI SMEs) address the need and make suggestions how to strengthen the innovative capacity of CCI enterprises (acquisition of soft and hard skills notably through trainings and programmes, lifelong learning education, audits)</p> <p>Recommendation #19 (raise the profile and visibility of CCIs in the public space) aims to raise awareness and visibility of innovation through the aspect of CCI enterprises</p>

<p>PA8</p>	<p>Action 1: to foster cooperation and exchange of knowledge between SMEs, creative industry, academia, the public sector and civil society in areas of competence in the Danube region</p>	<p>Recommendations #9 (develop cooperation projects involving different institutions, actors & stakeholders), #11 (strengthen networks and clusters of CCI stakeholders) and #12 (develop sustainable placemaking projects) contribute to support increased cooperation and exchange of knowledge between different stakeholders including SMEs, creative industry, academia, the public sector and civil society.</p> <p>Recommendations #6 (develop support programmes to strengthen capacities and skills of CCI SMEs) and #7 (Introduction of courses or modules on entrepreneurship in the curriculum of educational institutions in CCI sector) encourage partnerships between academia and support organisations</p>
<p>PA8</p>	<p>Action 3: Improvement of framework conditions, support programs and capacity building of stakeholders, to enhance the collaboration between cluster initiatives and regional innovation strategies, with an accent on rural areas</p>	<p>Recommendations #11 (strengthen networks & clusters of CCI stakeholders) & #13 (develop creative centres) strive to enhance the collaboration and exchange between all stakeholders and strive to foster community-building</p> <p>Recommendations #6 (develop support programmes to strengthen capacities and skills of CCI SMEs), #8 (support assessment of innovation capacities of CCI companies), #13 (develop creative centres), #15 (develop public support programmes for CCIs/start-ups) and #16 (support organizations and infrastructures supporting creatives and CCI SMEs) tackle the need for improving support programmes and capacity building</p>
<p>PA8</p>	<p>Action 4: to improve business support to strengthen the innovative and digital capacities of female-led-SMEs</p>	<p>Recommendations #13 (develop creative centres) and #16 (support organizations and infrastructures supporting creatives and CCI SMEs) both address the need to support the development, visibility, sustainability and activities/services of support organisations that provide services, trainings and mentoring to CCI SMEs (including female-led companies)</p> <p>Recommendations #6 (develop support programmes to strengthen capacities and skills of CCI SMEs) and #8 (support assessment of innovation capacities of CCI companies) are further recommendations for support organisations (as</p>

		provider) and CCI SMEs (as beneficiaries) that address the innovative and digital capacities of CCI enterprises, including female-led ones
PA9	Action 6: relevant and high-quality knowledge, skills and competences	<p>Recommendation #8 (support assessment of innovation capacities of CCI companies) supports the development of activities (e.g. readiness level audits, mentoring session during Danurban competition) targeting individuals and CCI enterprises and aiming at building capacity (enhance soft and hard skills, increased knowledge and competence through practical applied exercises)</p> <p>Recommendation #7 (strengthen entrepreneurial competences and digital skills in curricula of educational institutions) also aims at providing pupils and students with digital and business skills and knowledge</p>
PA10	Action 7: to strengthen the involvement of civil society and local actors in the Danube region	Recommendations #9 (develop cooperation projects involving different institutions, actors & stakeholders) & #12 (develop sustainable placemaking projects) both address the need for more participatory and co-creation processes involving civil society, citizens and local stakeholders
PA10	Action 8: to enhance capacities of cities and municipalities to facilitate local and regional development	Recommendation #9 (develop cooperation projects involving different institutions, actors & stakeholders), #10 (develop interdepartmental and cross-sectoral coordination for urban regeneration processes), #12 (develop sustainable placemaking projects) and #14 (develop holistic regional strategies) provide concrete recommendations how to improve the capacities of municipalities to develop local/regional strategies and support local/regional development

Besides the efforts on making an impact on the EUSDR and its Action plan, the Common strategy on Creative urban regeneration for the Danube region will be promoted by all Project partners and made available to other organisations, regions/countries outside of the current partnership and programme area.

Project partners are committed to circulate the strategy to their regional/national policymakers and to encourage to take the recommendations into account in the planning of the upcoming regional and national operational programmes. The strategy will be also disseminated to other regions through the Associated Strategic Partner Tallin Science Park Tehnopol (covering Baltic Sea region). The Common strategy concentrates on the Danube region and may therefore not be fully replicable to other regions due to certain regional specificities. Nevertheless, the presented recommendations are not only relevant for cities in the Danube region but are also highly transferable.

The Common strategy will be widely disseminated through the following channels and means: It will be

- uploaded and accessible on the [project website](#),
- communicated in the project social media,
- mailed to all local stakeholders listed in the project databank,
- presented at future events in which project partners are participating,
- circulated to relevant government agencies, policymakers and public authorities,
- circulated to EUSDR PA coordinators,
- circulated to various networks, e.g. network of creative urban service hubs, DTC Network.

In view of supporting the implementation and sustainability of the Common strategy, the RESTART_4Danube consortium will strive to continue the implementation of the Local Action Plans and the work of the network of creative urban service hubs. Finally, the consortium will work on identifying opportunities to

- build on and exploit the activities and results of the RESTART_4Danube project,
- monitor the implementation of the strategy.

9 Conclusions

The CCI sector is an essential catalyst of a sustainable, innovative and prosperous development at all levels of spatial aggregation between communities and cities, regions, federal and national states, in the European Union and also at a global level. CCIs are one of the fastest growing sectors globally and therefore recognized as important contributors to societal development in different key European policy documents. With almost a million enterprises, the CCI sector represent

nearly 4.5% of the total business economy.²² In this scope, many governments across the world have already recognized how the CCIs can directly and indirectly contribute to place-based regeneration efforts, helping to regenerate declining and depressed urban infrastructure.

The RESTART_4Danube project perceived that there is a need for integrated strategic approach on the local and regional level and policy actions in order to further support the CCI actors, especially SMEs, to attain more dynamic collaborations and secure the further growth. Therefore, the project aimed at contributing in the improvement of the framework conditions and policy instruments for a new model of Urban regeneration strongly involving CCIs in the Danube region. In this sense, the project consortium has joint the efforts to create the present Common strategy, Policy recommendations, Local Action Plans and concrete tools and instruments to support creative and innovative urban developments in the Danube Region.²³ Furthermore, the project contributed towards the enhanced transnational collaboration, developed cross-linkages among the sectors, ecosystems and stakeholders and provided different opportunities and platforms for public authorities (and also to the other Quadruple Helix actors) to discuss subjects related to the CCI sector and Urban regeneration and to exchange the ideas and/or best practices.

The overall aim of the present Common strategy was to maximise and leverage strengths, take advantage of opportunities, and address areas of improvement to ensure that, the CCIs in the scope of the Urban regeneration, are at the forefront of economic growth for the Danube region over the next 10 years and beyond. In this regard, the Common strategy has integrated:

- Provision of the detailed assessment of the current state of play regarding the integration of the CCIs in the Urban regeneration process in the Danube region
- Identification of the main actors and stakeholders in the CCI and Urban regeneration related innovation communities
- Identification of the major challenges and bottlenecks hindering the better collaboration and interactions among the stakeholders (Quadruple Helix approach)
- Definition of the common Vision in regards to the CCI innovation ecosystem and Urban regeneration processes
- Definition of the most relevant Intervention areas where the actions and further measures are needed to be able to improve the current status quo
- Provision of the the concrete recommendations in regards to the defined Intervention areas, to address the identified needs and challenges on the Danube region level.

In this scope, the Common strategy aims at:

²² European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Survey on access to finance for cultural and creative sectors : evaluate the financial gap of different cultural and creative sectors to support the impact assessment of the creative Europe programme, European Commission, 2015, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/65344>

²³ Project deliverables and outputs are available at the RESTART_4Danube project website: [RESTART 4Danube - Interreg Danube \(interreg-danube.eu\)](http://RESTART_4Danube - Interreg Danube (interreg-danube.eu))

- Contributing at growing awareness among public authorities regarding role and potential of CCIs in economic, social and urban development
- Increase visibility of the various good practices and programmes, available in the Danube region (and above) and enable their easier transferability
- Contribute in increasing of the synergies and cooperation by strengthen CCI ecosystems at local, national, regional, European level and
- Tackling the identified challenges in a systemic and transnational way.

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- CINEMA: www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/cinema
- CRE:HUB: <https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/crehub/>
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- STIMULART: www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/STIMULART.html
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