

Valletta Design Cluster

Organisation: Valletta 2018 Foundation

What was the challenge?

Among the most critical factors are the following:

- A lack of facilitated opportunities bringing design firms and design users (including clients) together;
- A lack or weak provision of design-oriented or design-specific support structures especially in terms of start-ups / enterprise support facilities and premises;
- A lack of a unified, strategic vision and action plan for design, together with a fragmentary nature of the current scenario in Malta constituted by different, variously interconnected actors but without a focused convergence on design activity and support;
- A lack of 'community' or 'sector' identity among design practitioners, connected to the predominantly individual (freelance) nature of design activity. The Cluster's physical positioning and aspiration both as an urban transformation catalyst as well as a point of convergence for the design sector addresses this, while also building on links with established business organisations such as the Malta Business Bureau;
- Academia-industry-government relations in terms of the development of the design sector are very fragmentary, and not connected to an overall and integrated vision, leading to untapped opportunities for potential start-up activity in design and in the wider creative economy.



How design helped?

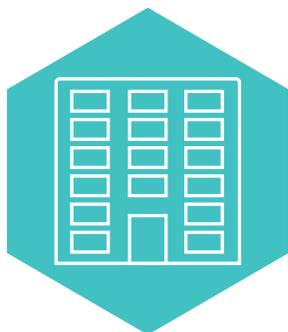
The Valletta Design Cluster aims to contribute towards the general well-being of Maltese society and beyond through its multi-faceted social, cultural and economic objectives. In this respect, the project shall be guided by the following principles:

- An acknowledgement of the entrepreneurial dimension, including social entrepreneurship, at the core of the Cluster's raison d'être;
- An acknowledgement of the essential need to open and sustain creative, business and research dialogues within a truly international and globalised scenario, by ensuring that the Cluster actively looks for and supports collaborations on the Mediterranean, European and international levels;
- An acknowledgement of the intrinsic value of the community of Valletta residents and businesses surrounding the Cluster's physical space and of their contribution to the Cluster's and Valletta's, cultural identity, by ensuring that the Cluster's operation as well as that of its users are respectful of its surroundings as well as by proposing and actively engaging in initiatives aimed at enhancing and supporting the wellbeing of this community;
- An acknowledgement of the interdependence between economic activity and the environment, and of the Cluster's obligation to invest intelligently in operational efficiency, in reduced resource wastage, in enhanced and holistic social wellbeing, and in a sustained form of social, cultural and economic activity that is conscientious and responsible, and that seeks a dynamic and positively transformative engagement with society.

What is the impact?

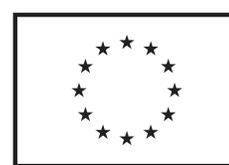
The project's impact is on multiple social, cultural and economic levels:

- Improving the urban environment in Malta's and Valletta's cultural core by recuperating and rehabilitating an area currently characterised by dereliction and dilapidation;
- Opening opportunities for social, cultural and economic activity through the investment in a Grade 1 Scheduled site and the immediately surrounding public area, thus valorising cultural heritage, stimulate new creative ventures, and improve residents' quality of life;
- Address the lacuna of a dedicated space for the development of cultural and creative industries, particularly of start-ups and SMEs in design and in design-intensive activity, and thereby address a structural lack in Malta's creative ecosystem;
- Spearhead government's Valletta Strategy, and specifically its priority intervention area (pilot area for regeneration), thereby contributing to the strategic objectives for Valletta to spread the benefits of it being Malta's cultural and economic hub to the full range of its users, residents and visitors.
- Implement a key strategic objective of the Valletta 2018 European Capital of Culture, through the direction of investment in a legacy initiative that shall continue to generate sustained support for the development of the cultural and creative sector, and that shall benefit the Valletta community.



Building creative communities

Design4Innovation partner: Valletta 2018 Foundation
Country: Malta



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund