Municipality of Timișoara
Action Plan

Action Plan for inducing SME growth and innovation via the ECoC event and legacy

Municipality of Timişoara links:

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1. Introduction

The ECoC-SME: Actions for inducing SME growth and innovation via the ECoC event and legacy project recognizes the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) Programme as a yet under-utilised opportunity for cities and regions to develop existing and prospective local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) via their early engagement in the event. The project focuses on the mega-event potentials to trigger, strengthen and diversify local entrepreneurship by encouraging their creative, cross-sectoral cooperation, clustering and networking, as well as their internationalisation.

1.1 Project Partner

In Timișoara, the local public authorities are the Local Council, which is the deliberative public authority, and the Mayor, who is the executive public authority. Within the structure of the Municipality, there is a service with relevant attributions regarding the implementation of the ECoC-SME project: Department for Implementing Cultural Infrastructure Projects (SUIPIC) which has as main attributions:

- Monitoring the actions undertaken in the program Timișoara - European Capital of Culture 2023.
- Maintaining the relationship and collaboration with the Timișoara 2021 European Capital of Culture Association.
- Monitoring and implementing the projects undertaken by the Municipality and its partners in the bid book, and supporting the cultural activities of the NGOs/foundations/associations and institutions involved in the program Timișoara - European Capital of Culture 2023.

Also, in the structure of the Municipality, within the Development Department, there is the Office for Attracting Investments, Management of Industrial Parks and Relationship with the Business sector, whose main activities are:

- Attracting investments in Timișoara.
- Managing the industrial parks and relationship with the business sector.
- Initiating and implementing local development programs and projects, and implementing various activities aiming at the economic promotion of the city.

www.primariatm.ro

1.2 Primary Policy Stakeholder

The Intercommunity Development Association Timișoara Growth Pole was established in 2009, having as members the Municipality of Timișoara, the Timiș County Council, as well as 19 neighbouring communes (Becicherecu Mic, Biled, Bucovăț, Ciacova, Dudeștii Noi, Dumbrăvița, Fibiș, Ghiroda, Giarmata, Giroc, Moșnița Nouă, Orțișoara, Pădureni, Pișchia, Remetea Mare, Săcălaz, Sânmihaiu Român, Șag, and Șandra).

The association aims to increase the quality of life and to create new jobs in the surrounding area of the Timișoara Growth Pole by rehabilitating the urban structure and improving urban services (including social services), and by developing business and entrepreneurship support structures.

The Intercommunity Development Association Timișoara Growth Pole has the responsibility to implement the Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole, which is the Policy Instrument addressed by the Municipality of Timișoara within the project implementation.

All strategic decisions regarding the implementation of the Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole are taken by the deliberative bodies of the Intercommunity Development Association, with the Municipality of Timișoara being the founding member of the Association.

www.adi-pct.ro

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1.3 Other relevant stakeholders involved in development and implementation of policy improvement

The West Regional Development Agency contributes to the sustainable development and prosperity of the West Region, by encouraging investment, permanent commitment in the process of industrial restructuring, and new job creation. It has an extremely important role in the management of Structural Funds as the Intermediate Body for the Regional Operational Programme in the West Region, and the Intermediate Body for the Sectoral Operational Programme Increasing Economic Competitiveness - priority axis 1 and priority axis 3. Since July 2020, the West Regional Development Agency has become the Managing Authority for the implementation of the Regional Operational Programmes in the next programming period, 2021-2027, for the West region, being responsible for the strategic programming of the region's economic and social development in partnership with the local stakeholders, and for the promotion of cooperation and the transfer of knowledge and skills between the business, scientific, and technological environment for the development of the region.

It offers financial support for the implementation of the Integrated Development Strategy of Timișoara Growth Pole, as this strategy is the prerequisite for financing under the Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020, Priority Axis 4 Supporting urban sustainable development.

www.adrvest.ro

The Timișoara 2021 European Capital of Culture Association was founded in 2011 in order to prepare the city's application for the title of European Capital of Culture. Following the national competition, Timișoara was designated as a European Capital of Culture for 2021, and the preparation of the cultural program for 2021 and event planning, and the coordination and implementation of the necessary measures to carry them out, as well as raising funds for the organization, promotion, and implementation of the programme become the main purpose of the association.

Due to the effects of the coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic, at the proposal of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union approved the postponement of the year in which Timișoara will hold the title of European Capital of Culture from 2021 to 2023.

The main responsibilities of the Timișoara 2021 European Capital of Culture Association relevant to the implementation of this project are the preparation and management of the cultural program in 2023.

www.timisoara2021.ro

Timiș Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture represents the interests of its members and the business community in relation to public authorities and bodies in the country and abroad.

The Timiș Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture is actively involved in carrying out actions aimed at ensuring a solid business environment at the regional level, collaborating with public, county and local public administration institutions and authorities, as well as with regional structures, in order to develop economic and social areas, including through public-private partnerships. It also elaborates, initiates and supports proposals for legislative changes and amendments to normative acts with socio-economic impact, meant to encourage the business environment and the entrepreneurial spirit, which it promotes to competent institutions, as well as to members of the Parliament.

It provides indirect political support to the implementation of the Policy Instrument (PI) by supporting the main stakeholder based on their knowledge and experience of working with and representing the business community in Timiș County, and also by having projects proposed within the Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole Projects Portfolio.

www.cciat.ro

The Territorial Office for Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperation Timișoara was established in 2005, and operates under the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism - Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises, Investment Attraction and Export Promotion Timișoara, and aims to support the business environment in four counties: Timiș, Arad, Caraș-Severin, and Hunedoara.

Its main objectives are to improve the business environment favourable to the establishment and development of SMEs, develop the productive and innovative activities of SMEs, improve SMEs' access to finance, promote the entrepreneurial culture, and support the development of cooperative activities through programmes dedicated to traditional crafts.

It provides indirect political support to the implementation of the policy instrument by supporting the main stakeholder based on their knowledge and experience of supporting the business environment, especially by developing activities of SMEs and improving their access to finance.

Politehnica University of Timișoara, founded in 1920, is a university of advanced research and education, and one of the Romanian universities with longstanding tradition.

The ID/IFR and e-Learning Centre (CeL) is an e-learning and distance learning centre established in 1998 as part of the national open distance learning network, and operates within the university. Since its creation, CeL has been involved in several European and international projects to strengthen the use of IT&C technologies in educational systems. Among CeL activities relevant for the implementation of the ECoC-SME project are in particular the training and professional sessions provided for companies or third parties in various technical or management areas of expertise. Also, in the framework of the cultural program Timișoara 2023, CeL implements the DigiCulture project.

It provides indirect political support by supporting the main stakeholder based on their knowledge and experience in delivering training courses for possible future entrepreneurs.

www.upt.ro
www.elearning.upt.ro

The West University of Timișoara is another higher education institution and research centre in Western Romania.

The Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (FEAA) implements a series of projects relevant for the ECoC-SME project, such as programmes and activities for the development of practice for economics students, the innovation of university education for future economists in management and business administration, entrepreneurship among young people in the Western Region, and for real access to the labour market through simulated enterprises, consisting of internships in a network of simulated enterprises for students and master students from faculties with an economic profile.

It runs the programme "Creative Timișoara", which familiarizes high school students with the most important resources of the city, being the result of collaboration between academia, the business sector, high schools, and public authorities.

It provides indirect political support by supporting the main stakeholder based on their knowledge and experience in delivering training courses for possible future entrepreneurs.

www.uvt.ro

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CULTURAL
PLAI

PLAI Cultural Centre is a multi-disciplinary NGO that promotes learning through diversity and uses the international cultural platform to initiate cultural projects that take the form of festivals and artistic programs, and also long-term sustainable concepts for community development. Since 2006, the PLAI Cultural Centre has developed projects such as the PLAI Festival, and continued with a co-production with the Municipality of Timişoara – JazzTM, and later within the context of ECoC 2023 – BEGA! programme.

Since 2014, the PLAI Cultural Centre has initiated several urban regeneration and social impact projects that include a physical, permanent space. It further founded AMBASADA - a social and cultural enterprise designed to support the creative and social non-profit community in the city and beyond, and later FABER - where it invested in the acquisition of the building, and recently, building.a.community - a structure of recovered containers that have become headquarters for creative and social entrepreneurs in the city.

It provides indirect political support by supporting the main stakeholder based on their knowledge and experience in organizing cultural projects and long-term sustainable concepts.

www.plai.ro

COWORK
TIMISOARA

Cowork Timişoara is a co-working space opened in 2017 with a mission to help entrepreneurs, digital nomads and other creatives find their perfect place to work. The Cowork Timişoara concept started in February 2017 with a first objective of prospecting the market and finding out if there was a need for commercial co-working spaces in Timişoara. Fast forwarding to 2021, the activity has shifted from two locations to an independent location in the city centre.

Cowork Timişoara helps the community grow in terms of start-ups and entrepreneurship, and acts as a facilitator through this process. It organizes start-up events such as Startup Survivor, Startup Weekend or Startup Coffee, and Innovation Labs to increase the start-up capacity to act in the local entrepreneurial ecosystem.

It has provided indirect political support by supporting the main stakeholder based on their knowledge and expertise in organizing and running start-up & technology events, with the sole purpose of growing and strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Timişoara.

www.coworktimisoara.com

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1.4 Stakeholders involved and their engagement within the ECoC-SME project

The **main stakeholders** involved in the ECoC-SME project, including the implementation of the Action plan, are: Intercommunity Development Association Timișoara Growth Pole, West Regional Development Agency, Timișoara 2021 European Capital of Culture Association, Politehnica University of Timișoara/CeL, West University of Timișoara/FEAA, Timiş Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, PLAI Cultural Center/Creativa/FABER, and Cowork Timișoara.

Stakeholders Engagement for ECoC SME Project

JUNE 2019
Municipality of Timișoara attends the kick-off meeting (PW1) and site-visit in Leeuvarden, NL

SEPTEMBER 2019
Stakeholders attend LLL1.1. on How can the ECoC program become an opportunity for cities and regions to develop existing and future entrepreneurial initiatives, Timisoara, RO

OCTOBER 2019
Project partner together with stakeholders attend Project workshop 2 (PW2). Open seminar(OS) and site visit in Matera, IT

NOVEMBER 2019
Stakeholders attend LLL1.2. on How can the ECoC program become an opportunity for cities and regions to develop existing and future entrepreneurial initiatives-presenting the outcomes of the first round and good practices identified during Matera PW2, OS and site-visit, Timisoara, RO

JUNE 2020
Project partner together with stakeholders attend workshop 3 (PW 3) on interregional learning based on the outcomes of the LLLs organized by project partners, online meeting

JUNE 2020
Project partner together with stakeholders attend Open Seminar (OS) on-line on continuing, restarting and adjusting amidst the Pandemic ECoC and CCI in Matera, Rijeka and Timișoara,

MAY 2020
Stakeholders attend LLL2.1. on Engagement: ways to activate potential start-ups and SMEs in the three stages of the mega-event: preparation, event year and legacy years, on-line meeting

JANUARY 2020
Stakeholders attend LLL1.3. on How can the European Capital of Culture program become an opportunity for cities and regions to develop existing and future entrepreneurial initiatives, Timisoara, RO

JULY 2020
Stakeholders and project partner Leeuwarden attend LLL2.2. on Engagement: ways to activate potential start-ups and SMEs in the three stages of the mega-event: preparation, event year and legacy years, on presenting good practices from Leeuwarden and Timisoara, online Timisoara, RO

OCTOBER 2020
Stakeholders attend LLL3.1. on Cross-sectoral partnerships, networks & clusters: how to capitalize on ECoC, Timisoara, RO

OCTOBER 2020
Stakeholders attend LLL4.1 on CCI sector in Timisoara and its region, the impact of the Covid -19 pandemic and ways of developing the sector in the ECoC mega-event preparation years, title year, and legacy years - Timisoara, RO

APRIL 2021
Stakeholders attend LLL4.2. on ways to improve the fourth version of the action plan, online meeting

FEBRUARY 2021
Stakeholders attend LLL3.2. on ways to improve the third version of the action plan, online meeting

NOVEMBER 2020
Municipality of Timișoara together with stakeholders attend the on-line discussion on retooling economic development and the cultural sector after the pandemic, online meeting.

NOVEMBER 2020
Municipality of Timișoara together with stakeholders attend first round of PW 4 (PW4.2) on presenting LLL3.1 and LLL4.1 outputs, online meeting.

In addition to the Local Learning Labs (LLLs), Project Workshops (PWs) and Open Seminars (OSs), the project partner and its stakeholder group participated in several online webinars and workshops to increase their capacities: webinar on Online meetings, City dialogue for culture, Tourism and Cultural and Creative Industries in the post Covid-19 period, European Capitals of Culture (ECoCs) and their capacity to raise local economies, Designing action plans, Cultural and Creative Regional Ecosystems, Retooling, economic development and the cultural sector after the pandemic, European Capitals of Culture as labs for creative industries: A talk of policies, infrastructures and capacity building, and Back in business SME support ecosystems for cultural and creative sectors.

2. Policy Context

2.1 General Information

The Action Plan aims to impact on:

☐ Investment for Growth and Jobs programme.
☐ European Territorial Cooperation programme.
☑ Other regional development policy instrument.

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole

https://adi-pct.ro/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/SIDU.pdf

The Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole was developed by the Municipality of Timișoara and approved by the Local Council by Decision 193/10.05.2016, and is undergoing a process of updating for 2021-2027. The revised document is planned to be finished and approved by the Timișoara Local Council in October 2021.

The studies carried out for the development of the Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole underline a number of indicators, in particular, geographical and geopolitical positioning, territorial audit/study, and diagnostic and SWOT analysis. These studies show that in terms of economic development, as the Timiș County seat and the traditional capital of the Banat region, Timișoara is a strong polarizing centre for the entire western region of Romania. With over 80% of the county's economy and more than 30% of the region's economy concentrated in the city, Timișoara is the second largest economic centre in the country after Bucharest, the capital city of Romania. Furthermore, according to several EU studies on regional development (ESPON; PlaNet CenSE, etc.), the Timișoara Metropolitan Area has the potential to polarize the entire western part of Romania and also the cross-border area (the south-eastern part of Hungary and the north-eastern part of Serbia).

This Action Plan contributes to the improvement of the Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole, Strategic Objective 1: Increasing economic competitiveness and innovation capacity through smart specialization, Programme P1.1. Developing a competitive economy based on increasing productivity and entrepreneurship by creating actions to retarget existing measures-

M.1.1.1 Optimal use of existing business infrastructure and creation of new infrastructure by encouraging local entrepreneurial initiatives, and M.1.1.2 Encouraging collaboration between public institutions, research centres, universities and the business environment, and by adding a new measure in order to be able to stimulate cross-sectoral partnerships in the ECoC 2023 context.

2.2 Description of the Policy Context

Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole

From an administrative-territorial point of view, the Timișoara Growth Pole initially included (with the composition remaining the same today) an urban center (the Municipality of Timișoara), and its area of immediate influence, namely 19 rural administrative-territorial units (Becicherecu Mic, Biled, Bucovăț, Ciacova, Dudeștii Noi, Dumbrăvița, Fibiș, Ghiroda, Giarmata, Giroc, Moșnița Nouă, Orțișoara, Pădureni, Pișchia, Remetea Mare, Săcălaz, Sânmihaiu Român, Șag, and Șandra), and the delimitation of the area of influence of the Timișoara Growth Pole was approved by Local Council Decision no. 387/2008.

This development strategy uses all the advantages of the area to fully benefit from the opportunities of external environments. Thus, by implementing the Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole, the focus is to emphasize the basic characteristics and to impose the area around Timișoara as a strategic pole of Romania, competitive in the European space, with a sustainable and innovative economy, a multicultural integrative space, and with a quality urban life attractive for both its inhabitants and for investors and visitors.

For the West region in which Timișoara and its Growth Pole are positioned, the West Regional Development Agency offers financial support for the implementation of the Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole, as this strategy is the prerequisite for financing under ROP 2014-2020, Priority Axis 4 Supporting urban sustainable development.

Focused in recent years on activities that bring high added value (automotive sector, technology and telecommunications sector, intelligent services sector), the economy of the Timișoara Growth Pole has registered remarkable progress.

Increasing the economic competitiveness and innovation capacity has been supported by significant investments, in particular in business infrastructure, in order to attract investors in high-tech areas. However, the existing infrastructure is not used to its full potential. In particular, there is still a low level of cooperation between research and development and the business environment, the activity of some research centres is not adapted to the real needs of the economy, and industrial activities using energy-consuming and polluting processes are still quite numerous. Although the services sector makes the largest contribution to the turnover of the pole, high value-added services are underdeveloped, especially smart services and knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS).

Local public authorities need to find viable solutions to remedy these dysfunctions in order to develop an economy that ensures a smart and sustainable growth. Encouraging local entrepreneurial initiatives, the collaboration between local research institutions, universities, and large investors, setting up priority economic clusters for the sectoral development of industry and services, creating an exhibition center to promote companies in the pole area, the development of the smart services and knowledge-intensive business services sectors are only some of the solutions to meet the needs of a competitive economy.

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The same applies for the cultural and creative sector, where the focus was for Timișoara to earn the title of European Capital of Culture. Now that the city holds the title, the focus needs to include supporting both existing business initiatives (SMEs) in the CCI sector, but also to foster the appearance of new business initiatives (start-ups). The nurturing of culture & heritage is already a strategic objective within the Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole, and within the current context, it presents an opportunity to support the development of the Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole to be a policy that enables with the CCI sector with new measures.

The West region of Romania.
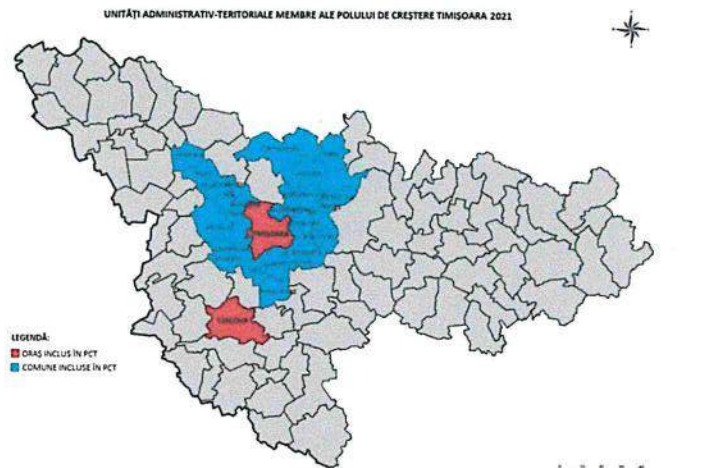
The 21 administrative-territorial units of Timișoara's Growth Pole (19 communes, Timișoara, and Timiș County)

2.3 Description of the Policy Instrument selected for improvement

Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole

The general objective of the Integrated Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole is to strengthen the polarizing role of Timișoara through intelligent and responsible development, promoting excellence in education, research, and business; so ensuring a quality urban space with a multicultural, creative, and prosperous society, connected to European values.

The vision is to consolidate the status of a competitive urban area that is open and welcoming to new people, activities, and ways of life; with a dynamic economy that is diversified and sustainable; and with a united strong and vibrant center that benefits from a high level of prosperity, the possibility to choose, good accessibility and internal and external relations; a healthy environment and remarkable life quality in accordance with environmental values; and as a place that respects its history, culture and heritage, and which assumes a leading role in the national development.

The Policy Instrument has five **strategic objectives:**

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1. Increasing economic competitiveness and innovation capacity through smart specialization.
2. Developing an integrated, complex and flexible infrastructure, and an intelligent traffic management system to increase accessibility and mobility.
3. Ensuring an intercultural, cohesive and dynamic social environment favourable to progress and inclusion.
4. Ensuring an ecological, comfortable and attractive habitat.
5. Ensuring a smart, inclusive and transparent administration.

The economy remains the driving force at the level of the Growth Pole, with local public authorities pursuing the development of an economy that ensures a smart and sustainable growth. In this context, the first objective is to develop a competitive economy, based on enhancing productivity and entrepreneurship. The optimal capitalization of the existing business infrastructure will be pursued by encouraging local entrepreneurial initiatives and providing support to SMEs. Also, the collaboration between local research institutions, universities, and the business community is seen as a priority.

In recent years, several key sectors with the potential for intelligent specialization have been identified within the Growth Pole, among which we mention the automotive and technology and communications sectors. Their development and consolidation is another important goal in order to increase the economic competitiveness and innovation capacity of the Growth Pole. If the development of enterprises in these sectors has been achieved mainly on the basis of company policies, the aim will be to multiply the horizontal links by implementing projects designed to stimulate the creation of networks or clusters of companies. The role of these associations is, through cooperation, to reduce the indirect costs of integrated companies, in order to increase their competitiveness in the market. The development of intelligent services and knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS) also remains a priority.

The strategy aims for the Growth Pole to consolidate its status as an attractive destination, being a competitive, sustainable and innovative pole, and an integrative multicultural space with a good quality of urban life.

In order to achieve these goals, the priority is to ensure increased economic competitiveness and innovation capacity, by supporting local entrepreneurial initiatives, increasing productivity, and strengthening key sectors with a potential for smart development. Facilities are also targeted for attracting foreign investors in clean, technologically-efficient areas of activity with high training potential for the local economy, and for establishing a highly skilled labour force in the area. To this end, it is particularly desired to encourage collaboration between local research institutions, universities, and large investors, to stimulate research especially in high technologies in the fields of informatics and energy efficiency, the establishment of centres of excellence, research-development, innovation and technological transfer in the fields of interest, and especially the encouragement of the establishment of economic clusters which is a priority for the sectoral development of industry and services.

2.4 Description of the need(s) to be addressed through the policy improvement

Considering that **culture is a driver for change**, cities that have previously held the ECoC title experienced a major change in the city or region, a significant increase in self-esteem and pride among citizens, a greater involvement in relation to the cultural offering of the city (especially for some

categories of audiences whose participation was less probable), new and developed cultural offerings, new skills and new opportunities for artists, cultural organizations and the CCI sector, and a better understanding and defined profile at international level, which often translates into the development of tourism and a better reputation.

Declared 2021 European Capital of Culture in 2016, Timişoara proposes a cultural programme with a narrative about setting civic energy in motion, based on the powerful metaphor of light. The Timişoara ECoC programme wants to spread the values it believes in to other cities of Europe. Specifically, the ECoC programme has the structure of a journey map across three territories that addresses the challenges Europe faces today – People, Places and Connections –, and something that audiences can explore according to their curiosity and interests.

As a result of the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and the imposed sanitary condition changes regarding the implementation of the European Capitals of Culture programmes that have occurred, Timişoara 2021 officially becomes Timişoara 2023.

This Action Plan aims to improve the policy instrument addressed by supporting two existing measures under Strategic Objective 1: Increasing economic competitiveness and innovation capacity through smart specialization, Program P1.1. Developing a competitive economy based on increasing productivity and entrepreneurship: M.1.1.1 Optimal use of existing business infrastructure and creation of new infrastructure by encouraging local entrepreneurial initiatives, and M.1.1.2 Encouraging collaboration between public institutions, research centres, universities and the business environment. Also, an additional measure enriches the policy instrument: M.1.1.3 Stimulating cross-sectoral partnerships to include the CCI, business, and technology sectors in the context of the upcoming ECoC mega-event and its legacy years.

The three actions envisaged in the present action plan will be included in the new improved Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timişoara Growth Pole list of projects to increase the capacity of the prospective entrepreneurs from the CCI, and to increase the participation of existing SMEs in all three stages of the Timişoara 2023 ECoC and its legacy years. This has already been agreed with our primary policy stakeholder, the Intercommunity Development Association Timişoara Growth Pole, who will endorse the Action Plan, and as a result, the new updated version of the Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timisoara Growth Pole will include both the new measure proposed and the actions as projects.

This improvement will manifest in the enhanced capacity building of SMEs and start-ups from the CCI and other sectors (e.g. hospitality) during the preparation, title year and legacy years of the Timişoara 2023 ECoC. Good practices identified and co-developed within ECoC-SME partnerships will be implemented via the Action Plan and will inspire prospective entrepreneurs and existing SMEs to adopt and further develop new (e.g. cross-sectoral) approaches, hence strengthening the Timişoara Growth Pole. The new measure (M.1.1.3) expands Strategic Objective 1 by explicitly bridging the economic and cultural and creative sectors to actively promote cross-sectoral initiatives. This change is necessary because at the time when the Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timişoara Growth Pole was elaborated, Timişoara had not been awarded the ECoC title. Now, the thus modified policy instrument which develops also in accordance with the new ROP 2021-2027, will take into account new approaches to culture and its impact on the business sector.

The policy change will also occur through improved governance, building on lessons learnt from more experienced partner regions (Friesland, Basilicata, Kaunas) and co-developed good practices from the ECoC-SME project. A lasting multi-stakeholder platform is expected to emerge with new governance approaches as a result of the increased participation of SMEs not only from Timișoara, but from the entire Timișoara Growth Pole.

Based on the outputs gained from organising Local Learning Labs in the ECoC-SME project frame, especially the discussions from the three rounds of the Local Learning Lab 1 and from the two rounds of the Local Learning Lab 2 covered:

- ways to increase the capacity of the SMEs to act in the ECoC context
- how to activate potential start-ups and SMEs
- finding out which ways and channels are the most efficient to communicate the role and needs of the ECoC programme
- determining if the SMEs are aware of the ECoC potential
- coming up with ways for cooperation between the business community and TM 2023 ECoC
- identifying the needs of the creative sector in relation to the ECoC programme in order to make the entrepreneurial opportunities seen
- learning about ways of facilitating access to the information needed by the entrepreneurs in order to act, and means for persuading SMEs to develop initiatives in relation to the ECoC mega event

All of the above points gave way to a number of **problems** to be addressed by the Action Plan:

1. missing a strategy from the local public authority regarding start-ups and SMEs
2. missing support tools for young entrepreneurs
3. missing a vision in terms of culture
4. missing entrepreneurship opportunities and cross-sectoral partnership in the ECoC context
5. missing a platform where various stakeholders open to cross-sectoral partnership can be viewed/contacted

The following **solutions** were considered to be the most important:

1. the creation of a multifunctional platform (on-line and physical) to develop entrepreneurship in the CCI sector – a diary kind of platform with what went well, what did not function/a platform with good practices/info gathered and disseminated to the entrepreneurial community
2. implementing recurrent programmes where the local stakeholders meet to support new business initiatives in the CCI sector while also supporting existing SMEs in the CCI sector
3. enabling partnerships between universities, companies and the CCI sector
4. driving education and supporting new initiatives in the CCI sector
5. organising cross-sectoral meetings
6. development of partnerships for pro-bono consultancy and training
7. fostering a culturally-focused environment within the local community

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The needs and solutions discussed during the first sessions of Local Learning Lab 3 focusing on cross-sectoral partnerships and networks and how to capitalise on ECoC, and Local Learning Lab 4 on ways of developing the CCI sector in Timișoara and its region in the ECoC mega-event preparation years, the title year, and legacy years were also taken into consideration when developing the actions.

3. Background and summary of ECoC-SME findings

Cultural and creative industries (CCI) in Timișoara are growing with great potential capable of transforming the city, and as a regional and national centre of reference for development through innovation, technology, and creative services. The Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth and the Master Plan for the General Urban Plan outline this vision. The challenge is represented by the need to identify competent sectors, and to compensate the need for regional and national competitiveness with public investment to ensure increased access to culture for the city's residents. This can be done by stimulating entrepreneurship and competitiveness, along with investment and financing of those cultural and creative industries with a mainly social and cultural impact, rather than an exclusively commercial impact. Studies at European level show that creative industries have a higher contribution to GDP than, for example, the automotive industry. The audio-visual industry is one of the most important components in terms of the added value that it generates, the social impact that it has in the community, the contribution to public education, and the confirmation of the cultural identity of a region. The competitiveness of the CCI products and services in Timișoara is above the national average, but additional support is needed for the city to bear the trademark of creative industries, and of creativity itself. The dominant creative and cultural industry in Timișoara is IT and new media, having already a stable and expanding market, especially foreign, and with services in the software and online advertising areas.

The local creative production focuses primarily on IT, software, gaming, product design, interior and advertising, urban art and architecture, and fashion. Timișoara is among the cities that have a strong human potential in the creative area, with an increasing critical mass of creators which directs its lucrative efforts to primarily serve an international market. Unfortunately, there is a perception among economic operators that Timișoara faces a significant migration of people who are specialized in the IT area, primarily to other cities in Romania, and also to other countries. Accordingly, the investment sector and creative production stimulation need to be more attractive for entrepreneurs from the CCI sector to encourage them to stay and develop businesses in Timișoara. The city risks losing a significant creative force, which is a high potential for the development of the city. In order to counteract such a threat, it is necessary for Timișoara, through the local cultural strategy, to establish an urban growth coalition made up of the local administration, the Chamber of Commerce, the local business sector, NGOs, public institutions of culture and education, local entrepreneurs, and creative production studios.

There is an important group of artists and architects, IT specialists and designers who try, for the most part, to survive from an entrepreneurial point of view. The most consistent investments in the science of management, leadership and market evaluations are made primarily in the IT, software, gaming and product or interior design industries. Important actors that promise to contribute to the long-term development of the creative sector are: FABER, Cowork Timișoara, and MultipleXity. However, while there are some networking type meetings and know-how transfer, as well as creative competitions in the software area, there are not so many in the ECoC context and more specifically with regard to culture.

An important **nursery of creative resources** is offered by the Faculty of Arts and Design from the West University of Timișoara, which organizes undergraduate and master studies with specializations in photography, computerized video processing, textile design, decorative arts, design, and fashion design. There is also an important association trend between the creative or cultural actors to develop businesses or associations, mainly between architects to create architectural studios in refurbished industrial areas. Such initiatives are based on significant investments, and are therefore sensitive to fluctuations in the market, primarily in the first phase of their work, and thus need tax breaks and seed funding for start-ups or facilities for renting workspaces. An investment fund for business start-ups, accompanied by a mentoring programme for the first year of operation was intended to be developed by the Municipality of Timișoara as a priority in the sphere of investment policies in the CCI sector. Such an approach would encourage the emergence of strategic business accelerators or spaces of incubation for creative business solutions. The emergence of business accelerators will be motivated by these start-up funds and by urban coalitions which confer market credibility and give clear guarantees of development.

Inter-regional cooperation has the potential to positively influence the overall management of the policy instrument. The Municipality of Timișoara and the Timișoara Growth Pole will capitalize on the examples of good practice of more experienced regions in the Netherlands and Italy, and from the "lessons learned" during their experience in the context of the European Capital of Culture. The action plan responds to the needs for the increased participation of SMEs, not only in Timișoara but also in the area covered by the entire Growth Pole, providing support to encourage local entrepreneurial initiatives, both for the smart specialization sector and for the CCI sector. This will include ways to improve the capacity of future entrepreneurs and SMEs to act in the context of the ECoC mega-event and its legacy using new and innovative methods, as well as examples of good practice identified in the project partnership and co-developed within the ECoC-SME project.

Starting with the example of good practice provided by the partner from Kaunas - a sustainable model in community integration, directions are drawn for actions 1, 2 and 3 namely attracting stakeholders from the local community as well as participants in the action. Two platforms have been identified locally: the Creativa.Community (initiated by FABER) and Timișoara Startups (initiated by Cowork Timișoara) which can be co-opted to provide mentors within the programme in Action 1. In turn, the two platforms can benefit from access to the participants attracted in the local learning workshops to be listed on the platforms, and also contribute to their development.

Continuing the discussions about communities and how they work in cross-sectoral partnerships or by themselves, with the focus on how to transform passive participants in the community into so-called "creative participants", we turned to the model suggested by the partner from Matera, and used it as inspiration in the first two actions proposed in this Action Plan, namely Action 1- fresh business ideas in CCI and mentoring, and Action 2- inspiration and role models.

Leeuwarden and its Launch Game project helped create a context that was inspiration for Action 1 in which we've addressed the need to get various participants under the same roof in order to both foster and kick-start new business initiatives in the ECoC context. Continuing the inspiration from Leeuwarden, after the visit of the workgroup to Blokhuispoort, we were inspired by the repurposing of an existing building within the city to be a creative hub for entrepreneurs and pioneers.

Rijeka's Creative Doctors action inspired us to look in our own backyard at an incredible local initiative "We donate #Oxygen for Timișoara (RO: "Donăm #Oxigen pentru Timișoara"), and to use the impact that this initiative created in the community to develop our Action 3 - Oxygen for Creatives.

There is a clear traceability between the physical anchoring, mentioned by the Rijeka and Leeuwarden partners through investments in local infrastructure in the context of the ECoC, namely in buildings that have been repurposed to serve as a physical framework for the CCI sector development.

For Timișoara, a similar project is MultipleXity - Centre for Art, Technology, and Experiment. MultipleXity (MX) is thought of as a center for cultural and technological experiment, with multiple functions that will be located in former garages and tram depots. The role of MX is to facilitate and encourage, through experimentation, initiatives and projects on the boundary between technology and art. MultipleXity will provide an open and free space with an accessible infrastructure for innovative projects and experiences, and artistic and technological concepts and products through intensive collaboration. The rehabilitation of the city's industrial heritage through this investment and its introduction into the cultural and social circuit is a first for public investment in Timișoara, and can generate a beneficial precedent for other disused industrial areas of the city and increase the attractiveness of the Bega Canal. The MX infrastructure is implemented by the Municipality of Timisoara, and its concept is developed in conjunction with the Timișoara 2021 European Capital of Culture Association. Especially, MX is seen as the project that ensures the legacy of the Timișoara 2023 programme.

Simulations from MX development plan
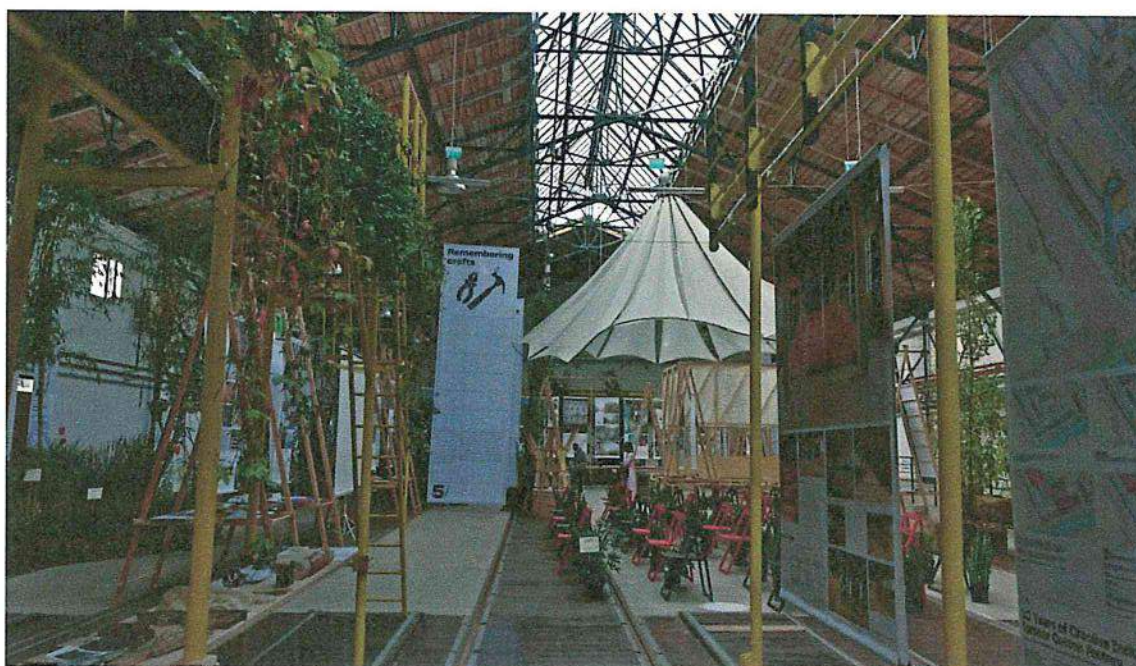
BETA 2020 (Timişoara Architecture Biennial)

Also inspired by Matera's good practice is the TraCEs - Transformative tourism across European Capitals of Culture project. This concept of transformative tourism gives tourists a changed perspective and motivation by connecting, helping, understanding and exploring the local community, which is now more than ever seen as important, when normal travel has become so disrupted because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Especially in this complicated period, transformative tourism is seen as a way for SMEs in tourism to survive the Covid-19 pandemic, and our stakeholders from the tourism sector found inspiration in this concept and developed several initiatives as a result.

SYNERGIES with other projects

Synergies with other projects funded by the EU were found during the implementation of the ECoC-SME project.

Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities (CCSC) is a policy project co-funded by the European Commission and implemented in Timişoara by one of our project stakeholders - PLAI Cultural Center/ Ambasada. From 2018 to 2021, the project developed new ways for cities and regions to bring together the public administration and the cultural sector, in order to co-create public policies. The project shows that culture and communing practices can transform neighbourhoods and cities into more sustainable entities. A study on Urban Life Quality in Timişoara was carried out, and this survey instrument has the potential to be transformed into an instrument for a cultural consumption barometer, which is a survey tool needed in the ECoC context.

www.spacesandcities.com

We were introduced to the **TraCEs - Cultour is Capital** project for transformative tourism across European Capitals of Culture at the Matera Open Seminar, by our project partner Matera Hub, a lead

partner in the project. TraCEs has focused its actions on getting tourism and creative industries to work together, in order to design and prototype new tourism experiences, specifically for European Capitals of Culture, and aiming at promoting "transformative tourism" as a more sustainable, accessible and experiential form of tourism where travellers become part of a real life experience in strict connection with locals and the hosting place. This concept changed perspectives and motivations by connecting, helping, understanding and exploring the local community, which again is of key importance when travel is so complicated because of the Covid-19 pandemic context.

The Municipality of Timișoara became an associated partner of TraCEs by signing a letter of interest towards the objectives, actions and results of the project. One of its products, The Game of TraCEs, is a platform for hosting the transformative tourism experiences of ECoCs, and a place where the creative industries of ECoCs will be mapped and connected, and was promoted to our stakeholder group and collaborations are foreseen within our Action 3 Oxygen for Creatives.

www.cultouriscapital.eu

One of our main stakeholders in the project, the West Regional Development Agency, is implementing **CINEMA - Creative Industries for New Urban Economies in the Danube Region**, an Interreg Danube Transnational Programme project. CINEMA's objective is to improve the innovative framework conditions for creative industries and urban regeneration in the Danube Region by developing and testing innovative models, tools and services based on cross-fertilisation and start-up actions among creative industries and the urban economy sectors like retail and small businesses. As both our projects are considering the creative industry as a cradle of innovation and an underestimated economic asset with high potential to contribute to the revitalisation of cities, we exchange experience and work closely together to improve existing policies, institutional dialogue and cooperation. Within the CINEMA project, West RDA will develop a portfolio of services centred around training for innovation, funds available for the CCI sector, and the internationalization of businesses using the connection with the Enterprise Europe Network.

https://adrvest.ro/internationalizare/proiecte

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4. Actions and timeframe

Part I – General information

Project: **PGI06047 ECoC- SME Actions for inducing SME growth and innovation via the ECoC event and legacy**

Partner organisation: Municipality of Timişoara

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): not relevant

Country: Romania

NUTS2 region: Vest

Contact person: Lavinia Simion, project manager for the Municipality of Timişoara

email address: lavinia.simion@primaraitm.ro

phone number: +40 744391209

Part II – Policy context

| The Action Plan aims to impact: | ☐ | Investment for Growth and Jobs programme |
| | ☐ | European Territorial Cooperation programme |
| | ☑ | Other regional development policy instrument |

Name of the policy instrument addressed: **Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timişoara Growth Pole**

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

The three actions envisaged bring a new, proactive and innovative perspective aiming at increasing the capacity of the prospective entrepreneurs to act, and stimulating cross-sectoral partnerships between public institutions, research centres, universities and the business environment. This retargets the already existing M.1.1.2 in the ECoC context, thus contributing to industry well-being. The C2B Hackathon, Creative Talks and Matchmaking Fair, and the Oxygen for Creatives Platform are interconnected, complementary actions with the purpose of improving the policy instrument addressed, enriching Objective 1 Increasing economic competitiveness and capacity of innovation through smart specialization, measures M.1.1.1 Optimal use of existing business infrastructure and creation of new infrastructure by encouraging local entrepreneurial initiatives and M.1.1.2 Encouraging collaboration between public institutions, research centres, universities and the business environment, and **adding a further measure, M.1.1.3 Stimulating cross-sectoral partnerships to include the CCI, business, and technology sectors in the context of**

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the upcoming ECoC mega-event and its legacy years.

The timing of the Action Plan is an advantage as the Integrated Urban Development Strategy Timișoara Growth Pole is currently undergoing an updating process for 2021-2027, and the actions envisaged will be included in the list of the projects of this strategy to be financed by the Municipality of Timișoara. The existing measures will be kept and retargeted to take into consideration the Timișoara 2023 ECoC context, and the new proposed measure will also be introduced.
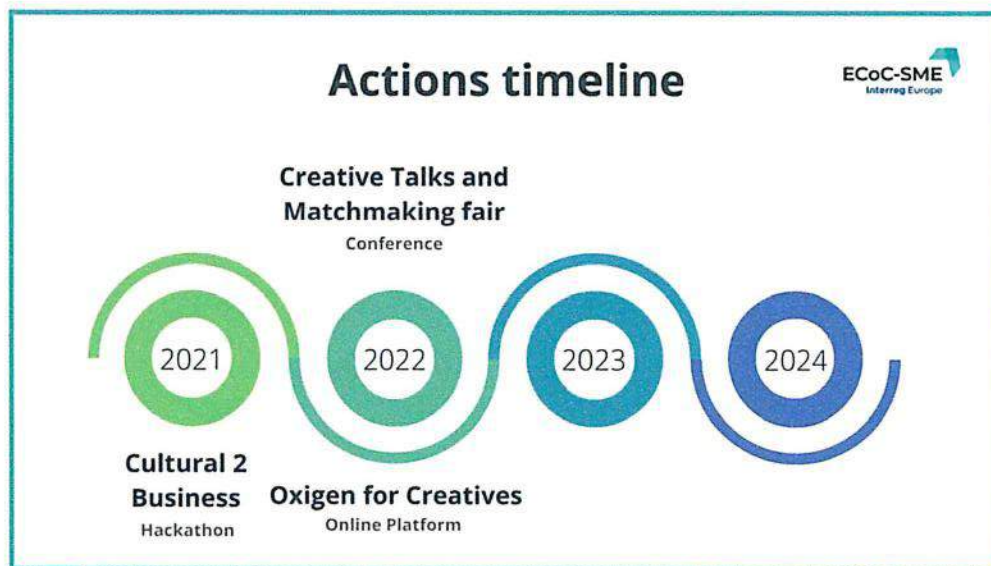
4.1 ACTION 1 - Cultural to Business (Cultural2Business/C2B) hackathon

An event that brings together representatives of the CCI, IT&C and business sectors under the same roof, thinking and developing cultural approaches to new business initiatives. The current action improves the policy instrument addressed by increasing the capacity of the CCI, IT&C and Business sectors to act in the ECoC context, thus contributing to a set of professionals which offer long term support to Action 3.

1. **Background**

The cultural and creative industry (CCI) plays an essential but often overlooked part of start-up promotion. Through the ECoC-SME project, the Municipality of Timișoara aims at building an increased capacity of SMEs from the CCIs, smart specialization, and other sectors related to ECoC to act in all its three stages: preparation, the mega-event year and legacy years via interregional exchanges, partnership cooperation, and stakeholder engagement. Based on what we have

discovered and discussed with our stakeholder's group in our Local Learning Labs, we looked for best practices from our project partners. The proposed action is seen as a method to help prospective entrepreneurs in developing their cultural business, and for existing SMEs to develop new products in relation to the ECoC mega-event and its legacy.

The innovation that the Cultural 2 Business programme brings to the local community is the way in which it brings together representatives of the CCI, IT&C and Business sectors under the same roof, thinking about and developing cultural approaches to business new initiatives.
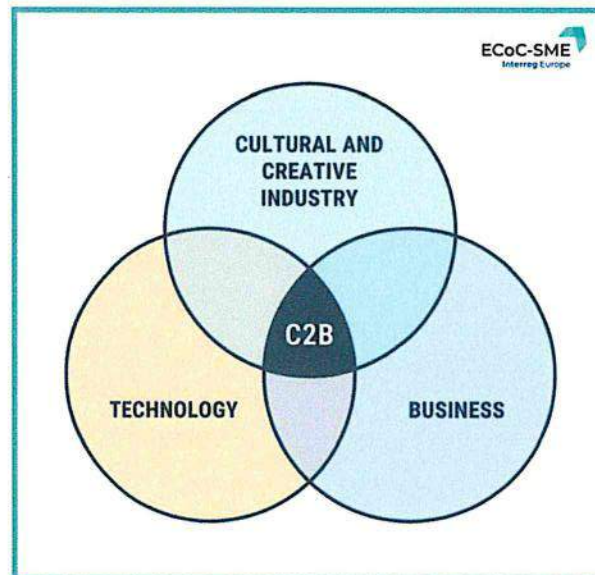
2. Action

The proposed action is a result of the inspiration that the Municipality of Timișoara drew from the ECoC-SME partnership with Leeuwarden, more specifically with The Incubator Foundation. Thus, the CCI and IT&C sectors in Timișoara and its Growth Pole can learn from a more experienced city. This good practice will encourage not only entrepreneurs from Timișoara, but also from its region. This approach comes as a support for both prospective entrepreneurs and also well developed SMEs to create further approaches that have been found successful up to 2023, the new year for the Timișoara ECoC.

Using as a starting point the good practice identified from our partner from Leeuwarden – the Cultural Launch Game, we considered it equally necessary to have a replication adapted to the local culture. In the Cultural Launch Game programme, we identified essential values for the local community in Timișoara: mentoring, collaboration, co-creation, a context, and also support for new initiatives in the cultural and creative field, that would offer the possibility to members of the local community to showcase their new projects and initiatives that can then be developed into business initiatives. Thus, by maintaining these values, we adapted our own programme with components already familiar to the local community, such as: organizing it in the form of a hackathon that offers a wide possibility in terms of time for participants and mentors to support the process of co-creation, mentoring and learning, but also the possibility for these projects to be placed on a viable business trajectory.

Besides making this interregional learning process available within the project partnership, the local learning labs organized at a local level, gave us important information:

- there is no know-how on starting a business in the CCI sector, hence a need to connect representatives of the sector with experts in the business area
- there is no technology know-how CCI sector, so we understand a need for an interconnection with people in the IT&C sector
- there is a need to create a context through which local stakeholders can have access and support to draw up new initiatives in the CCI sector
- there is no place where information can be accessed by future entrepreneurs within the CCI sector

Therefore, we consider that the implementation of a Cultural to Business programme has to cover these identified needs at a local and regional level.

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The main action is the organization of a hackathon-like event - Cultural to Business (C2B) – held over a weekend (Friday – Sunday). During the event, participants can develop business ideas in the creative and cultural sector with the help of mentors. The programme is free and addresses both people already involved in the CCI sector and people specializing in technology (applications, algorithms, any representative of the IT & C sector), marketing and communication, business, and management.

The aim of the event is to bring participants with as diverse specializations as possible under the same roof, so that they can co-create and collaborate together to develop projects in the CCI sector with an impact in the business area.

The following requirements are needed to implement such an event:

• Development of a programme identity (name, logo, visual identity manual)

• Development of an online social media page (Facebook recommendation)

Once the online presence of the programme is created, it can move forward with promoting the concept among the local community and preparing the implementation of the program.

Good event management processes such as registration forms, event management and feedback documents will be created online. It is recommended to use an online form tool (e.g. Google Forms, 123FormBuilder). Thus, both the number of potential participants and the diversity and subdomains from which they come can be measured during the campaign to promote the program.

Structurally, the Cultural to Business programme consists of at least two pre-events whose purposes are generating business ideas in the CCI (Cultural and Creative Industries) sector in the context of ECoC, and promoting the programme within the local community. The two pre-events, depending on their context from the moment of their implementation, will take place in two physical locations, or in the online environment. A location familiar to the creative community will be used to organising the C2B event. This hackathon can be organized on its own, or as part of a cultural event. An example of this is the 2020 edition of the Flight Festival, which added to its artistic features innovative entrepreneurial approaches which enjoyed great success among

participants.

The two pre-events will contain an idea presentation session, a teamwork session, and a networking component, aiming at generating content and attracting participants for the C2B programme. The ideation process within the pre-events is inspired by good practices in other programmes developed within the local community like Innovation Labs and Startup Survivor, and its role is to facilitate the co-creation process. Running the pre-events will be one or more facilitators based on the number of attendees, and also mentors to support the process.

The pre-events are designed to help promoting the C2B event, both in attracting participants and attracting ideas, so that by the time of the actual hackathon we have a really good starting point. So we use as an idea and participant funnel the two iterations prior to the event, and we unite them with the ideas shared directly within the C2B event. We learned that at a local level, actively engaging participants prior to the event helps to boost the impact of the main event and also assures a more successful outcome overall.

Together with the pre-events that take us to the main event, there should be a constant open call to submit ideas. This way, the ideas can benefit from support prior to the event in terms of:
- having access to team members that they might need
- getting feedback on the idea in order to reshape it up until the main event takes place
- being able to promote existing ideas already submitted in order to attract new participants

The C2B hackathon will take place over a weekend, thus giving the possibility for wider participation.

Cultural2Business

DAY 1	Idea presentation (livestreamed)
	Team formation
	Networking session
DAY 2	Mentoring sessions: Development a business plan: idea validation, customer profiling and financial planning
DAY 3	Mentoring sessions: Preparation for the final pitch
	Final presentation of the business plan (livestream)
	Networking session: Exchange of contacts and ideas following the presentations and the event

The reason why the opening and final presentations are suggested to be public events is to provide a transparent perspective that the program can have on the local community, and also to

give the whole community the opportunity to view the results, namely the final presentations within the program.

The final presentations are followed up by an awards ceremony so that the winning teams can get recognition, while at the same time all the participants get feedback. Within the final presentation a jury panel will take part, ask questions, and then deliberate based on criteria like impact of the problem and solution, feasibility and potential, and a working prototype developed within the weekend.

If the entire action takes place in the online environment due to the situation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic context at that time, the structure of the programme does not change. Instead, the online transition will look like this:

- Instead of using a physical location (conference space), a virtual space will be used. In the case of pre-events, the Zoom platform can be used to organize them, and in the case of The Cultural 2 Business hackathon, the Discord platform can be used together with StreamYard and YouTube live for broadcast.
- The management of participants and teamwork sessions, mentoring, and workshops within the programme are also translated online, and the Discord application can be recommended for this management.
- The opening presentation of the programme will be public, as well as the final presentations. For this purpose, it will be possible to use a combination of tools and platforms such as OBS, StreamYard, and YouTube Live.

3. Players involved

The event brings together:

a. Organizers - an organization that will be able to support the smooth running of the programme with access to an organizing team, and also to a local network of potential stakeholders involved in the programme. Among the specializations of the team members are communication and marketing, design, logistics, and project management. An important aspect related to the role of the organizer is the engagement of a facilitator who will play the voice of the program for all of the people present at the event.

b. Participants - In order to facilitate innovation, create disruption, and develop new initiatives, participants should include participants from the CCI sector, participants with a background in business, management, communication, marketing, and last but not least, participants with a background in technology. In addition, students from the West University of Timișoara, Faculty of Arts and Design, Faculty of Music, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, and the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics, and students from the Politehnica University of Timișoara, Faculty of Automation and Computing, Electronics, Telecommunications and Information Technologies, Faculty of Management in Production and Transportation, and Communication Sciences should participate.

c. Mentors – Mentors are an essential element in guiding the programme and its participants. Mentors are members of the local community who have experience in business and in developing cultural-creative initiatives. Mentors are involved in the pro-bono programme to support a cause that benefits the entire community in the long run. Examples of potential mentors from the local community should be representatives of the key stakeholders, like the Creativa platform, Flight Festival, JazzTM, Growceanu Angel Investment Group, MultipleXity, Timișoara Capital of Culture 2021 Association, and Cowork Timișoara.

The role of mentors is to provide:

- practical business information and coaching in validating the business plan
- consultancy in the cultural sector
- access to own resources (contacts, partners)

d. Judges - will take part in the final presentations and have a key role to evaluate the projects developed within the C2B hackathon. Judges are involved in the pro-bono programme to rank the presented projects based on criteria like:

- impact of problem and solution
- feasibility and potential
- working prototype developed within the weekend

e. Partners - partners in the programme are public institutions, organizations or companies that bring resources within the programme supporting the Cultural2Business hackathon with:

- mentoring hours both within the event and possible post-event consulting for teams
- money prizes for the winners or for all the teams
- support in co-financing the event to cover part or all costs
- promoting the event among the members of the organization or support in promoting the event in the community

Examples of partner institutions or organizations: West Regional Development Agency, Cowork

Timişoara, Timiş Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, Intercommunity Development Association Timişoara Growth Pole, FABER, French Chamber of Commerce, Industry Romania, etc.

4. Timeframe (August - November 2021)

The implementation period will be defined by the timeframe in which the actions can be implemented from the point of view of the Interreg Europe project. For the development of such an event, a preparation of approximately 3 months is necessary, during which:

a. The identity of the hackathon is created and the promotion in the local community begins
b. The registration process for the hackathon is started
c. The two pre-events are implemented
d. There is a Cultural to Business programme
e. Post-event follow-up is done with participants and mentors

5. Costs, including costs structure
Estimated around 10,000 – 20,000 lei (2,000 – 4,000 euro).

Costs include human resources in charge of implementing the C2B hackathon, hosting the events (including pre-events), coffee-breaks, stationery and supplies, and optional offline and online promotion.

There is a possibility that part of the costs related to the spaces and facilities in the spaces will be substantially reduced if the events take place in spaces owned by the Municipality of Timişoara.

The Cultural2Business hosting can be reduced as an active expense if it is hosted by the Municipality of Timişoara.

1. The main supplies can be made available by the Municipality of Timişoara.
2. If the event transits into an online context, the physical costs no longer exist.
3. Costs may be added only in the case that the event would take place in an online context.

6. Sources of funding (if relevant):

1. The local budget of the instrument policy owner – the Municipality of Timişoara. The costs for the organisation of the C2B Hackathon will be financed from the local budget, a fact that will be clearly stated in the revised Integrated Urban Development Strategy for the 2021–2027 period.

2. Possible local partnerships - there is the possibility to gain additional support from local partners if the C2B Hackathon will be organised in collaboration with Flight Festival for an extra impact in the sector, or from sponsors (e.g. prizes for post hackathon implementation of projects, etc).

7. Expected KPIs

- number of participants at pre-events
  - estimated: a total of 30-40 participants attending the two pre-events

- number of participants at the C2B hackathon
  - estimated: 25-50 participants to attend the hackathon
- number of ideas generated
  - estimated: 7–15 ideas to be generated, of which 5–10 ideas will be worked on throughout the weekend with a team formed around those ideas
- percentage of participants at the C2B hackathon from the CCI sector, business and technology
  - estimated: 45% CCI sector, 45% Technology, 10% Business
- mass media and social media reach for the C2B event
  - estimated: 5k social media and online mass media reach

The above estimations are in direct correlation with the budget. Shifting to an online or offline context should not significantly impact the above estimations.

For monitoring the above KPIs, a process should be set in place to track registrations, mentoring sessions, ideas pitched and worked on throughout the weekend, and also the reach of the C2B hackathon on online platforms.

4.2 ACTION 2 - Creative Talks & Matchmaking Fair

An event offering learning and networking experiences for a coagulation of the local cultural and creative ecosystem. A hybrid concept where 'conference meets exhibition' to maximise the impact and interaction with the local community. By bringing together local stakeholders we facilitate learning and cross-sectoral partnerships, which are firmly tied to the addition of the measure to the policy instrument that supports cross-sectoral partnerships in the ECoC context (M.1.1.3). The current action serves as a funnel for Action 3.

1. Background

Following the experience gained in the local learning labs organized within the ECoC-SME project, the need for a real connection of the local creative communities in the CCI sector was identified. Regarding cross-sectoral partnerships, the following aspects were observed and discussed:

- the existence of formal, inactive, and only superficial partnerships
- the fact that there is no cross-sectoral connection between the CCI sector and the business and/or IT&C sector

At the same time, using the set of good practices mentioned by the Matera, Leeuwarden, Rijeka, and Kaunas partners, we identified that the community plays a key role in coagulating and engaging the city, especially in the context of the ECoC.

The benefits of such an action are various, depending on the role played within the event:

- speakers and panellists get to share know-how, while connecting with fellow speakers & panellists and debating various points of view
- match-making fair exhibitors get exposure within the local community and get to know

one another
- the wide-audience gets to connect, share contacts and initiate potential collaborations

This action aims at encouraging collaboration between the cultural and creative community, universities, youth, and the business sector.

2. Action

Organizing a Creative Talks & Matchmaking Fair, taking place over two days, which combines learning elements delivered in the form of a conference, and networking elements developed in the form of a matchmaking fair. Such an event will bring together the CCI sector, the business sector, and 'enablers' for this sector as well as for the business environment and experts in the IT&C area.

Through such an action, we can actively contribute to the coagulation of the local ecosystem by involving CCI stakeholders with the local business sector and IT&C specialists.

The Creative Talks & Matchmaking Fair will take place over two consecutive days at the end of the week. In the first part of the first day and also on the second day there will be a matchmaking fair, followed by conferences (discussions in the form of presentation-talks up to 20 minutes long), followed by networking sessions at the end. The discussion topics can cover topics from the CCI, business and technology, but should ensure a constant bridge between the sectors. Organizing end of the day panel discussions would help emphasize the importance of collaboration and cooperation between the industries in the ECoC context, in direct relation with the opportunities offered by the cultural programme.

The entire event should be open to the wide public as a means of awareness and local support. As a completion of the event, a follow-up action should be implemented.

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Creative Talks & Matchmaking Fair

Day 1 & 2

Talks

Fair

Networking

**Joining the local community on
Timisoara Startups
and
Creativa.Community**

The power of bringing in speakers with a background in the CCI sector from both a national and possibly international scene will enable local stakeholders to benefit from various perspectives, in order to develop a vision for the local scene. This particular component of the event also helps in creating international bridges between CCI stakeholders, and thus encouraging the constant sharing of know-how in both directions. Participants in the C2B Hackathon will be invited to participate in the Creative Talks & Matchmaking Fair, either as exhibitors in the fair or as speakers presenting their experience in the hackathon for inspiring others.

The fair creates a showcasing opportunity for CCI sector stakeholders, and service providers represented by the IT&C and business sectors. This way, they can create collaborations between themselves as the main beneficiaries of the program. Also, as part of a secondary set of beneficiaries, the fair component is open to a wide audience as an open-to-all fair in which anyone can browse and interact through the booths. With this in mind, the aim is to create awareness for the stakeholders of the CCI sector, and to bring the general community closer to what these institutions and companies are creating.
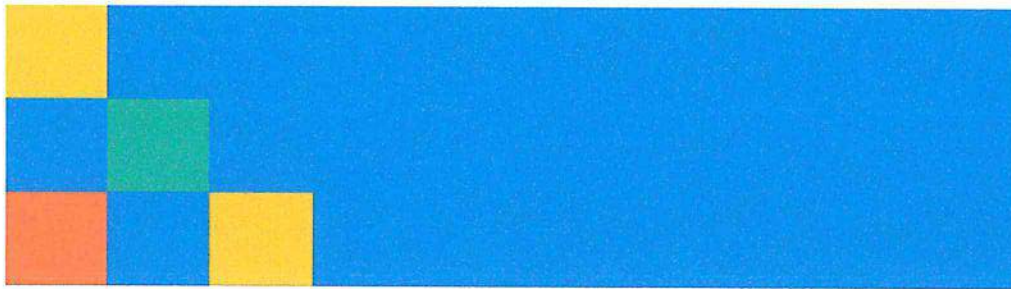
1

Inspiring talks

Developed to kickstart curiosity, share concepts
& ideas, promote development.

2

Showcase: Matchmaking fair

Showcasing your products & services to a wide
audience.

3

Network: Matchmaking fair

Network & Connect. Expand your connection
within the industry & cross-sectoral.

4

Follow-up

Join the local platforms: Creativa.Community
and TMStartups.com

The content created in terms of the network should be directed to join the two local initiatives that highlight the local stakeholders: Creativa.Community and Timișoara Startups.

Creativa is an open platform for individuals or groups who can offer creative answers to various challenges, being at the same time an opportunity for creative exposure and a resource for all those who need creative impulses in their projects. More can be found on: https://www.creativa.community

Timișoara Startups is a local platform showcasing both technology start-ups and SMEs within the local community, and also the stakeholders behind the showcased initiatives together with enablers of the local ecosystem. More can be found on: https://www.timisoarastartups.com

An identical transition of the program in an online format will be proposed if required by the pandemic context at the time of implementation. There is the possibility to make a 100% online transition, using as an example a platform that makes the online transition of an entire conference location, thus offering: a stage, stands, and a networking area, all in virtual format. Examples of such platforms are MyConnector, a Romanian conference space provider, or Hopin.to. This would offer the possibility to focus on the networking aspect, together with showcasing (within the fair) and know-how sharing on stage for the talks. A potential physical

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location would be the Multiplexity - Centre for Art, Technology and Experiment.

3. Players involved

- Organizers - The Municipality of Timișoara will organize the event together with an organisation responsible for organising activities prior to the fair and the fair itself (implementing the concept, attracting exhibitors, speakers, facilitators, and promotion activities).
- Exhibitors - a mix between existing businesses in the CCI sector (DIY/handmade workshops, arts and crafts, sound, audio and video, performance arts) as well as local cultural organizations, local cultural institutions, non-profit organizations.
- Speakers - professionals in the CCI, business, and technology sectors. The purpose of the speakers will be to inspire and discuss how projects can be co-created in the CCI through cross-sectoral partnerships, and also how they manage to develop successful initiatives.
- Participants - visitors from the community who are curious to learn more about local initiatives, and who wish to interact with exhibitors and speakers at the fair.
- Possible partners - local companies aimed at developing the local cultural sector (e.g. photo-video service providers, travel agencies, etc.).

4. Timeframe (April - June 2022)

The time period will be defined by the timeframe in which the actions can be implemented from the point of view of the Interreg Europe project. For the development of such an event, approximately 3 months are necessary for preparation, during which:

a. the identity of the event is created and promotion in the local community begins

b. a campaign is created to bring exhibitors to the fair. Exhibitor access can be managed in such a way as to ensure the fullest possible representation of the CCI sector

c. a list of potential speakers is created based on which action is taken in, drawing up the agenda with presentations and discussions in the form of a panel

d. the entire event is promoted to the local general audience

e. post-event follow-up is done with fair participants and speakers

5. Costs

Estimated around 25,000 - 30,000 lei (5,000 - 6,000 euro).

Costs include human resources, venue rental and services needed, travel and accommodation for speakers, coffee-breaks, and online needs in case of a shift due to the COVID-19 context.

6. Sources of funding (if relevant):

1. The local budget of the instrument policy owner – the Municipality of Timișoara. The costs for the organisation of the Creative Talks & Matchmaking fair will be financed from the local budget, a fact that will be clearly stated in the revised Integrated Urban Development Strategy for 2021–2027 period.

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2. Possible local partnerships

7. Expected KPIs

- number of inspiring talks
  - estimated 6 to 8 talks, including potential panel discussion(s)
- number of international speakers
  - estimated 1 to 2 international speakers
- number of exhibitors
  - estimated 10–15 exhibitors
- promotional reach on mass media and social media
  - estimated 7k–10k reach on social media
- approximate number of guests attending the Creative Talks & Matchmaking Fair from the community
  - estimated 100–150 guests attending talks and visiting the exhibitors across the entire program

The above estimations are in direct correlation with the budget. Shifting to an online or offline context should not significantly impact the above estimations.

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4.3 ACTION 3 - Oxygen for Creatives

A platform which offers solutions to various problems and challenges in the CCI sector and brings people and funding resources together for a better community of creative people. Oxygen for Creatives develops a sustainable mechanism which contributes to solving real challenges of the Cultural and Creative sector in the long term by emphasizing the need for cross-sectoral partnerships linked to the newly added M.1.1.3 in the policy instrument.

1. Background

Timișoara as a community needs continuity, and the previously defined actions are focused actions meant to create spark, ideate and bring the community together. Oxygen for Creatives is meant to be the next step, in the form of a long term action for after the project will come to an end, and an action for 2023 and further for a sustainable cultural and creative ecosystem. It also forms a possible legacy project for the Timișoara 2023 ECoC.

The coronavirus pandemic has challenged us as a community to find resources through which to be with each other in these complicated times. To demonstrate the success of the solidarity campaign to fight Covid-19, "We donate #Oxygen for Timișoara (RO: "Donăm #Oxigen pentru Timișoara") showed us that we are in fact a strong community.

The pandemic we are all going through has tested and continues to test to the maximum the adaptability and resilience of our community. Between standing aside and letting others take care of themselves, and the desire to act together for the common good, for which everyone comes with their expertise, talent and resources, the Municipality of Timișoara and the community partners decided to show solidarity to overcome problems the city is facing during the pandemic, especially the health sector and the hospitals which are on the front line.

The Municipality of Timișoara, non-governmental organizations, volunteers and entrepreneurs have joined forces to support hospitals and the community in the face of the coronavirus pandemic in order to increase the resources with which doctors can save lives, each having the power to "donate" much needed breaths for patients on their way to healing. Long-term solutions can only develop where all forces meet. Crises have always shown the value of community, and the power of the world working together. Only together can we build a future, functional and sustainable community, beyond emergencies.

The New European Bauhaus initiative presented by the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in October 2020 has given new life to this revolutionary movement through a creative and interdisciplinary initiative, convening a space of encounter to design future ways of living, situated at the crossroads between art, culture, social inclusion, science and technology.

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These moments of shared work will strengthen the CCI sector and create lists of priorities and potential actions to be carried out, while respecting the role of each individual and/or organisation involved.
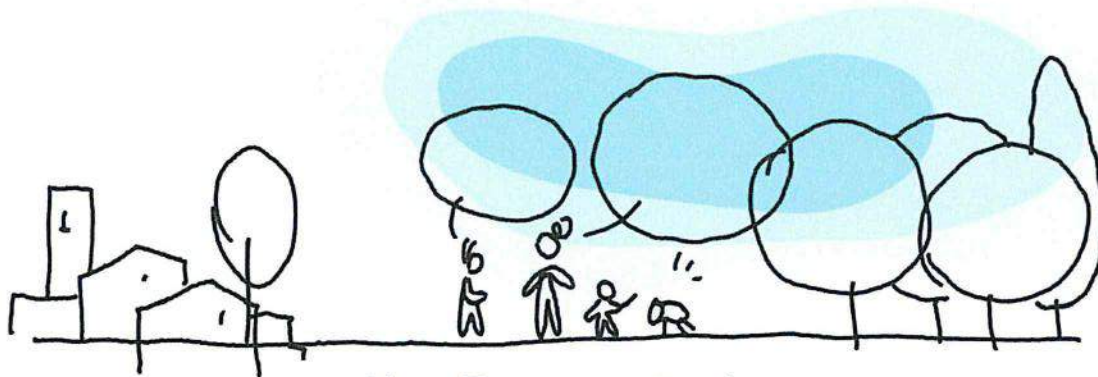
New European Bauhaus
beautiful | sustainable | together

All together, Oxygen for Creatives is an outcome and our inspiration from this new EU initiative and the Creative Doctors action developed by the Rijeka partner, which also relates to the way in which people have responded to community needs in the difficult Covid-19 context, and transformed this into a creative tool for entrepreneurs. While a local success story, when coupled with feedback from the focused actions (Action 1 and 2), there is a clear need for the community to take things to the next level.

2. Action

Oxygen for Creatives is a digital tool where challenges in the cultural and creative sector meet funding and human resources. In order to create a flourishing ecosystem for the Cultural and Creative sector, there is a need for a go-to place where besides involving the local stakeholders, there is a mechanism in place to document problems and then come up with solutions that involve either funding and/or contributors - which can be individuals, private companies or public institutions.

Oxygen for Creatives is a platform intended to enable the cultural entrepreneurial spirit, and for arts and cultural organizations to be more entrepreneurial so that they contribute to the ECoC 2023 legacy years to shape a better society.

It is a kind of greenhouse for start-ups where cultural and creative actors with innovative business ideas can be also consulted and trained. It is a contact point for entrepreneurially thinking and acting people to share, network and mutually benefit from one another, and a platform for cultural and creative industry activity in which start-up consultants and cultural entrepreneurs will advise teams or individuals from the CCI sector and work with them on their respective start-up ideas.

It will provide not only consulting services, but also workshops, networking meetings and events for the respective creative industries sector. Thus, creative ideas will be promoted, supported and enriched, and entrepreneurial thinking in the creative industries will have a place for protected development. Ultimately, a community will emerge that will enable them to convert their creative and innovative businesses into scalable business models in the ECoC legacy years.

OXYGEN FOR CREATIVES

A platform for bridging the gap between **problems, funding,** and **community**

Challenges + Funding + People

The aim of the platform is to enable and foster cultural entrepreneurial spirit. The creatives will learn, create and collaborate within cross-sectoral partnerships locally and at an international level in the ECoC context of cities and regions that have fostered or will foster this mega-event.

The general goal of this platform is to empower creative and cultural start-ups. Supporting models designed to enable local artists to work independently and network internationally will be selected from the more experienced partners in the project such as Matera Hub, RiHub–Rijeka, and Incubator Foundation Leeuwarden. This could be done in close cooperation with the Vytautas Magnus University Centre for enterprise practice from Kaunas, as a project partner.

Creative entrepreneurs often apply a project funding logic that is not entrepreneurial. In the platform we aim to tackle this problem, and the goal is to link creative industries and entrepreneurship, and to strengthen entrepreneurial thinking and acting in the creative industries sector.

Start-up consultants for the creative industries sector will be trained and will then advise teams from the creative industries. Start-up ideas with a viable business model, interdisciplinary teams, and with a high degree of innovation and local social and creative relevance will be promoted. The platform will thus become a powerhouse for the local cultural and creative industries sector. Their strength may further grow out of international and virtual networking, based on the international connection to the European creative industries sector in the ECoC context. The creatives will learn, create and collaborate within cross-sectoral partnerships locally and also in international environment in the ECoC context of cities and regions that have fostered or will foster this mega-event.

The platform works as an aggregator with the support of an administration team that classifies problems as internal tickets, showcases them on the platform so that they can be visible both for potential funding opportunities and also volunteering efforts. This translates into a website where anyone can view the published problems, and can contribute to them with either financial support or with time and know-how. In the administrative panel where only the team has access, problems are received and sorted.

This works like a ticketing system where each problem is prioritised by the administrative team before being published. At the same time, the team of experts search within a local database of potential private companies to support the showcased opportunities with funding.

Taking into account the local success of "Oxigen pentru Timişoara" and similar initiatives meant to bridge gaps, showcase challenges and offer further support in matching needs with resources, there is a clear collaboration opportunity with a focus on the cultural and creative sector, especially in the ECoC context and its legacy.

Considering the C2B hackathon where problems can be identified within the event and solutions can be kickstarted, Oxygen for Creatives could be considered as the platform that can further support these initiatives. The support can come as funding for the implementation of the solutions identified and/or allocating more community members to implement the solution.

Bridging the gap between needs and opportunities has never been more important. In order to foster cross-sectoral partnerships and engagement within the community, problems should be identified, signalled, and then matched with proper solutions. These solutions can come in various forms, and can be seen as either funding opportunities where we can introduce a crowdfunding method to raise the amount needed and offer various stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to a common cause, or they can require human resources, where people are needed to contribute by providing know-how.

Crowdfunding has become an increasingly popular method to raise both capital and awareness, and is used across the globe for launching new initiatives. Be it humanitarian causes, new businesses starting out, or community initiatives that need support with the aid of crowdfunding, problems can be showcased and contributions can come in a digital format.

Thus, we envisioned Oxygen for Creatives as a platform that could stand out in the community, and while being able to function in times of the COVID-19 pandemic when it is needed might be an important aspect, it will also function within regular times when the community should always come together.

The structure of the Oxygen for Creatives platform will be created in consultation with the CC sector in a joint co-creation process. This digital tool will be developed as part of the MultipleXity (MX) future infrastructure, the main Timişoara 2023 ECoC legacy project, and as soon as the space is open to the cultural and creative sector, this platform will also have a physical space to grow even more.

3. Players involved

In order for the platform to deliver its intended use, the following players should be involved:
- Organisation - creation and maintenance of the technical platform: in charge of delivering the platform and creating an administration panel. This platform could be developed using an already existing platform in the CCI sector such as Creativa.Community, or inside the MultipleXity system which is the main legacy project of Timişoara 2023 ECoC.
- Administrative staff - sorting problems, approving them on the platform, looking for private companies to support initiatives
- Stakeholders from the CCI sector - identifying and signalling problems, while also being direct or indirect beneficiaries of the platform

- Individuals and organisations - providing funding using a crowdfunding method for the listed problems
- Community members and NGOs - donating time and know-how to help with the sorting of problems, scouting for funding, matching human resources

4. Timeframe (February 2022 -> TBD)

This would mean an implementation phase for the platform starting in February 2022. In parallel with the implementation efforts, an awareness campaign should be in place in order to promote the upcoming platform to both the actors within the CCI sector and local stakeholders, and to engage them in a co-creation process for developing the structure and content of the platform according to the needs of the sector.

Phase1: Co-creation (February - April, 2022) - working with community stakeholders to create a valuable structure for the platform and taking into account a realistic flow of actions in order to tackle challenges and bring together funding opportunities and volunteers.

Phase2: Research and content creation (April - May, 2022) - research on private funding opportunities, projects and causes that would need support, and create a database to have as a starting point.

Phase3: Acquisition launching & contract signing (June, 2022) - intended for the development of the platform

Phase4: Platform creation & launch (July 2022 -> TBD) - creating an awareness campaign around the platform involving mass-media, online press, and community stakeholders.

5. Costs

Phase1: Co-creation - organising of physical or online workshops with community stakeholders, local institutions, cultural sector and private stakeholders. The workshops should be facilitated discussions where gathering input from various sources and communicating a structured approach to the content of the platform.
Budget: estimated around 2,500–5,000 lei (500–1,000 euro)

Phase2: Research and content creation - building a database of:
- private companies that can financially support the challenges listed on the platform
- cultural and creative sector, mapping NGOs, Institutions and projects
- mapping of a potential volunteer database or NGOs that can contribute to sourcing volunteers
- identifying potential challenges that could use support
- creating a database of educational content needed, based on the output from the co-creation workshops

Budget: estimated around 2,500 lei (500 euro)

Phase3: Acquisition launching and contract signing

Phase4: Platform creation and launch - building the platform based on stakeholder inputs in the co-creation phase, and having as a starting point the database provided in phase2. The platform should be developed so that content administration could be done without any technical knowledge being needed.

Budget:
- Software development (includes visual identity of the concept): 10,000 euro
- Marketing and launch campaign: 2,000 euro

Estimated around 50,000–60,000 lei (10,000–12,000 euro)

Total budget: estimated around 55,000–67,500 lei (11,000–13,500 euro)

6. Sources of funding (if relevant):

1. The local budget of the instrument policy owner – the Municipality of Timișoara. The costs for the organisation of the Oxygen for Creatives will be financed from the local budget, a fact that will be clearly stated in the revised Integrated Urban Development Strategy for 2021–2027 period.
2. Possible local partnerships

7. Expected KPIs

- number of stakeholders involved in the co-creation process
  - 15 stakeholders per gathering, with a total of 45 stakeholders
- number of challenges, funding opportunities and community members on the platform in the first 6 months and the upcoming 6 months
  - 10 challenges in the first months matched with funding opportunities and/or volunteers
  - 20 in the upcoming 6 months

Estimations for the above KPIs are to be defined together with monitoring solutions at a later stage.

4.4 Enablers and barriers of Action Plan development and implementation

	Enablers	
	Description of enabler	**Importance of enabler and potential impact on development and implementation of policy improvement**
1	Willingness of stakeholders to be actively involved and support current actions	The stakeholders consulted in the current project are constantly vetting the actions and offering their support in sustaining the next steps of the programme, and thus helping the development of new initiatives in the CCI sector and supporting existing ones in their development.
2	Willingness of mentors to be actively involved and supporting current	Mentors are a crucial part of the C2B hackathon. By supporting the participants with their expertise in a pro bono manner, know-how sharing and exponential growth are expected.

	actions	
3	The clear need for cohesion and cross-sectoral partnerships	The critical point in which 2020 brought the local community together in the Covid-19 pandemic context helped to emphasize even more the need for partnerships and working together.

	Barriers	
	Description of barrier	**Importance of barrier and potential impact on development and implementation of policy improvement**
1	Openness to collaborate & co create in the local community	There are clear barriers to overcome. Especially, the one of partnerships being just a formal agreement, with close to no active involvement in a collaboration or co-creation partnership that would open doors in terms of opportunities and growth.

4.5 Risks and mitigating actions

	Risk title	Description of risk	Level of probability (Low, Medium, High)	Description of mitigating action(s)
1	The continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic	The COVID-19 pandemic is currently disrupting a wide array of activities with a clear impact on actions that involve events.	Medium	In the case that the pandemic continues to impact activities, the actions in the current Action Plan have been drafted in order to be able to relocate them to an online setting.
2	Failure to obtain financing	Risk of a financial nature, which may arise as a result of the unavailability of funds necessary for the change of the policy instrument.	Low	To mitigate this risk, necessary steps for the introduction of the costs related to the implementation of the actions in the local budget for 2021 and 2022 will be taken.

3	Reduced entrepreneurial initiatives in the ECoC context	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a lack of information regarding the ECoC cultural programme needs	Medium	A better communication of the ECoC programme and further helping measures for the new entrepreneurial initiatives in time of pandemic.
4	Insufficient response of mentors or target groups	Booking of pro-bono expertise (time) for mentors involved in the actions.	Low	One-on-one communication with mentors and the CCI sector. Motivating tools. Promotion on the official communication channels of Municipality of Timişoara and associate institutions.

5. Monitoring and impacts of the Action Plan

Monitoring principles. Showing results and learning from experience is a vital function for inducing SME growth and innovation via the ECoC event and legacy. For this reason, we have established the following principles:

- the monitoring of both the quality and the quantity of the results is done in each of the Actions
- each Action has a coordinating partner and contributing partners. The coordinating partner of the Action organises suitable monitoring methods and makes the practical arrangements
- each coordinating partner makes sure that the monitoring results are updated and shared within the teams

When implementing each of the three actions mentioned in the AP, the specific KPI should be taken into account. They generally refer to the number of participants and general exposure of the specific activity within the community. This ensures both a reach in terms of acknowledgement of the specific activity taking place within the community and that it has reached a high number of potential stakeholders, but also ensures the active participation of the targeted stakeholders.

In order to have realistic and timeline monitoring for each action, a process should be defined as part of the monitoring of the KPIs:

- Action 1:
  o registration process for participants, mentors, judges
  o tracking process of team formation
  o tracking process for pitched, worked on and awarded ideas
  o tracking of channels where the hackathon is being promoted
- Action 2:
  o booking process for speakers and panellists

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- booking process for exhibitors, taking variety into account
- registration of conference and exhibition attendees
- Action 3:
  - involvement process of stakeholders in the co-creation phase
  - tracking process for challenges and volunteers

All of the above coupled with a realistic monitoring of the budget of each action is needed in order for the hackathon, conference and platform to achieve their fullest impact. The Intercommunity Development Association Timișoara Growth Pole will endorse the current Action Plan together with the Municipality of Timișoara.

6. Action plan endorsement

This action plan will be implemented and monitored by the Municipality of Timişoara with the support of the Intercommunity Development Association Timişoara Growth Pole.

Date: _21.07.2021_

Name: _RUBEN LATCAU_

Position: _DEPUTY MAYOR_

Organisation: Municipality of Timişoara

Stamp of the organisation (if available):

Signature: _____

Date: _16.07.2021_

Name: Megan Ovidiu

Position: General Director

Organisation: Intercommunity Development Association Timişoara Growth Pole

Stamp of the organisation (if available):

Signature: _____

Date: _14.07.2021_

Name: Greblă Sanda

Position: Head of Department for Implementing Cultural Infrastructure Projects

Organisation: Municipality of Timişoara

Signature: _____

Date: _14.07.2021_

Name: Simion Lavinia

Position: Project Manager

Organisation: Municipality of Timişoara

Signature: _____