CRAFTS CODE Action Plan for
Vaasa University of Applied Sciences
The Regional Council of Ostrobothnia

Knitting a Digital Network for Handicraft in Ostrobothnia

Contents

PART I – General information

Project: CRAFTS CODE – CReative Actions For Tailoring Smes' COmpetitive Development
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PART II – Policy context

With location in West Finland, at the coast of Gulf of Bothnia, Ostrobothnia counts as a region of high-level industrialisation that has succeeded in exporting advanced technology and engineering products especially in energy and electronics solutions. In addition to these, timber and paper, food production and different services count among key sectors of livelihoods.

In comparison to technology-led businesses in the region, the number of craft SMEs is low, and the business profiles differ significantly between these sectors. Still, the advanced level of technology in the region can feed to other sectors and give impetus to different livelihoods, including crafts. Especially in this regard, the CRAFTS CODE project was seen a possibility in supporting capacity building and raising the level of innovativeness in craft enterprises in Ostrobothnia.

Policy needs

Policy needs in the region's craft sector were analysed as part of the CRAFTS CODE project. The analysis illustrates that the policy needs meet with the general goal to support a 'spill-over effect' in the region which would mean taking advantage of the technological lead in the main export sectors and to increase the level of innovativeness and adoption of new technologies also in the craft sector.

SWOT of crafts companies in Ostrobothnia:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
- Skills and know-how - Quality - Awareness of sustainable development, especially on ecological sustainability - Commitment	- Limited regional market (due to number of population). - Scant network of peers among craft entrepreneurs. - Very thin investment on the handicraft sector. - Challenges in business orientation.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
- Digitalisation - Domestic tourism in the region is increasing. - UNESCO world heritage site (Kvarken) in the region holds potential for productisation and sales. - International atmosphere that especially the larger companies bring to the region.	- Craft entrepreneurs' low interest into renewing their activities. - Development agents' old-fashioned perception of the craft sector that reflects as low appreciation of craft entrepreneurship and craft products. - Craft entrepreneurship as business model does not attract marketing professionals.

While craft enterprises have several strengths that include high-level artisanal skills and taking pride in creating unique items and high-quality products, there are also several down-sides. First, following the general trend in the country, the number of craft entrepreneurs is growing lower. Therefore, there are not too many peers for craft entrepreneurs whom with to compare experiences, develop practices and bring together synergies. Especially following the corona pandemic, many craft entrepreneurs have to look closely at their business viability, as different events and craft markets have typically offered the main sales channels.

Craft sector is typically seen as a marginal economic activity that is overrun by regional key industries such as energy and electronics. Therefore, public investments on the craft sector are very limited, and partly due to the thin structures within the sector, possibilities to apply for funding also remain limited. This vicious circle is in part loomed through lengthy and complex economic and societal processes, in which the craft activities have faced several major changes not only in terms of production and consumption but also in regional development rationalities at national, European and global levels. At times, this has led to situations where the craft sector actors have had to persist in facing low appreciation of their skills and products that have been regarded as peripheral or even as anti-modern.

Yet, as has recently been seen, the corona pandemic related regulations have given the extra push to the rising popularity of craft activities as hobby and to domestic and slow tourism. This has translated as customers to different craft products and services. Indeed, craft sector is more often recognised adjacent to other sectors of activity, including hospitality services. In Ostrobothnia, there are still underutilised opportunities connected to the UNESCO World Heritage site Kvarken.

Craft entrepreneurship counts among the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) that, especially in the pandemic aftermath, have been widely recognised as an important factor in local economies. This hugely diverse field of activity offers a variety of opportunities that not only feed to the spectrum of livelihoods but also to atmospheres of creativity and participatory activity in local communities. It is therefore quintessential that the craft sector is supported in its aspirations to evolve and gain new forms of activity. Here, digitalisation holds a key role, and therefore, the policy needs reflect in the choice of policy instruments for the CRAFTS CODE in Ostrobothnia.

Policy instruments

The policy instrument phrased in the CRAFTS CODE Application Form on part of the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia was the 'Sustainable growth and jobs 2014–2020, the Structural Funds Programme of Finland', its action line 2.1 Competitiveness of SMEs. This programme is by now dated and therefore efforts to influence that programme are futile. However, the object of increasing SMEs competitiveness continues to be of utmost interest in Finland's current EU regional and structural policy programme, 'Innovation and Skills in Finland 2021–2027'. As the key documents of regional

development that are supportive to the mentioned new programme, this Action Plan focuses on the following:

- Regional Strategy of Ostrobothnia: Regional Plan 2050 and Regional Programme 2022–2025;
- Innovation and Growth Strategy of Ostrobothnia 2022–2025: Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3).

The policy owner (PP8) is the responsible and managing authority of these documents. The documents are currently in process of update and open for comments (negotiations process lasts until April 2022, while the official publication is foreseen in June 2022). This means that through the implementation of the Actions detailed in this Action Plan these policy instruments gain direct impact from the policy learning process achieved through the CRAFTS CODE project. As will be explained in the following pages, the Actions aim at complementing the strategic foci of the Regional Strategy of Ostrobothnia and expanding the development and learning process included in the Innovation and Growth Strategy of Ostrobothnia. Both Actions focus on policy improvement through *improved management of the policy instruments.*

The Regional Strategy of Ostrobothnia includes two parts as obliged by Finnish law (Act 7/2014, Law on developing regions and administering structural funds activities, specifically § 32). The Regional Plan must outline the long-term development goals. The Regional Programme describes contemporary context of development and pins the key goals and measures of development for the coming next years. In the currently open process, the policy owner and managing authority (PP8, Regional Council of Ostrobothnia), foresees the Regional Plan stretching up to year 2050 while the Regional Programme concentrates on years 2022–2025. Together, the two parts summon the Regional Strategy of Ostrobothnia.

Focussing also on the years 2022–2025, the Innovation and Growth Strategy of Ostrobothnia (S3) concentrates on strengthening business competitivity and enhancing opportunities for international growth in the region. Whereas the Regional Strategy of Ostrobothnia covers all sectors of activity in

the region and offers guidelines of development on the more general level, both documents see digitalisation and capacity building in SMEs as pivotal for the region's future success.

The Innovation and Growth Strategy aims at strengthening region's companies' access to different smart and digital services that will help increasing their innovation level and improve their conditions for growth. In the previous implementation periods of the S3 strategy emphasis has been put on establishing pilot and demonstration environments which test, simulate and showcase the implementation of new technologies for companies (e.g. IoT, 5G, VR/AR/XR, robotics, 3D-printing). The currently planned strategy focusses on supporting actions and activities, in which knowhow from one sector is used for the benefit of another sector. This could mean, for example, supporting the adoption of 3D-printing in the more artisanal processes of making.

Regarding the nature of both policy instruments, it is important to understand that they do not involve budget allocations and that they are not directly linked to the distribution of e.g. ERDF funds. However, they do work as steering instruments, which means that the strategy documents have impact on what kind of projects are looked after and which criteria are underscored in implementing funding schemes.

PART III – Actions

Action 1 – The CCIs, including the craft sector, policy needs in digitalisation recognised in the Regional Strategy

Action 1 focuses on the Regional Strategy of Ostrobothnia with *type of policy change: improved management of the policy instrument.*

Action description

Action 1 concentrates on a strategic improvement of the Regional Strategy of Ostrobothnia, hereafter referred to as Regional Strategy, seeing after that the updated strategy document has digitalisation selected as a strategic focal point and lists the craft sector (included in CCIs) among the branches that can significantly benefit from the digital turn. The Action brings needed attention to the development needs of CCIs at large, starting from the craft SMEs need for capacity building in digital skills, and accelerates new initiatives on the matter. Action 1 will be implemented in co-operation between PP3 (VAMK) and the policy owner, PP8 (Regional Council of Ostrobothnia).

Digitalisation was recognised already in the previous version of the Regional Strategy, but the new update brings more emphasis on the topic as '*Digitalisation as Source of Growth*' is selected as one of the focal points of regional development. This is a target that was discussed also throughout the CRAFTS CODE Phase 1, and the good practices from other European regions, such as OPTIMISE, D-TOOL, and MakeX, have shown how digital applications and services are used and found effective in craft enterprises. In Ostrobothnia, we are currently in a momentum that lessons learned through the CRAFTS CODE policy learning process can be fluently planted to the strategy document in update, and, with Action 1, we want to seize this moment.

Admitting that the Regional Strategy is not in the position to single out initiatives, there is nevertheless a need to detail the role digitalisation can have for the creativity-led businesses. Action 1 aims at influencing the strategy process while the process welcomes Letters of Statement and to emphasise the craft sector's needs among the other CCIs' needs in the digital turn. Until now, digitalisation has been mainly linked with the internationally growing industries of the region. The many examples that the CRAFTS CODE project offers show the importance digitalisation has also for the crafts SMEs. The Regional Strategy is a key steering policy document that should spread this message by recognising and promoting the needs and opportunities of the crafts sector, as part of the CCIs, in the digital turn.

Action 1 builds on the on-going strategy update process and will be achieved through direct negotiations on the Regional Strategy draft between the project partners (PP3, PP8) and parties in

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head of the strategy update process. As concrete outcomes, PP3 hands in a Letter of Statement with detailed suggestions of improvement to the draft version of the Regional Strategy. Referring to the CRAFTS CODE project and the examples seen during the learning process, as is explained in following paragraphs, the Letter of Statement will be handed to the presentative of the policy owner (PP8) who works at practical level in the strategy document update process. Again, noting that the Regional Strategy is not a document to list exact projects and that it does not hold or allocate funds, improvements, in the form of written sentences suggested to be added to the strategy text in suitable points, will be addressed to each part of the Regional Strategy, the long-term Regional Plan 2050 and contemporary Regional Programme 2022–2025. Anticipated changes are seen as the new Regional Strategy will be published in June 2022.

Background

The fact that digitalisation has been earlier acknowledged a megatrend that should be largely considered in regional development also in Ostrobothnia offers a fruitful background for taking more focussed attention on the matter. Here, the CRAFTS CODE has been a timely and helpful project in offering several practical examples of how digital tools and services have been applied in artisanal businesses. Examples such as the "OPTIMISE Design" from Ireland and indeed the "MakeX", addressed also in Action 2, give impetus and practical experience about taking digitalisation to the practical level in craft SMEs development.

The first Interregional Thematic Seminar (ITS1) held on 12 – 13 May 2020 introduced the "OPTIMISE Design", the Irish high-level developing and mentoring process with several steps that headed to improve craft SMEs online presence and grow their global e-commerce. The process included among other things a digital audit and a whole series of mentoring days culminating with a masterclass for the participating entrepreneurs. The "OPTIMISE Design" gives a valuable example of steps that a learning process for capacity building in digital skills can include. At the same time, it illustrates how different partners can work together to synchronise their expertise and offer a developing and mentoring scheme for SMEs in the craft sector. This is all the more valuable recognising certain demographic and geographic similarities between Ireland and Finland.

The same occasion (ITS 1, 12 – 13 May 2020) showcased also the good practice D-TOOL from Spain. D-TOOL is a virtual tool for SMEs to assess and measure their design-level. D-TOOL offers a great example of using digitalisation to business development. While this practice is found interesting, it currently rather offers an idol than a transferable practice to Ostrobothnia. However, in Action 1, it is exactly this idol value that we appreciate in the D-TOOL.

The Italian "MakeX", presented at the occasion of the third ITS that was held online on the 10–11 May 2021, showed on a practical level, how the craft entrepreneurs' needs can be met by offering tools and applications of digital manufacturing so that artisans can quickly and through a hands-on method realise how digitalisation can help their work. While "MakeX" is a fruit of cooperation between the Municipality of Cascina, the Tuscany Region, and Polo Navacchio SpA, it also shows how different actors can unite their capacities to encourage also artisans, who often are more accustomed to manual practices, to embrace new and innovative working methods.

The key lesson that these examples hold was underlined during ITS 4, 18 – 19 November 2021, that allowed Ostrobothnian craft entrepreneurs and actives to familiarize themselves with digital applications. This opportunity to practical learning experience showed that also Ostrobothnian artisans are willing to learn and to acquire new skills and keep track of new possibilities that the digital turn offers. Therefore, it is all the more important that the Regional Strategy document reflects this motivation and spurs artisans and other creatives to increase their capacities in digital skills and sets an example for public bodies and development agents to come together and to create opportunities for these entrepreneurs to learn and to access new tools, methods and services that base on digital solutions.

Specific activities and timeframe

January 2022: Negotiation between the project partners (PP3, PP8) and parties in head of the strategy update process.

February 2022: Letter of Statement addressed to the Regional Strategy process.

February 2022 – April 2022: Further negotiations regarding the statement.

June 2022: Regional Strategy of Ostrobothnia: Regional Plan 2050 and Regional Programme 2022–2025 will be published.

August 2022 – July 2023: Monitoring the results of the action with relevant indicators (see below).

Stakeholders involved

1. Regional Council of Ostrobothnia, policy owner (PP8)
2. Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (VAMK, PP3)

Regional Council of Ostrobothnia is the policy owner and managing authority of the policy instrument. The Regional Council acts as the party responsible for the Regional Strategy process and, as part of this, their representatives participate the negotiations about how to improve the strategy document based on the CRAFTS CODE learning process. They share the draft version of the strategy document to PP3 and they receive the Letter of Statement from PP3. The PP8 is the body responsible for publishing the Regional Strategy (see Indicator 2).

PP3 calls together negotiations and informs PP8 representatives about the CRAFTS CODE learning process and good practices seen during the project. The PP3 reads and analyses the draft strategy documents, writes a Letter of Statement with suggested detailed improvements and hands it to PP8 representatives (Indicator 1). PP3 continues to call together further meetings for discussion according to need.

The PP3 and PP8 jointly monitor results of the Action.

Costs and funding

The Implementation of Action 1 requires staff resources from the VAMK (PP3) and from the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia (PP8). The Action will be implemented as part of the parties (PP3, PP8) day-to-day work so it will be funded through respective bodies' annual budgets.

Estimated sums of costs: 3500 € (PP3), 7000 € (PP8).

Risks and contingency plans

Risks for the completion of the Action are low. Any dawning risks of not achieving the Action implementation are responded with further negotiations between the project partners and the parties in head of the strategy process.

Monitoring and indicators

(Target number in brackets)

Implementation of the Action will be monitored throughout the Phase 2. Monitoring will be accomplished with the help of different indicators that include the following:

Result indicators

Digitalisation selected as a strategic focal point with craft sector (included in CCIs) listed among the benefitting fields of activity.

Output indicators

1) Letter of Statement to the Regional Strategy process (1)
2) Published Regional Strategy of Ostrobothnia (1)

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Action 2 – A virtual platform for strengthening craft SMEs' digital capacities and improving the smart specialisation learning process in the region

Action 2 focusses on the Innovation and growth strategy (Smart Specialisation Strategy, S3) of Ostrobothnia 2022 – 2025 with *type of policy change: improved management of the policy instrument.*

Action description

Action 2 addresses the policy need to improve craft SMEs competitivity by accessing digital solutions and strengthen their role in the learning process linked to the Innovation and growth strategy of Ostrobothnia (S3). The Action is visioned to work as a two-way initiative that 1) enables spreading information to craft SMEs about digital solutions and 2) collects information from craft SMEs about their development needs. The action will be implemented in co-operation by PP3 (VAMK) and PP8 (Regional Council of Ostrobothnia).

Action 2 builds on and seeks to link three components: 1) the learning process and good practices experienced in the CRAFTS CODE project, 2) the existing piloting and demonstration facilities and services in the region and 3) the smart specialisation learning process in the region. These components are described below.

The Thematic Priority 4 of the Innovation and growth strategy, Digital Solutions, underlines the need for horizontal learning across different branches of industry. It is understood that whereas the application of digital solutions is specific to each branch, the underlying technologies are similar. It is therefore acknowledged that different branches also face similar issues that typically involve the need for capacity building in digitalisation. The strategy therefore envisions increasing joint learning and cross-fertilisation between different branches as an opportunity for enhancing digitalisation and finding new opportunities for growth in the region.

Implementing Action 2 there will be launched a virtual platform that supports SMEs in increasing their awareness of digital solutions and enhancing their digital skills. This new platform will also be used

as a method to collect information and amplify the knowledge base that feeds to the smart specialisation process, making the craft sector's development needs better heard and visible. In this way, the Action gives a practical tool to advance craft SMEs competitivity through digital solutions and a direct impact on the Innovation and growth strategy of Ostrobothnia (S3).

A new platform for enhancing digitisation

It has been found out in the region that an effective way to achieve capacity building in digitalisation are the virtual platforms that encourage actors from different branches to learn new skills and to adopt different digital solutions to their production and business practices. Accordingly, Action 2 links together the learning process and good practices found during the CRAFTS CODE project and the previous experience of virtual platforms relating to the smart specialisation process in the region. In this way, Action 2 creates a continuation to a development method but with articulated focus on craft SMEs. In addition, the new platform will be used to improve the smart specialisation process.

In the implementation of Action 2, PP3 takes the lead in creating a new virtual platform that disseminates information about different digitisation related services available in Ostrobothnia, brings the platform to the craft entrepreneurs' knowledge and mentors them through examples in how to creatively apply digital solutions in their work.

In addition to sharing information, the platform will be used to collect information about the craft SMEs' needs. To this end, a specific questionnaire will be created that the craft SMEs using the new platform fill in. The collected information will be included in the Regional Council's (PP8) smart specialisation development work as will be explained in following paragraphs.

The virtual platform will remain public and available as part of the Muova website (VAMK, PP3), including the questionnaire.

Opening new gates in smart specialisation process for the craft sector

The concept of smart specialisation is characterized by search for new growth opportunities on the regional level. The potentials for growth are discovered through analysis of unique regional strengths. Public agents such as the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia play a proactive role in the analysing and learning process, the aim of which is to concentrate resources on activities that support the transformation of existing economic structures and opening for emerging opportunities.

The smart specialisation strategy builds on the notion of horizontal learning across different branches of industry advocating the use of existing pilot and demonstration environments in different sectors in the region. As part of the smart specialisation work, the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia (PP8) has developed a participatory learning process with five steps (see Figure 1). An important step in this tool are the *Rounds of Dialogue*, meetings for discussion about development needs relating to smart specialisation, that take place bi-annually between representatives of the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia and representatives of the region's key branches of industry.

A Round of Dialogue starts with mapping companies' views on factors of change in their business environments, new technologies of interest as well as their expectations and experiences of cooperation in the regional innovation ecosystem. Interviews are conducted mostly with export-oriented companies within the manufacturing industry. The underlying notion is that industries working in a global environment are more innovative. This has also been the base for selecting the respondents as they are assumed to have strong insights in the working of the innovation system.

Results from the Rounds of Dialogue feed to the smart specialisation learning process. The purpose of the learning process is to reach a shared understanding about what are the bottlenecks for innovation diffusion and what are the needs for new knowledge related to the introduction of new technologies. The process then leads to designing new development measures, planning respective research and educational initiatives that help to answer the found development needs, and coordinating actions among different actors in the region. To enhance this learning process, the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia needs more knowledge about development needs in different branches and their working models and feedback on the applied learning process.

Before Action 2, this process has not included the craft sector or the CCIs at large. This means that the development needs of the craft sector or the CCIs have not been heard and this information has been excluded from the data basis that the Rounds of Dialogue so far have generated. With the platform and the questionnaire as the concrete tools, Action 2 helps filling this gap and increases the knowledge basis of the learning process by exploring these issues in the crafts sector, which creates a direct improvement on the management of the Innovation and growth strategy, as is illustrated in Figure 1. The following section explains how this will be accomplished.

The implementation of Action 2 will start parallelly to the next Round of Dialogue that the PP8 is going to start in autumn 2022. This means that first questionnaire results collected from craft SMEs through the use of the new platform will be achieved and fed to the learning process at the same time with the results from the Rounds of Dialogue. The PP3 creates the new platform, but the questionnaire for mapping down crafts SMEs development needs will be planned and created together by PP3 and PP8. The PP3 channels questionnaire replies to the policy owner (PP8) that is responsible for handling and including the questionnaire results in the smart specialisation learning process, as is illustrated in Figure 1.

Action 2 aims at concrete measures in two ways. The new platform supports craft entrepreneurs with a source of information about digital services to improve their business competitivity, but it will also serve in collecting information about their development needs. Following the implementation of Action 2, experiences of using the platform and of subsuming the questionnaire results collected with helps of the new platform into the smart specialisation learning process will be discussed and reflected by the different stakeholders (VAMK, craft entrepreneurs, policy owner) at a joint workshop (April – May 2023).

Action 2: questionnaire results from the craft sector are included into the smart specialisation learning process.
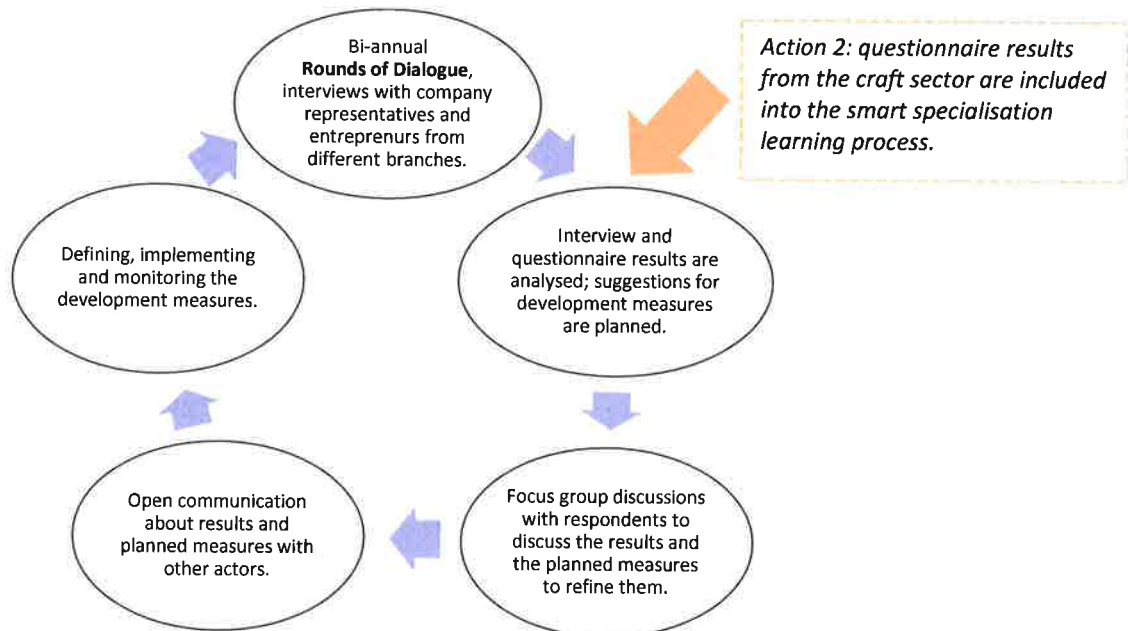
Figure 1. Learning process developed for the continuing smart specialisation strategy process as illustrated in the draft for the Innovation and growth strategy of Ostrobothnia 2022 – 2025. With Action 2, development needs and viewpoints from the craft sector are included in the knowledge basis of the process, a direct improvement to the managing of the smart specialisation strategy process.

Background

Considering that Ostrobothnia has reached success in the high-end technological industries, it appears that the craft sector has not gained advantage of this development. This has led to a situation that there are organisations and enterprises providing digital solutions and related services, but these have not been found by crafts entrepreneurs who have rather concentrated on the more traditional practices.

Still, throughout the CRAFTS CODE process it was seen that Ostrobothnian craft entrepreneurs are enthusiastic to learn more about the opportunities that digitalisation can offer for their processes of making and business solutions once they have, so to speak, been exposed to seeing those opportunities in practice. Indeed, prior to the breaking of the corona pandemic, regional stakeholder craft entrepreneurs had the opportunity to learn from different practices implemented elsewhere in the

project area, which led to several enquiries about how to access similar solutions locally. Also, despite the restrictions set due to the pandemic, virtual stakeholder meetings were arranged to review and discuss the various good practices presented throughout the CRAFTS CODE process.

MakeX

While several of the good practices presented were found interesting and possibly applicable also in the Ostrobothnia region, this action focuses on the good practice presented at the later stage of Phase 1, namely the MakeX project from Tuscany. MakeX was presented at the occasion of the third ITS (Interregional Thematic Seminar) that was held online on the 10–11 May 2021 and that focussed on innovating in the craft sector. This practice was later addressed in stakeholder meetings and in the Match Making session on 30 November 2021.

MakeX is a network that brings together tools and applications of digital manufacturing that different parties apply in their process of making and in marketing and sales. It offers a concrete, hands-on example of how to address the concrete needs of craft entrepreneurs. The network is open to a wide audience including artisans, students, creatives who want to experiment and innovate in the craft sector. MakeX, the Tuscan Network of Digital Manufacturing, is promoted by the Municipality of Cascina, financed by the Tuscany Region and coordinated by Polo Navacchio SpA.

Following further exploring of the good practice on their website, MakeX was considered highly useful and applicable in Ostrobothnia. MakeX provides a good example of a platform of digital services for craftspeople. Also, the project incorporates an essential aspect of combining virtual and face-to-face mentoring which will be adopted into the implementation of Action 2. It is seen that MakeX promotes craft SMEs digitalisation in three ways: by collecting applications and services together, making them available on a virtual platform where craft entrepreneurs are told more about how to use them, and in this way leads craft entrepreneurs further into digitalisation processes.

This good practice also illustrates the importance of gaining more information about how the services available on the platform are used and which services would still be required. Such information is essential for developing the platform further and to better understand the craft sector's development needs.

Specific activities and timeframe

Parallel activities regarding the Rounds of Dialogue of the S3 process in italic.

1. Existing digital tools and solutions and the service providers will be mapped. (August – September 2022)

2. The online virtual platform and the user questionnaire to collect information are planned (September – November 2022)

3. *Rounds of Dialogue (S3) start (October 2022)*

4. Craft entrepreneurs invited to test the virtual platform. This is supported with examples. Users reply to the development needs questionnaire. (December – February 2023)

5. *Rounds of Dialogues are accomplished (January 2023)*

6. *Results of Rounds of Dialogues are being analysed for planning development measures (February 2023)*

7. Questionnaire results and feedback is reported to the policy owner and fed to the smart specialisation strategy process. (February 2023)

8. *Confirmation on including the questionnaire results in the smart specialisation process by the policy owner (February 2023)*

9. A joint workshop with the different stakeholders (VAMK, craft entrepreneurs, policy owner) will be organised to discuss the results and to develop further steps to improve the service. (April – May 2023)

10. Monitoring the action implementation. (Until July 2023)

11. Virtual platform and the development needs questionnaire remain available.

12. *Smart specialisation process continues.*

Stakeholders involved

Responsible stakeholders

1. Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (VAMK) (PP3)

2. Regional Council of Ostrobothnia, policy owner (PP8)

PP3 will be in the lead of creating the new virtual platform that collects together information about different digitisation related services available in Ostrobothnia, brings the platform to the craft entrepreneurs' knowledge and mentors them through examples in how to creatively apply digital solutions in their work.

After the virtual platform has been launched, it will remain public and available as part of the Muova website (VAMK, PP3), including the questionnaire on development needs.

The questionnaire for mapping down crafts SMEs development needs will be planned and created together by PP3 and PP8. While the PP3 channels questionnaire replies to the policy owner (PP8), it is at the policy owner's (PP8) responsibility to receive and analyse the questionnaire results as part of the smart specialisation learning process.

The PP3 and PP8 jointly monitor results of the Action.

Other stakeholders
- Craft entrepreneurs in the region
- Service providers of digital solutions and services in the region

Craft entrepreneurs are foreseen as the users of the new platform. Service providers of digital solutions and services in the region contribute to the new platform, as their services are made visible and accessible to the craft entrepreneurs.

Costs and funding

Implementation of the Action 2 will be funded together by PP3 and PP8. PP3 will be in charge of creating the online platform, and the funding for the platform, including required staff resources, will come from PP3 annual budget.

On the part of PP8, the Action 2 implementation (planning the questionnaire together with PP3; analysing questionnaire results as part of the smart specialisation learning process) will be executed as part of their day-to-day work and will be funded through their annual budget. Other expenses are expected from organising the final workshop between the different stakeholders (PP8).

Approximate immediate costs for Action 2: 8500 € (PP3), 3500 € (PP8).

Risks and contingency plans

Risks for the completion of the action are low. This is achieved with the VAMK (PP3) taking the lead role in implementing the action. As the focus of the action will be on working on a virtual platform, the risks posed by covid-19 related restrictions remain low. Observing the risks related to the circulation of the virus, regular measures to hinder that will be taken into account when organising physical meetings.

Monitoring and indicators

(Target number in brackets)

Implementation of the Action will be monitored throughout the Phase 2. Monitoring will be accomplished with the help of different indicators that include the following:

Result indicators

- Online platform for craft SMEs (1)
- Questionnaire for mapping development needs (1)

Output indicators

- Test using of the platform accompanied with replies to the questionnaire (8 replies)
- Letter of Confirmation on including questionnaire results into smart specialisation process by the policy owner (1)

- Final workshop with the different parties for further steps of development (1)
- Other measures to further influence the policy instrument (e.g. emails, meetings, negotiations) (3)