



## CoWallonia : Coworking as a tool to foster collaboration, build innovative communities and develop creative ecosystems

CoWallonia is a network of 8 coworking spaces launched within the framework of Creative Wallonia, a governmental program aiming to boost creativity and innovation in the Walloon region. The network was created in 2012 and is managed by the Walloon Telecommunications Agency (AWT). In two years' time, the CoWallonia coworking spaces and their promoters have successfully advocated coworking as a way to foster collaboration, build innovative communities and develop creative ecosystems.

A coworking space is a place to work, share and meet for entrepreneurs, starters and freelancers. The CoWallonia coworking spaces are boosted by specific events and managing teams that are present on site daily to promote relations between coworkers. Each space is located in a different city in Walonia (Charleroi, La Louvière, Liège, Louvain-la-Neuve, Mons, Namur, Seraing et Tournai) and has its own specificities and personality. However, all spaces share common values (such as openness, professionalism, cross-fertilisation and friendliness) and gather a network of public and private partners active in the fields of entrepreneurship, technological, social and cultural development.

### Diversity of profiles and new ways of working

More than just a trend, coworking is a revolution of work and change completely the traditional ways of working. Working from a coworking space involves a real shift on where, when, how and who to work with. It is consequently strongly linked to the "NWOW" (New World of Work or New Ways of Working) and movement, advocating for more flexibility, autonomy and creativity in the way people work. Plus, coworking allows for a diversity of profiles that can lead to cross-fertilisation and collaborative innovation.

Coworking spaces are intended primarily for freelancers profiles (48% of coworkers)<sup>1</sup>, but also gathers employees and white collar workers (20%) as well as unemployed starters (11%), company directors (9%) and students (6%). This diversity of profiles also reflects in the coworkers' sectors of activity: mobile and web technologies, media and communication, arts, human resources, finance and accountability, services, ...

### Coworking fosters interactions and collaborations between professionals

Regarding the effects of coworking on a range of professional and social specifications, it appears clearly from our survey that coworking has very positive outcomes on coworkers from a professional and a personal point of view.

SPECIFICATION	"POSITIVE OR VERY POSITIVE" EFFECT
Social circle	90 %

<sup>1</sup> Survey conducted in the CoWallonia coworking spaces in March 2014.

Reducing isolation	88 %
Business network	83 %
Motivation	81 %
Creativity	69 %
Productivity	64 %
Business branding	63 %
New skills	55 %
Work-life balance	52 %
Self-confidence	51 %
Concentration	44 %
Team work	43%
Revenues	23 %
Company size (new hires)	11%

*These figures are indicative of the many positive effects of coworking on its users, whether they are freelancers, employees or starters.*

Regarding the interactions between the users, it also appears clearly from the survey that although everyone is there to work on his own project, coworking encourages interactions among professionals and the emergence of new collaborations as well as the development of new projects.

<b>INTERACTIONS BETWEEN COWORKERS</b>	<b>“OFTEN TO VERY OFTEN”</b>
Informal discussion (e.g. cafeteria, lounge)	90%
Sharing knowledge, advice	75%
Mutual assistance (e.g. technical issue)	74%
Brainstorming and sharing of new ideas	63%
Professional recommendations	61%
Feedback on my project/activity	58%
Development of new projects	44%

### **Wallonia, European Creative District**

In 2013, Wallonia was distinguished as a « European Creative District » along with Tuscany among more than 40 candidate regions in Europe. Based on the recognition of Creative Wallonia as an exemplary action by the European Commission, this approach aims at positioning Creative Wallonia

as a European demonstrator, developing trans-regional collaboration for public and private stakeholders, and developing the plan itself through benchmark and identification of good practices.

CoWallonia, via the Walloon Telecommunications Agency (AWT), is one of the five Walloon partners collaborating to achieve this project (Service Public of Wallonia - DGO6, St'art Invest, Wallonie Design and ID Campus). In this context, our goal is to further the approach of the coworking spaces as a tool to connect creative and cultural industries (CCIs) and traditional industries. The project will identify recommendations, best practices and case studies at the European level and intends to serve as a European demonstrator on this matter.

The Wallonia European Creative District is part of the European Creative Industries Alliance (ECIA).

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### **For more information**

#### **WALLONIA EUROPEAN CREATIVE DISTRICT**

[www.creativewallonia.be/wecd](http://www.creativewallonia.be/wecd)

- **Twitter** : @Wall\_Inno et @creativewal / Hashtag : #WECD

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#### **COWALLONIA**

The network of Walloon coworking spaces (Creative Wallonia)

<http://www.cowallonia.be>

- **Facebook**: CoWallonia
- **Twitter**: @cowallonia
- **Linkedin**: CoWallonia by CW

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#### **CREATIVE WALLONIA**

Framework program for creativity and innovation in Wallonia

<http://www.creativewallonia.be>

- **Twitter**: @creativewal
- **Facebook**: creative.wallonia