



The Wallonia European Creative District celebrates its first anniversary

A year ago, Wallonia has been distinguished as a « European Creative District » along with Tuscany among more than 40 candidate regions in Europe. The Wallonia European Creative District (WECD) is based on a strong political initiative launched in 2010, Creative Wallonia, aiming at galvanizing the economy through technological innovation and non technological creativity. The ambition is to develop the transformative power of service innovation and creativity to intensify the revitalization and rejuvenation of the industrial base of the regional economy.

Creative Wallonia's ambition to use Creative and Cultural Industries (CCIs) and the creative economy more globally as catalysts for industrial revitalization is built on a large and open concept of innovation, allowing productive and creative interactions between enterprises, stakeholders, sectors, etc.

The objective of the WECD project is to increase linkages between the actors and actions of the Creative Wallonia program and the rest of the regional economy, thereby strengthening the role of CCIs in more "traditional" industrial value chains.

Moreover, the essence of the WECD is to demonstrate at the European level that an economy characterized by the weight of its more "traditional" industries can be revitalized by a strong and holistic strategy focusing on creativity conducted at the regional level, such as the **Creative Wallonia** program. It combines the tools of industrial policy (such as clusters, financial facilities), innovative services (audits, vouchers, etc.) and the added value of CCIs. This is also to leverage the international opening of the Creative Wallonia program and the operators who are involved in order to multiply the cross-fertilization between Wallonia and the relevant European stakeholders in the field of CCI and innovative services.

The Wallonia European Creative District: an inclusive strategy

The WECD's objectives are addressed through specific pilot initiatives that are implemented and tested or scaled up at an international level such as creative vouchers, coworking spaces, creative trainings and innovative financing schemes. Policy learning initiatives are being implemented in order to present the Walloon strategy, to improve it, to take stock of the pilot initiatives results and to disseminate good practices.



The WECD follows a systemic and holistic approach including 4 concrete lines identified by the European Commission's Call (international policy learning, better business support, access to finance and clustering/networking) that are strongly interdependent.

The consortium is composed of 5 specialized Walloon stakeholders: the Public Service of Wallonia (Economic Policies Directorate) as lead partner, Wallonie Design, St'Art Invest, ID Campus and the Walloon agency for telecommunications.

The panel of mobilized stakeholders cover a wide range of themes and policy tools allowing: training (ID-Campus), financing (St'art), business support tools (Wallonie Design, AWT), coworking on ICT (AWT), clustering, and policy design and monitoring (SPW-DGO6). Each, in their area of competency, mobilizes specific expertise and EU collaborations and networks, while the project as a whole allows to develop new synergies between actors and policy tools.

News and first results

Policy learning is an important dimension of the project. Indeed, the CCIs and their spillovers on the global economy as well as the functioning of the creative economy are topics that are not fully understood. Some issues, especially concerning policy making, need to be investigated as, for example, the development of policy tools leading to the reinforcement of the CCIs spillovers. Moreover the project addresses specific issues (such as bank guarantees) that require technical knowledge. Those specific issues are addressed by the WECD in order to make progress in addressing those items at the regional level. The WECD takes part in the **European Creative Industries Alliance platform**.

The WECD has **mobilized regional and international expertise** that has allowed to fine-tune the strategy of the project and the rationale of each action.

- Two studies planned by the WECD have been realized. Those studies focus, for the first, on **the place and role of the CCIs in the Walloon industrial value chains** and, for the second, on the **Creative Wallonia program results** after three years of implementation and the good practices that could be disseminated at an international scale. The preliminary results of the two studies will feed the strategy's evolution of the project and empower it through time.
- The project integrates a **High level Group** composed of national and international experts. Rasmus Wiinstedt Tscherning, ECIA's chair person is part of this group. The High Level Group meetings confront the Walloon strategy with external views and experiences from other regions/countries. Debates and exchange of ideas inside the consortium with the support of the High Level Group have built a strong common and dynamic vision for the WECD project. This approach leads to an integration of each separate action into a coherent outlook.

The WECD **exchanges with other regions** in order to fulfill several objectives: fine-tuning of the project strategy, benchmark of the project and of the region initiatives in the field of creative economy and dissemination about the evolution of the WECD and its preliminary results. Several European regions have been contacted to start collaborations in the scope of the different actions such as "International scale up of Boost Up / Creative Industries", the "New education Master program aimed at inoculating creative thinking and behavior", "Co-working spaces as a tool to connect CCI and the traditional industry" and actions promoting private financing of CCIs.

Dissemination is organized among international and national stakeholders involved in innovation and economic policies in order to demonstrate the ambition and the added value of the Walloon



approach. A communication strategy has been implemented notably through social medias; several communication tools have been developed and are now used. Furthermore,

The launch of the WECD took place in Namur on 24th April with about 600 people attending. This event was honoured by the presence of Elio di Rupo, the Belgian Prime Minister and Jean-Claude Marcourt, Vice President of the Walloon government and Minister of the economy and Daniel Calleja Crespo, Director General of DG Enterprise and Industry. It also included the Tuscany Region with the presence of Ms Cristina Scaletti, Minister for Culture, Trade and Tourism. The project has been presented along with success stories of Walloon creative initiatives.

The project has also been presented during events organized by the Joint Research Center conference (JRC), the European Regions Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN) itself which is a Brussels-based platform of Research and Innovation Organisations and Stakeholders in Regions and the European Commission.

We are writing the next chapter of the story...

After the centralization of the pieces of information, the **preparation of the actions** has been an important step of the first period. The four lines and main themes of the WECD have a complementary dimension leading to the fulfillment of the WECD's objectives. The **first steps of implementation** have been passed and several **preliminary results** are available.

- The great majority of the actions have been designed such as the creative vouchers, the action "raising the awareness of the investor community on the potential of CCI companies", the education Master of ID Campus, etc.
- International partnerships are under construction.

Also, the WECD is organizing several events such as training sessions on the private financing of the CCIs designed for accountants and people working in the banking system¹.

On June 17 2014, Wallonie Design organizes an event on "the facilitation of collaboration between traditional industries and the creative ones"².

Many other initiatives are under construction.

The dynamic of the project is expanding and the first preliminary results are available. Learn more on creativewallonia.be/wecd!

¹ Pour plus d'information : <http://www.creativewallonia.be/actualites/~deux-journees-de-formation-sur-les-industries-culturelles-et-creatives.htm?lng=fr>

² Pour plus d'information : http://www.industriescreatives.be/cr-er-collaborer-innover_blogs_203.html



More information:

www.creativewallonia.be/wecd



#WECD Comptes associés : @Wall_Inno et @creativewal

Contact :

Public Service of Wallonia – Directorate for the economic policies

Chloé Faton

Email : Chloe.faton@spw.wallonie.be

Phone : 0032 81333938



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