



**Creative Industries Conference  
Berlin,  
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**Panel 2 : Coherent Policy from the Perspective of European Cities  
ECCE Project : Developing Economic Clusters of Cultural Enterprises**

**Overview of the ECCE Project : Key Objectives & Expected Outcomes  
Claire Newman, ECCE Project Coordinator**

Jean-Louis Bonnin has talked about Nantes' strategy to promote cultural and creative industries on its territory. I will conclude Nantes' introduction with a short, general explanation of the ECCE project and its main objectives and expected outcomes and my colleagues from our partner cities will complete our presentation of the ECCE project with an overview of the key themes treated in our project.

There are 7 partners in the ECCE project: the French cities of Nantes, Angers and Rennes, the Dutch cities of Eindhoven and Utrecht, the German city of Aachen and the UK Creative Industries Development Agency (CIDA) based in Huddersfield, UK. Our project is short in timescale and ambitious in its objectives. It runs for only 2 years, until June 2008 and is co-financed under the INTERREG III B North West Europe regional development programme.

There are 2 broad political objectives of the ECCE project, i.e.:

- 1) **to reinforce economic growth and employment in the cultural and creative industries sector in the ECCE partner cities.** The shared ambition to promote economic development of the sector is what brought the ECCE partners to work together. Each of the partners had generated interesting data showing the promising economic niche presented by the cultural and creative industries sectors on their territory.

By way of example, Eindhoven undertook research in its region of nearly 8500 creative companies that showed that these companies correspond to 8% of the total regional turnover.

Similar data specific to the scenographic sector in the Nantes region showed that the region represented the second highest number of job / business creations nationally in this sector with a turnover of 53 M€ and close to 3000 jobs in the SMEs concerned.

Some partners had already instigated strategies to harness and encourage this economic development, notably Aachen and CIDA who were already experienced in providing consultancy and resources to help promote the development of their local cultural and creative SMEs at the start of our project. Other partners were in the process of researching the problems faced by local SMEs and reviewing potential solutions.

**A number of shared conclusions were nevertheless plain:** although cultural and creative SMEs showed an interesting niche in terms of economic development, and were often very innovative, opportunities for growth were limited by: a general lack of investment in the sector; insufficient business and management skills and lack of access to training both within the sector and for arts / creative students aspiring to work in it.

2) This leads onto the 2<sup>nd</sup> key objective of the project which is to **encourage & promote the competitive advantages of medium sized cities for SMEs in the cultural and creative sector.**

The ECCE partner cities are comparable in terms of population density with city centres of 200 000 to 250 000 and metropolitan conurbations of up to 500 000. They also share in common their proximity to the large international centres such as Paris and London that are inevitably particularly attractive for the cultural industries. Therefore, to avoid the “brain drain” phenomenon, ECCE cities see the need to consolidate investment in education and training relevant to the sector: via university courses and specialist higher education centres for architecture, fine arts, business management schools and to ensure that this leads on to further economic development of the creative and cultural SMEs in the private sector and generally to less reliance upon public authorities in the sector.

By investing in local resources centres that specialise in providing consultancy, coaching and training for cultural and creative SMEs, the ECCE partners hope to help attract young people trained and educated locally and aspiring to work in the sector and to attract and maintain already established businesses. The intention is to capitalise on the advantages of medium sized cities as compared to international capital cities, for individuals and companies starting up – and there are many advantages notably the significantly lower costs of establishing and running a business outside capital cities.

These then are the key objectives driving the actions put in place by the ECCE project. The first main **ACTION** is to put in place in each partner city a resources centre that provides services for local cultural and creative companies and individuals. The second **operational objective** is to make use of the expertise and knowledge that the partners have gained and exchanged in order to integrate these in their local services. This, we hope, is the added value of working internationally an added value from which cultural and creative SMEs should be the key beneficiary.

**Our project is organised in 2 main phases.** The first phase of approximately one year was devoted to putting in place services to local companies in each partner city and in partner exchanges on the key issues identified as important for the cultural and creative industries, i.e. training and education, access to finance and consultancy services for the cultural and creative sector. Services are now up and running in 5 of the 7 partner cities and will shortly be so in all ECCE cities.

In the second phase of the project, the partners will try to integrate the expertise and know-how developed together into their local services. My colleagues will provide you with more in depth information and reflections about the first conclusions on our common actions on training, access to finance and consultancy and also on the development of a web portal for the project and for the creative and cultural industries.

Towards the end of our project (June 2008), the ECCE partners will focus on communicating the recommendations drawn from our common actions notably in terms of guides to good practice and practical guides on subjects such as access to finance designed for the creative and cultural sector. Over the next year we will also be gathering information and data to illustrate the impact of our services to local companies both quantitatively and qualitatively in our specific regions, for example in terms of business creation and employment.

The ECCE project is timely, coinciding as it does with the political interest in the contribution of the cultural and creative sector towards achieving the Lisbon objectives. We anticipate that our conclusions and results both the more “**political**”, in terms of the role that medium sized cities can play in developing the cultural and creative economy and also the more **practical, technical** conclusions and results will make an important contribution to the debate launched by the Commission’s study on the Economy of Culture in Europe. In particular, they will illustrate how public authorities and, in particular, local authorities, can work effectively to help foster entrepreneurial activity in the cultural and creative sector to the benefit of this sector and also to the general economic development, quality of life and attractiveness of their cities.