



CRAFTING THE FUTURE: FIVE SQUARED [5²]





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Turin: European Training Foundation, 2024
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ISBN 978-92-9157-739-2 doi:10.2816/36996 TA-02-24-035-EN-N

“Crafts are not practices of the past, nor can they be anchored in contemporaneity. On the contrary, we see crafts as a vital and vibrant sector that can and must be sustainable and responsive, thus contributing to the cultural, social, environmental and economic development of countries around the world.”

Craft [n]

UK /kr:ft/ US /kræft/

Craft

Noun: a craft is a practice which employs manual skills and an understanding of materials, design and techniques e.g. glassblowing, woodturning, embroidery, millinery, etc.

Verb: to make an object or a creation skilfully, principally by hand, using or reinterpreting established know-how and techniques.

Craftsmanship

Noun: a skill at making things, especially by hand or the skill with which something was made e.g. Master artisans are trying to pass their craftsmanship to the younger generation.

[Cambridge Dictionary]

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

In an era of rapid technological development characterised by fast and mass production, craftsmanship is gaining appeal. Handmade, authentic and original goods are increasingly recognised as precious treasures. Appreciating the value of crafted objects is an integral part of the journey towards understanding their significance. True craftsmanship is rooted in local communities and is inherently sustainable.

For centuries, craftsmanship has represented our rich heritage, reflecting and transmitting tradition and culture. It has nurtured cultural identity, individual artistic and creative abilities, as well as specific skills, techniques and forms. Craft products are far more than mere objects; they convey meaning and have compelling stories to tell.

Modern craft embodies a vibrant and diverse sector that encompasses numerous specialised trades. While textile, fashion, ceramics, glass, metalwork, jewellery and woodworking are widely recognised, there are numerous other crafts that have distinct connections to heritage, territory, culture, and tradition. Today, high-level creativity and related skills demonstrate how countries can promote traditional sectors to foster development and culture.

Crafts also play an important role in connecting communities and people working in related sectors, such as tourism, cultural and creative industries and agriculture. From this perspective, the craft sector can significantly contribute to providing income and employment opportunities for individuals, families and entire communities.





Craft has always been a form of education. The term “artisan” implies instruction; it derives from the Latin word “artitus,” meaning “to instruct in the arts.” Craft embodies a type of education that often differs greatly from mainstream schooling. It involves observation, mimicry, innovation and experimentation. A master not only shapes the raw material in their hands, but also sets an example for apprentices and trainees. Unlike traditional educational approaches, the craft sector offers a fresh perspective of education.

These reasons have prompted our organisations to collaborate and share our knowledge and ideas for the future of the sector. Alongside a group of experts and practitioners representing different regions of the world, we have come together to discuss critical issues and acknowledge emerging skills needs in the craft sector.

What follows is a concise description of the sector, including its distinctive characteristics, limitations and potential. We then present a vision for development, which is closely tied to specific priorities and actionable steps. Together, we can draw the attention of policymakers worldwide and create a significant impact in a world that highly values quality, attention to detail and creativity as prized assets for individuals and countries. The text is interspersed with quotes from participants at the Craftsmanship and skills for the future event held on 28 February and 1 March 2023. The following organisations worked together in partnership on this project:

“We often worry about cultural appropriation, but it’s almost as if AI is now appropriating what was once human.”

“Artisanal occupations and crafts are disappearing every day without leaving a trace. Defending them is our undeferrable task, a driving force that motivates a new generation.”



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication represents a collective endeavour, made possible through the expertise and collaboration of distinguished professionals. The ETF extends its heartfelt appreciation to Claudia Pompa and Hiromichi Katayama of UNESCO, Kjell Sundin of UNIDO, Mohammed Elrazzaz and Hamed El Etreby from the Union for the Mediterranean, and Alberto Cavalli and Celine Vogt from the Michelangelo Foundation. Their invaluable contributions, knowledge sharing, case studies, and peer reviews were instrumental in bringing this work to fruition.

We are particularly grateful to Elisa Guidi, Louise Allen, and Elisabeth Miroshnichenko from the World Crafts Council Europe for their dedicated involvement, insightful contributions, and thorough reviews. Our gratitude also extends to Alessandro Mele from Cometa for hosting the event in February 2023, and Tobias Jones for his journalistic work.

Special thanks are due to our ETF colleagues: Cristiano Cagnin for his role in the foresight visit, Silvia Ornano for her support in project management, and Joanna Anstey for her extensive efforts in communication. We give a special mention to Oleksandra Nych, whose active involvement greatly enriched the final product during her internship at the ETF. The publication was written, coordinated, and finalised by Floriana Folisi, Francesca Rosso, and Manuela Prina of the ETF.

“Global value chains will be greener: there will be more eco-friendly sourcing along the supply and manufacturing chain, and a higher consumer awareness and responsibility as the public asks for different goods.”

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“Investing in crafts is no longer a matter of choice because craft has a social dividend, especially in countries struggling with poverty.”

THE CRAFT SECTOR (TODAY)

The definition of craft varies considerably and is contingent upon diverse interpretations, often rooted in cultural contexts. While some define craft as 'creative and productive activities, aimed at crafting artistic products for decorative and consumer purposes'¹, others refer to it as 'economic activity(ies), involving the production of goods and/or craft services produced by hand or in series often using creative skills'². Another perspective regards craft as a process of creating original or imitative products through traditional techniques³. The International Charter of Artistic Craftsmanship⁴ describes crafts as tangible expressions of material culture manifested through artistic phenomena and artefacts, embodying collective artworks and heritage. These objects serve as spiritual and cultural messages, bridging the past and the future through the preservation of traditions, creativity, and distinctive craftsmanship techniques. UNESCO defines craft as products that are produced by artisans, whether entirely by hand or with the aid of hand tools or mechanical means, as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the predominant element in the finished product. The unique essence of artisanal products arises from their distinctive features, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally embedded, decorative, functional, traditional, religiously significant or socially symbolic⁵.

"If diversity is a value, then crafts done in a certain era by certain people passed down by generations should be a value."

“Our entire economic system needs to fundamentally change. We need a new system of value and circularity. There’s a tension between globally-available digital files and how we get back to being rooted in the local, in finding sources within our own ecologies...”

Irrespective of the formal definition, craft practices are deeply rooted in history, extending over centuries and including a variety of specialisations such as woodworking, pottery/ceramics, painting and a wide array of everyday objects like carpets, jewellery and furniture. While craft is often perceived as a small-scale, ‘authentic’ form of production, rooted in natural materials, it has also embraced digital technologies, enabling the development of increasingly complex objects and products.

Crafts are significant not just for preserving cultural heritage and facilitating intergenerational dialogue, but also for their social and economic roles and robust cross-sectoral ties. Crafts have a significant influence on other sub-sectors, such as tourism, agriculture, and the cultural and creative industries⁶.

From an economic standpoint, the intricate nature of the craft sector, coupled with the absence of precise definitions renders the analysis of its employment structure and economic value a complex undertaking. Although comprehensive global data is lacking, certain trends are evident: overall, the craft sector is characterised by small businesses, offering viable and sustainable employment in urban and rural areas, including remote ones. These businesses demonstrate above-average growth, generating employment opportunities, particularly for young people and women, while simultaneously strengthening social cohesion⁷.

¹ Ukraine Law on folk arts and crafts, 2001 Про народні художні промисли | від 21.06.2001 No 2547-III (rada.gov.ua).

² Albania Law on Craftsmanship No 70, dated 30.6.2016.

³ Study of Heritage Crafts Sector in Georgia. 2013 p.16

⁴ International Charter of Artistic Craftsmanship: Fondazione Cologni dei Mestieri d'Arte

⁵ UNESCO and International Trade Centre (ITC), Final report of the International Symposium on Crafts and the International Market: Trade and Customs Codification, 1997

⁶ Activities based on cultural values, or other artistic individual or collective creative expressions: Culture and Creativity (europa.eu).

⁷ The future is in our hands | ETF (europa.eu), ETF 2022



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a pen, with the background being a blurred document. The text 'KEY DRIVERS OF CHANGE' is overlaid in white, sans-serif font.

KEY DRIVERS OF CHANGE

KEY DRIVERS OF CHANGE


Key factors influencing changes in the craft sector: focus on skills

European Training Foundation and Michelangelo Foundation research offers a perspective on the specific drivers shaping the craft sector, particularly their impact on the skills required by craftspeople and artisans⁸. These drivers encompass:

Cultural identity: A growing interest in preserving cultural heritage through crafts is evident. Traditional and local crafts play a vital role in ensuring the continuity of cultural traditions within an ever-evolving world. Crafts serve as a unifying force, connecting generations and reflecting communal identity and history. An example can be seen in Tunisia, where UNIDO has established a network of multi-purpose service centres (hubs) across the country. The hubs, resulting from public-private partnerships, are geared towards promoting the culture of craftsmanship and design⁹. They are places of interaction and training, and support participants in the cultural and creative industries, notably artisans, designers, young entrepreneurs and students. In Tunisia, these hubs provide an array of technical support services, ranging from prototyping to marketing, bespoke technical training and various activities for hub members. The hubs also engage in incubation programmes and form numerous partnerships with art and design schools. Regular events such as conferences, seminars and workshops encourage the exchange of ideas and collaboration within the creative community. UNIDO, aligning with its mandate in the field of creative industries, seeks to elevate the craft sector into a higher value-added industry, enhancing the competitiveness of craft and design value chains. The strategic focus primarily targets beneficiaries in rural areas, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and women. The infusion of advanced skills, technologies, and innovative approaches holds the promise of further invigorating the dynamism in the creative industries and opening new marketing opportunities, both locally and internationally.



"I envisage, in future, less reliance on the public sector. It won't be about big multinationals, but about working as a society."



Tourism sector: The tourism sector plays a pivotal role in driving an escalating demand for crafts. Tourism is closely intertwined with the appreciation of heritage, captivating both international and domestic tourists. The heightened interest in cultural heritage has a substantial impact on travel trends, leading to consistent growth in the number of tourists visiting countries and participating in organised events. Additionally, tourists have developed an increasing appetite for crafts, catalysing shifts in craftsmanship. A clear example is evident in Armenia, where almost all craft sub-sectors are oriented towards tourism, particularly the traditional crafts. In Albania, a national policy actively promotes the country as a tourist destination, prompting significant investment in touristic cities and villages. This investment has revitalised traditional vocations and spurred an increased demand for traditional products. In Iran, the rich creative industry and the historic and geographical significance of Sanandaj and Kermanshah present immense potential for the development of domestic tourism in these cities. UNIDO has been at the forefront of preserving and restoring traditional and local crafts, such as footwear, musical instruments and backgammon, through the establishment of the Sanandaj Creative Hub¹⁰.

"At present there's a real lack of data to find right policies and right strategies. We need to understand where we are right now. You cannot rely on one ministry: it requires the ministry of education, the ministry of industry, of infrastructure, of planning – some kind of inter-ministerial committee to capture all the key players... and the private sector must be included too if we are to be able to say 'crafts are now finally understood!'"

⁸ Craftsmanship and Skills for the Future | Open Space (europa.eu) and The future is in our hands | ETF (europa.eu)

⁹ <https://creativetunisia.tn/>

¹⁰ <https://irancreativehubs.com/hubs/>

Empowering creative youth at Indonesian heritage sites. Indonesian heritage sites are vital for preserving culture and providing enriching experiences for tourists, both local and international. However, despite the growing number of visitors, local communities in these areas often do not benefit from the influx of tourists. To address this, UNESCO Jakarta and the Citi Foundation have been working with young entrepreneurs at six heritage sites in Indonesia since 2017. Their partnership aims to raise awareness about heritage preservation while improving the lives of those living near these sites.

The initiative focuses on enhancing the business skills of local youth engaged in small cultural enterprises, such as crafts, fashion, music, cooking, and tourism within and around heritage sites. It also educates them on the economic value of these sites for their businesses. This support is closely tied to the promotion of intangible cultural heritage and traditional practices like ulos weaving, gorga carving, batik, and martial arts.

The project involves a range of activities, including training in product development, financial literacy, business planning, marketing, branding, and historical education about the heritage sites. Participants receive networking support and opportunities to showcase their work through competitions and public events.

By connecting local communities, their livelihoods, and heritage sites, the Creative Youth at Indonesian Heritage Sites project aims to promote heritage conservation and engage local youth. This innovative approach ensures that communities benefit economically from development and tourism while enhancing the value of heritage destinations and providing visitors with locally crafted goods and services¹¹.



“The whole fabric of education is changing right now. I feel we’re moving away from four-year degrees to more flexible ways and phases. There will be more integration with the real world, types of education that are much more fulfilling, involving mobility and flexibility.”





“It’s about giving dignity to work with hands.”



“The luxury sector has no crisis, there are queues outside shops, so there is demand for high-value crafts...”



Globalisation of the craft sector: The globalisation of the sector allows businesses and markets to connect with any country worldwide through international fairs and exhibitions¹². This expanded reach offers opportunities to tap into new markets, but also weakens traditional bonds and intensifies competition in the domestic market. However, globalisation also presents significant challenges for preserving traditional craftsmanship as many craftspeople struggle to adapt to the increased competition.

Participation in international trade fairs, both commercial and professional, has proven essential for selling handicrafts and accessing new international markets for Tunisian handicraft actors, especially SMEs. Such participation not only boosts sales and exports, but also contributes to a change in mindset within the creative community, while upholding cultural heritage and traditions in their work. Trade fairs serve as more than competitive venues; they are also spaces where creativity and inspiration converge. This synergy often leads to the creation of new products that prioritise quality over quantity and emphasise cultural identity. Globalising the craft sector can lead to increased exchange of cultural heritage, traditions and the subsequent preservation of inherited art¹³.

¹¹ <https://whc.unesco.org/fr/canopee/creative-youth-indonesia/#:~:text=A%20programme%20by%20UNESCO%20Jakarta,livelihoods%20with%20the%20heritage%20sites>.

¹² For example omnichannels for online sales is a key to makers (from instagram to eshops)


¹³ Creative Tunisia – Resilience Through Creativity

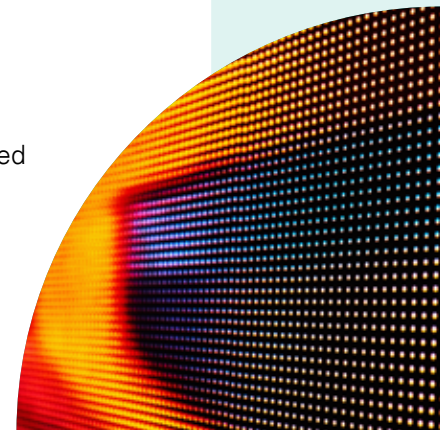


The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat partnered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia in 2018 to establish the Creative Forum Ljubljana, a significant fixture on the regional calendar for creative industries and clusters. This collaboration has led to three editions of the forum thus far. The inaugural edition in 2018 centred on fostering connections through creativity, followed by a focus on creative capital in the second edition of 2019. The third edition, held in 2021, delved into unlocking future potential. With a fourth edition planned for 2024, this initiative has effectively brought together diverse stakeholders, contributing to the advancement of the creative sector.

Through a comprehensive people-focused approach, the forum themes were carefully selected, engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders. This inclusive approach encompassed representatives from governments, public and private sectors, social economy, international and regional organisations, international financial institutions, civil society organisations, cultural and creative industries, as well as academia from both sides of the Euro-Mediterranean region and beyond.

“Craft is so ingrained in a community. Context, and how you build around context, matters.”

 **Craft sector attractiveness:** Craft professions face challenges in appealing to young people, partly due to unfamiliarity with the sector and a perception that craft work is outdated. This viewpoint contributes to a lack of prestige, diminished demand, and constrained income opportunities. In contrast, there is a growing interest among young people in creative professions, creating new avenues for merging crafts with creative industries and modern vocations.







“Many communities have fought so hard to defend their ways of life. Do we value their objects just as products or by the stories and histories they contain? What is the value of a product and who defines it? Is the value only about price?”

“We require beauty as a policy, but is beauty only a value or can it become a meaningful policy?”

The Better Education for Africa’s Rise II (BEAR II) initiative, backed by UNESCO and South Korea spanned five years and aimed to improve the relevance, quality and perception of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems in African nations. From 2017 to 2022, BEAR II provided support to five countries in Eastern Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania and Uganda. This initiative employed sector-specific interventions and targeted capacity-building activities for policymakers, experts and teaching staff in TVET institutions. The project sought to align TVET offerings with economic and labour market needs, elevate the quality of learning programmes and institutions, and enhance the perception of TVET among young people, enterprises and society.

In Tanzania, the BEAR II project directed its efforts towards the creative industries, with a particular focus on handicrafts. This sector, which accounts for approximately 20% of the informal labour force, presents an avenue for employment, social empowerment, and economic and rural development in the country. The BEAR II project aimed to uplift this sector, which is conducive to start-up businesses, particularly among women and marginalised groups. The project facilitated a labour market analysis, curricula and training material, and the establishment of a government-supported Creative Industries Sectoral Skills Council. This Council serves as a coordination mechanism, linking up key stakeholders, addressing the skills gap, and fostering demand-driven training.

 **Urbanisation and craft preservation:** The growing trend towards urbanisation, driven by people seeking better job prospects, raises concerns about preserving the cultural heritage and traditions of crafts rooted in rural communities. This urbanisation threatens these communities and their heritage. Initiatives like UNIDO’s in Tunisia, which include creating image databases and digitising patterns, colours, and objects at risk of fading, address these concerns. UNIDO’s commitment to the creative industries is evident in its support for establishing physical workspaces with machinery, materials, and networking opportunities. It acts as a hub for artisans to transmit their unique skills and knowledge.

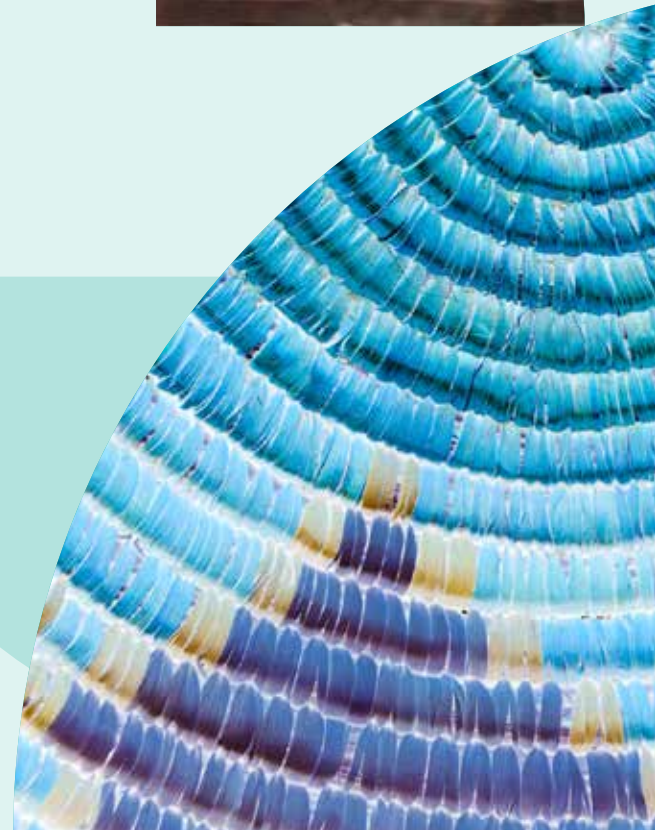



Technological innovation and the impact of Covid-19: Technological advancements are reshaping production processes and enabling broader market access through social media platforms. The aftermath of Covid-19 has expedited technological innovation, necessitating changes in work patterns and greater demand for skills in most sectors, including crafts. Craft businesses are increasingly embracing digital communication tools, with social networks gaining preference over standalone websites. This digital shift affects sales, communication, creation and production processes. It encompasses promoting products online, conducting online banking transactions, handling administrative procedures virtually and even adopting technology on the assembly line, such as tactile screens, 3D projecting and visualisation in sectors like woodworking.



“New skills will obviously be required in the future, so one needs to guarantee continuous skills development. But there needs to be a forum for the transmission of skills to ensure that craft isn’t this static thing.”

“The craft sector needs better communication strategies. Sometimes it’s seen as something old, something from the past, and it needs to communicate better its activities and future visions.”





A virtual festival celebrating Creative Hubs in Kurdistan and Kermanshah. UNIDO has established two creative hubs in Iran, specifically in Kurdistan and Kermanshah. These hubs provide support to more than 200 start-ups operating in the handicrafts and tourism sectors, based on regional needs. To achieve the objectives set for these creative hubs, in 2021/22 UNIDO launched the first International Festival of Creative Hubs in Iran, dedicated to recognising the potential of Iran's creative industries.

The Covid-19 pandemic had a profound impact on Iran, causing significant economic challenges due to extended lockdowns. This naturally affected start-ups' ability to market their products. In response, a four-month online festival was organised, attracting 4,132 participants, with a remarkable 75% representation of women. Various activities, including training, coaching, competitions and exhibitions, were designed and implemented. Topics of the training courses included branding and packaging, digital marketing, financial literacy, new design methodologies, soft skills, and customer relationship management. Notably, 35 teams actively engaged in the coaching sessions, which were divided into four training periods focusing on tourism, handicrafts, food and fashion.

Source: <https://irancreativehubs.com/hubs/>

"We could talk about it being a 'time for crafts' because one has to take time to become a master. Nowadays everything is about speed, but if you want to be a very successful craftsperson you need patience. It's about discovering a different pace to life."

“Crafts are not about destruction, but about construction.”

“Beauty is fragile: it needs us.”

The environment: Sustainable trends and traditional heritage Increasingly, customers are showing heightened concern about environmental issues, driving their interest in understanding the origin of materials and the ecological impact of production models and techniques. The trend of purchasing directly from markets to bypass lengthy distribution chains is influencing the craft sector. Moreover, there is a growing focus on emerging sustainable materials. The appeal of traditional heritage products and crafts has risen, as handmade products are perceived as more sustainably produced. These creations remain closely linked to more environmentally sound practices and economies.

In Vietnam¹⁴, the social enterprise Mi Tom Xanh is taking a novel approach by collaborating with traditional bamboo rattan villages to create innovative products. The company collects, recycles and transforms plastic noodle wraps into fashion accessories, household goods and decorations, leveraging the knowledge and skills of these traditional bamboo craft villages.

“Crafts need safeguarding to avoid the risk of losing something. The end of all strategy needs to be the arrival at a situation in which sectors have no risk of disappearing. Not that we want a museum either. We want living skills. What is the pathway to that? What studies do you need to do? I feel that crafts need to be not just geographical, but also generational.”

¹⁴ <https://open.unido.org/projects/VN/projects/210091>

¹⁵ <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-sustainability-education-prizewinner-zikra-builds-future-past>





Zikra: a bridge to the past, a path to the future¹⁵. Zikra for Popular Learning began in the small village of Ghor Al Mazra, Jordan, and has now expanded to cover four regions: Amman, Al-Karak, Al-Salt and Irbid. This inclusive learning project, founded by Lama Khatieb and Rabee Zureikat, aims to help local populations reconnect with their identity, culture and ancestral knowledge to find sustainable solutions to contemporary challenges.

Zikra has introduced various programmes to communicate its vision, one of which is Exchange Tourism. This initiative bridges the gap between urban and rural communities. Alongside this, Zikra conducts capacity-building workshops and training sessions in schools, universities and institutions involving youth, educators and community members across different Arab regions.

Under the Exchange Tourism programme, a typical visitor pays a nominal sum to spend a day experiencing village life, including learning activities like harvesting crops and caring for livestock. Unique village activities include crafting toy cars from wire, a food value chain project and a musical identity project centred around the traditional reed instrument, the ney.

The outcomes of projects like the musical identity initiative, combined with Zikra's other learning programmes and tools, are being embraced as student activities in several schools and universities. In 2017, Zikra received the prestigious UNESCO-Japan Prize for Education for Sustainable Development. The Government of Japan grants three annual awards, each amounting to USD 50,000. It was awarded for the first time by the Director-General of UNESCO in November 2015. The prize acknowledges the pivotal role of education in bridging the diverse dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic, cultural and environmental.





EMERGING SKILLS NEEDS



EMERGING SKILLS NEEDS

The ability of the craft sector to capitalise on ongoing changes hinges on the availability of skills that facilitate the introduction, use, and maintenance of new technologies, as well as the ability to harness opportunities arising from new trends. Therefore, the recognised key drivers and trends can bring benefits if the following skills receive support:

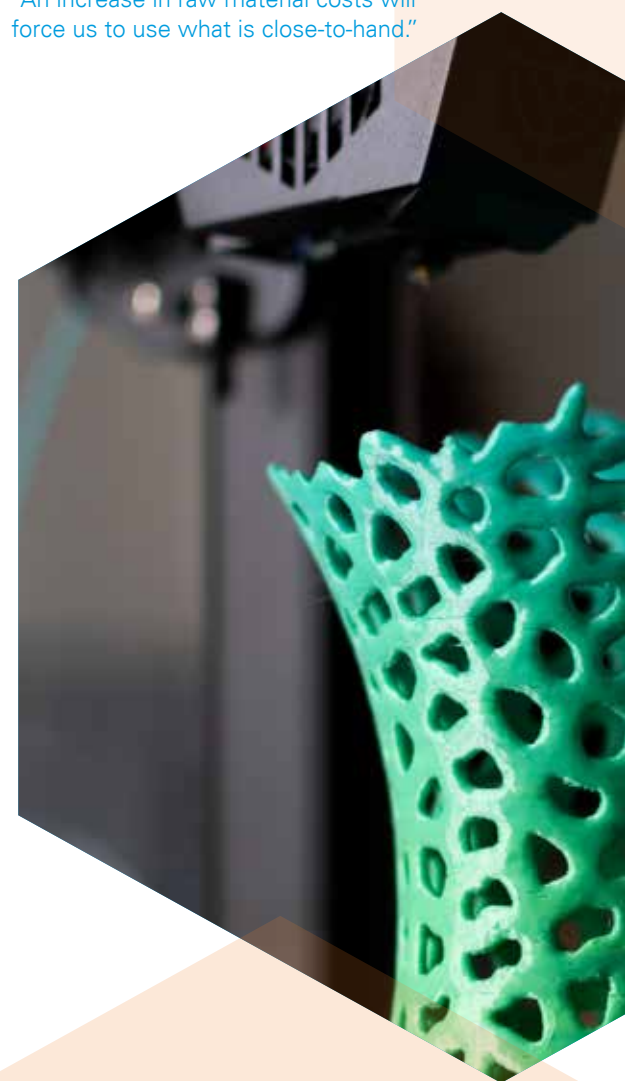
- **Entrepreneurial skills:** This encompasses a broad range of skill sets, including leadership, business management, creative thinking, and business basics. These basics include knowing how to register as self-employed, manage taxes, create marketing plans, develop business projects, and collaborate with other organisations. This is particularly relevant for individual artisans or very small firms.

The UfM project aimed at establishing a regional platform for the development of cultural and creative industries and clusters in the Southern Mediterranean for dialogue and knowledge exchange within the cultural and creative fields. This platform fostered entrepreneurial cooperation and placed particular emphasis on gender issues. Furthermore, it highlighted the potential of the cultural and creative industries, while promoting employment opportunities in the Southern Mediterranean. Promoted by UNIDO, it benefitted clusters in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine* and Tunisia

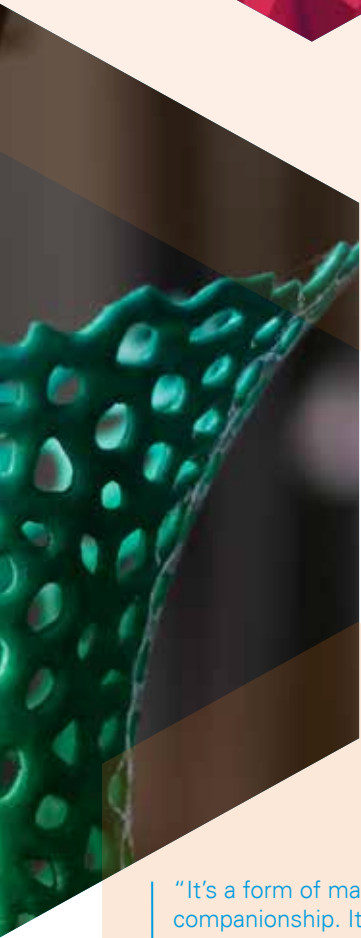
- **Computer literacy skills:** This includes the ability to perform tasks on a computer, such as navigating a browser, operating software systems, and using media tools. Operating fully in digital markets is essential for reaching wider audiences, particularly through social media platforms.

“Craft has to be not just about the final product, but also about the process behind it, about the natural resources, the integration with habitat, with the entire eco-system...”

“An increase in raw material costs will force us to use what is close-to-hand.”



* This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.



“It’s a form of making that contains companionship. It values relationships because the apprentice learns from a master.”

- **Technology-related skills:** This is the ability to work with various technological tools and new machines, as well as the integration of cutting-edge digital technology. This allows students and artisans to gain practical work experience and practice using machines not typically available in schools, such as expensive equipment including 3D printers or specialised IT design software.

These IT advancements streamline the work of craftspeople by supporting manual labour throughout the production and distribution processes. They contribute to efficiency and work optimisation, driving growth in the crafts industry. It is important to note that new machines and tools are adopted only to the extent that they can support manual work or add unique value to complement manual labour. The need for skills related to the use of these tools has therefore increased significantly in the past few years.

- **Creativity and design skills:** This is the ability to use the imagination to generate new ideas or execute tasks, as well as transform products, including artistic contributions or ideas. Due to the internationalisation of the craft market, increasing competition leads to the emergence of new ideas or improved versions of existing products. These skills remain crucial for the “uniqueness” of certain craft products and they ensure that craft objects remain attractive.
- **Interpersonal/soft skills:** This includes communication, adaptability, creative thinking, sales skills (including online sales), knowledge of a foreign language (e.g. English). The introduction of innovation and the increased importance of exports in the crafts industry necessitates a shift in skillsets of craft workers. They need to possess not only technical skills but also interpersonal skills to thrive in this changing landscape.
- **Knowledge of materials:** This covers in-depth knowledge of the materials used in production, including their environmental sustainability related to their composition and production lifecycle. This knowledge also relates to occupational safety and health, contributes to minimising the carbon footprint of each item produced and encourages the use of local materials.



EXPERIENCE FROM THE GROUND



EXPERIENCE FROM THE GROUND

Regarding both established and emerging skills in crafts, there's a growing emphasis on work-based learning, collaboration between craft students and designers, as well as sustainable environmental practices within the craft sector. The following sub-sections introduce and describe specific cases from different countries that highlight these emerging approaches.

1. Work-based learning for entrepreneurship, technology-based training and interpersonal skills development

Work-based learning refers to the acquisition of skills through actual work, whether paid or unpaid, that results in the production of real goods and services¹⁶.

As in many sectors worldwide, a significant portion of necessary skills is cultivated in the workplace, which offers the direct acquisition of specific skills in companies and workshops, as opposed to schools or training centres. This dual learning approach, combining formal education with practical experience, is even more important in the field of craftsmanship.

“It offers an intergenerational approach to learning.”

“There will be more clustering and going local because of the shorter, or disrupted, value chain. In this reconfiguration, we'll see proximation, so more friend-shoring, near-shoring, re-shoring...”



Several challenges need careful consideration from both the schools' and the companies/artisans' perspective.

From the schools' perspective:

1. The high costs of new technologies and machines often hinder schools and laboratories from having these resources in-house, particularly for expensive equipment, like 3D printers or design software. This is especially true for traditional crafts and design. The crafts industry, typically consisting of small businesses, faces difficulties in accessing such advanced technologies due to their cost, even when manual craftsmanship remains a significant proportion of traditional crafts.

2. New techniques and technologies require teachers and trainers to keep themselves up-to-date. Support should be provided to teachers, trainers and mentors, especially within micro, small and medium-sized companies, to enhance their skills, knowledge and competences. This allows them to train apprentices using the latest teaching and training methods and align with labour market needs. However, this requires time and resources, which can have a greater impact on micro and small companies.

From the companies/artisans' perspective:

1. Artisan shops or companies, typically employing two to twenty individuals, often face human resource limitations. Balancing the mentorship of an apprentice or trainee while managing regular work is challenging. Additionally, some artisans fear that investing significant effort in training a student might lead to increased competition if the student goes on to open their own shop. Nonetheless, apprentices can bring fresh perspectives, innovative techniques, and the ability to use new technologies.

2. However, a crucial aspect that needs to be promoted in the sector is training in real work environments. This allows businesses to address immediate demands while also supporting small companies and the overall economy in preparing for future challenges¹⁷.

¹⁶ Work-based learning_Tool.pdf (europa.eu) (p.4), ETF 2018

¹⁷ In line with the kinesthetic/tactile learning style, which requires the manipulation and tactile use of materials to learn, kinesthetic/tactile techniques are used in combination with visual and/or auditory study techniques, producing multi-sensory learning



The Ikaalinen College for Crafts and Design and the Taidosto Cooperative (based in Finland), was established in 2004. It maintains a close collaboration with the Ikaalinen College of Crafts and Design and is collectively owned by over 400 artisans from diverse fields. This unique model transforms the school into a workplace, forming a cooperative (a legal entity) primarily composed of the school's students.

Recognising the need for practical learning opportunities within the private sector, the Ikaalinen College for Crafts and Design introduced the TOY model (entrepreneurial on-the-job learning). Through this model, students have the chance to produce their own products, sell them, and use the school's machinery. Centralised accounting is managed for the entire cooperative. During the TOY model experience, students engage in team coaching sessions, where they gain essential knowledge about developing business ideas, marketing, pricing strategies, and running a business. Importantly, all these aspects are seamlessly integrated into their academic studies, with students receiving an entrepreneurship study module as part of their participation in the TOY model.

Upon completing the TOY model, students continue their engagement by becoming members of the Taidosto Cooperative. They maintain their roles as entrepreneurs alongside their ongoing studies. Furthermore, after graduation, students have the option to remain as members, allowing them to further develop their ideas before venturing into establishing their own companies.

"We might see a return to more informal education in which teaching is done in a very different way. We'll still see schools, but a lot more like Cometa: hubs and labs for reality-based learning."



<https://sasky.fi/English-site/>

Homo Faber Fellowship¹⁸: An educational initiative created by the Michelangelo Foundation, aims to support the seamless integration of skilled graduates into the crafts industry. This seven-month fellowship features a month-long entrepreneurial and creative masterclass, conducted in collaboration with the ESSEC Business School and Passa Ao Futuro, within a creative hub. Subsequently, participants embark on a six-month internship at a workshop of a master artisan. The fellowship is designed to pair duos of master artisans and craft graduates, fostering the transfer of invaluable skills. The programme is taking place across several European countries in partnership with local members of the Foundation's extensive network.



<https://nextgen.homofaber.com>

The Georgian Heritage Craft Association (GHCA) is an NGO established in 2015, operating on a membership-based model. Its primary objective is to develop a sustainable framework for the craft sector in Georgia by creating a networking platform that brings together individuals, craftspeople, organisations, and guilds. The GHCA has successfully united over 300 members since its inception.

One of the GHCA's notable achievements is the development of an informal education programme designed to bridge the existing gaps in entrepreneurial skills among artisans, which are essential for successful self-employment in the crafts market. This programme includes a series of training sessions, workshops, and individual consultations, all aimed at enhancing the transmission of craft skills to future generations.

Recently, the GHCA has embarked on a collaborative effort with the formal education system, particularly in partnership with the newly established Vocational Skills Agency. The joint initiative is known as the Craft Duo, and its mission is to address the mismatch between craft-related vocational modules and the qualifications required by the employment market. Although the process is currently underway, this independent entity will be governed by a board of representatives drawn from sectoral and sub-sectoral craft associations.



<https://crafts.ge/>

2. Collaborative efforts between craft students and designers are key to stimulating creativity and enhancing interpersonal skills

To educate students in emerging art forms and promote the exchange of design knowledge and skills, it is essential to present them with challenging opportunities. For example, allowing students to collaborate directly with professionals, such as designers, allows them to develop their skills in interpreting and crafting products, transforming ideas into tangible creations, and mutually inspiring one another. Such collaboration also cultivates teamwork and client interaction, leading to improved flexibility and adaptability in the workplace. This challenge not only enhances technical skills but also bolsters interpersonal skills (such as social and behavioural skills) that are increasingly essential in this field.


The Ecole Boulle was established in 1886 in Paris, initially as a furniture making institution, and has since evolved into a prestigious centre for comprehensive craftsmanship training across various disciplines. The school features 13 in-house workshops, offering courses ranging from baccalaureate level to postgraduate studies. The classes are conducted by master craftsmen in small group sizes of two to twelve students, with a strong emphasis on developing savoir-faire and achieving a fine balance between design practices and top-tier craftsmanship.

Ecole Boulle has created a distinct educational path known as DNMADE (Diplôme National des Métiers d'Art et du Design). This programme focuses on cultivating knowledge and professional skills in various crafts and design specialties. It facilitates the connection between design creation and production/manufacturing/implementation. The bachelor's cycle spans three years, divided into six semesters. In the final two semesters, students collaborate with designers and other professional figures to develop projects and produce new artworks. The project offers diverse pathways with a unique focus, including interior architecture and furniture design, social innovation within habitats and territories, and object design, among others.

This specific educational experience empowers DNMADE graduates to access roles in the crafts and design economic sectors, encompassing creative activities, design, realisation, production, and conservation-restoration. Additionally, students have the option to pursue further studies at university level, expanding their academic horizons.



<https://ecole-boulle.org/>



3. The use of design to promote a sustainable environmental approach

To raise awareness of the ongoing green transition, it is essential to champion the concept of sustainability. A valuable approach involves giving materials a “second life” rather than disposing of them, along with recycling waste materials from products such as marble, fabric, and more. Providing training on crafting handmade products from these waste materials represents a powerful means to support the green transition. Additionally, organising exhibitions to showcase the outcomes of sustainable work can serve as a powerful source of inspiration.

As part of the Mobilizing Cultural Dynamics and Youth Participation towards Hanoi Creative Capital project, UNIDO orchestrated the Circular Living Design Challenge. This contest took a distinct approach, moving beyond the conventional design competition model. It engaged designers over an extended period within the creative ecosystem, fostering collaboration with local fab labs and makerspaces. The contest’s first stage encouraged broad participation, with entries in the form of sketches that emphasised ideation, without immediate execution. Shortlisted projects advanced to a two-day hackathon event in Hanoi, where local labs collectively hosted a hands-on two-day prototyping session, providing digital fabrication tools, techniques, instructors and mentors to bring ideas to life.

The participants, empowered by this support, then entered their prototypes into stage two of the competition. The Circular Living Design Awards recognised three winners for the most sustainable, creative, and scalable design projects across Hanoi and Vietnam. These projects received further support for development and were showcased at international and national events, such as Hanoi Design Week.

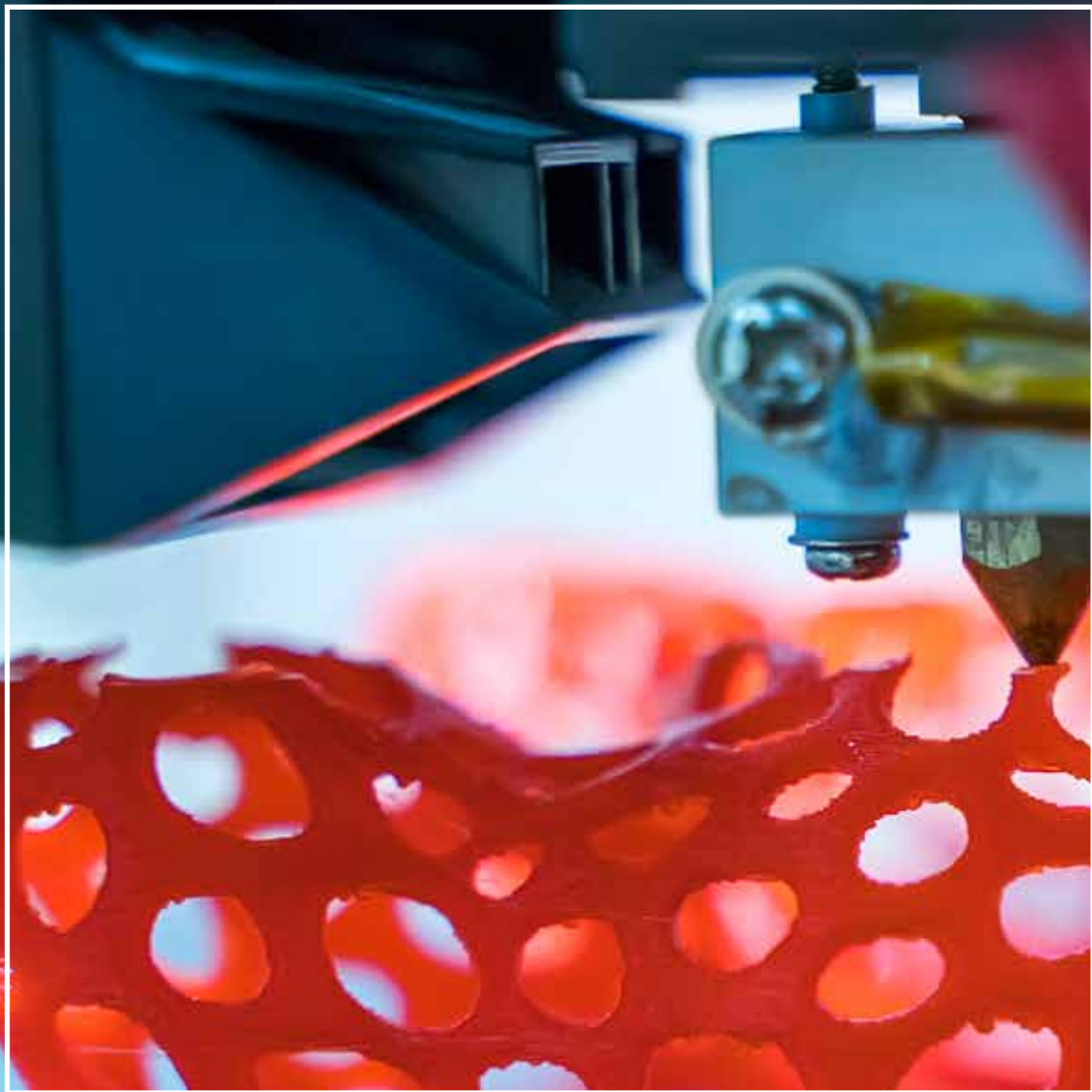
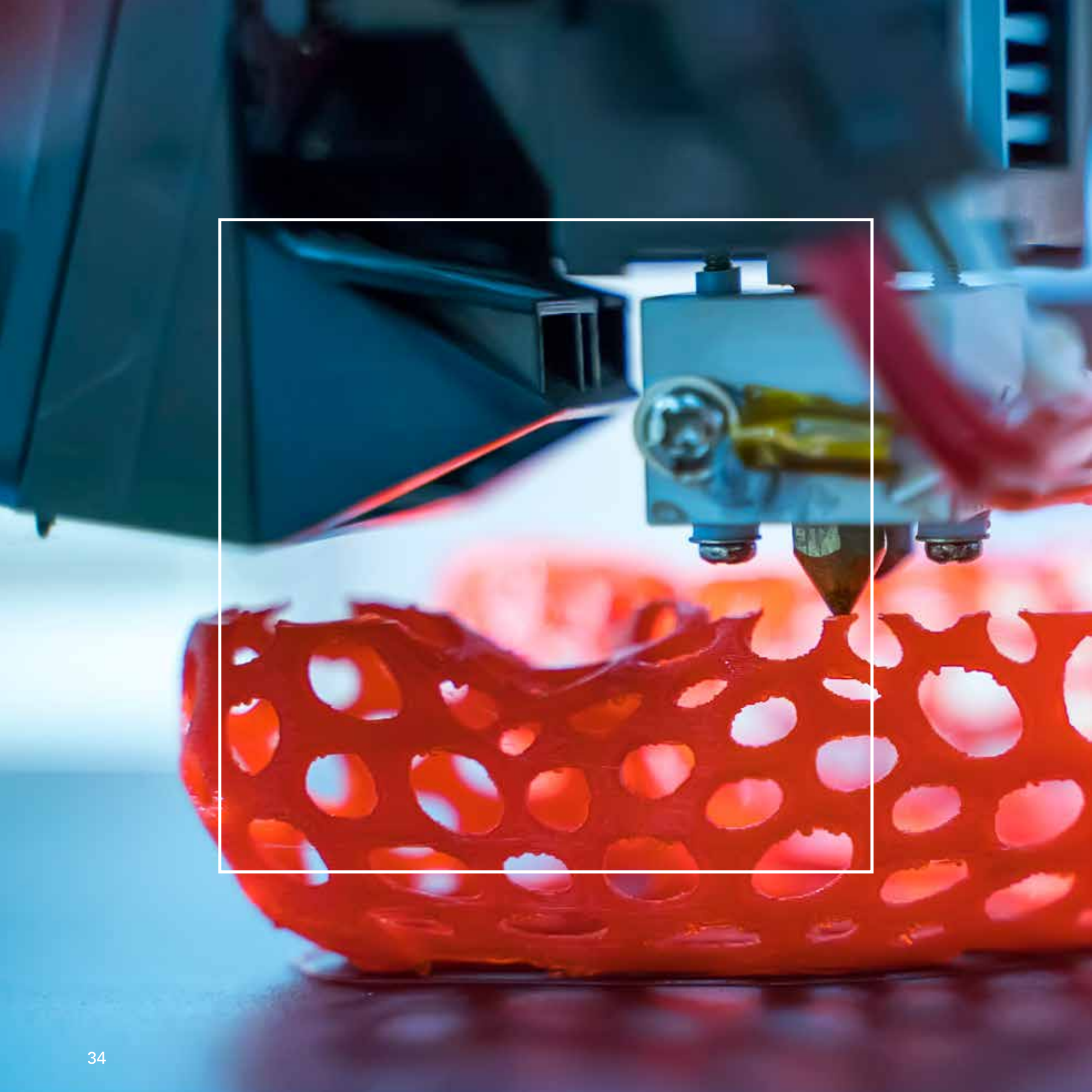
Among the winners were Mi Tom Xanh, an organisation transforming plastic noodle wraps into fashion accessories, household goods and decorations; Sounds of Recycled Wood, which turns twigs and wood scraps into school supplies, toys and home decor items, including a recording device for added joy; and Colouring Air Quality, a project recreating famous Hanoi buildings with recycled materials and a real-time system of coloured lights that reflect air quality. This innovative project aims to raise public awareness about health and the environment, encouraging proactive action for protection.

“Without dialect and without meaning nothing that interests us can really take place... Otherwise we are just insects, polite insects.”

“Story-telling is so important.”



<http://fab.city/projects/hanoi-rethink-unesco-un-habitat/>



The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue gradient. In the lower-left foreground, there is a red, textured object, possibly a piece of fabric or a craft, with some white and pinkish patterns. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

LOOKING AHEAD: A VISION FOR CRAFTS

LOOKING AHEAD: A VISION FOR CRAFTS

How can we shape the future of crafts the way we want it to be? How do we make it inclusive, appealing, appreciated and better integrated into education and training systems? Are we aligned with the way we envision it?

In March 2023, all partners engaged in a two-day visionary discussion with experts about the craft sector's future up to 2050. This inspiring event took place at the Cometa centre of excellence in Como, Italy. The setting at Cometa resonated with the importance and relevance of craftsmanship, care and attention to detail.

Through a foresight* exercise, we collaborated to develop a shared vision for the crafts industry, pinpointing specific priorities and actions that can help global policymakers envision the sector with a forward-looking perspective. Policymakers, educators, craft practitioners, and international experts converged, leveraging their diverse backgrounds and knowledge to share expertise. Guided by professional moderators, participants engaged to exchange ideas, share knowledge, and discuss the topic from multiple angles.

* Foresight is a tool that helps to shape policies with a focus on the medium to long term. This exercise can be described as a structured and participatory process for gathering future intelligence, aimed at building a vision for the medium to long term, all while guiding present-day decisions and maximising community efforts.

technology
global
governance
circularity
entrepreneurship
business
craft
celebrating
chain
craft
experience
modernised
personal
value
commercialised
past
experience
agreement
LEARNING
FUTURE
young
sustainable
INTERNATIONAL
regulation
story
DEVELOPMENT
IMPACT
market
DATA
IDENTITY
generations
skills
Local
knowledge
CRAFTS
skills



Our vision statement

We champion crafts as a form of cultural heritage and contemporary expression. Our vision is to create a world where crafts are recognised, appreciated and celebrated and where craftspeople possess the skills, resources, and recognition essential to establish and sustain flourishing businesses.

We aspire to celebrate the value of beauty and storytelling within crafts. We are dedicated to fostering the exchange of knowledge across generations, addressing the imperative to challenge the traditional hierarchy between craft expertise and mainstream education.

We are committed to embracing the “glocal” concept in crafts: locally produced, where the knowledge thrives, yet globally distributed, all while maintaining a sustainable and ethical approach to crafts production.

To achieve this vision, we propose a multi-faceted approach.

1. An ecosystem approach:

A holistic approach, combined with supportive infrastructure, can heighten societal awareness and understanding of the sector. This, in turn, will lead to collective actions and appreciation of the unique value of each craftwork.

2. Local and global dynamics:

We recognise the interplay between global and local aspects in crafts. While crafts often stem from local traditions, they can also benefit from global networks and markets.

3. Sustainability and circular economy:

Crafts can contribute to a circular economy with zero waste, emphasising quality, sustainability, and local ecological systems. New eco and craft labels, linked to reusing and recycling practices, are emerging to support this.

4. Leveraging technology:

The role of technology, including digital connectivity and AI, can enhance craftsmanship by supporting creativity and complementary roles, not replacing them.

5. Education and skills development:

Our vision's foundation is education, focusing on transmitting traditional and new skills, creative practices and opportunities for mobility for exchange of knowledge and know-how. We believe in lifelong learning, practical pathways, and recognition of aptitudes to build thriving crafts communities.

6. Preserving tradition:

Learning from master artisans and intergenerational knowledge exchange is crucial. Circular and sustainable teaching methods are essential to passing on craft skills and values.

7. Challenging hierarchy:

We aim to bridge the gap between craft education and the business aspects of crafts, ensuring equal access to training, resources, and opportunities for craftspeople.

8. Storytelling and recognition:

The ability to convey the stories behind creations is vital. It connects with customers, builds relationships, and promotes the value of crafts. Crafts have a rich history of being vehicles for creativity, cultural identity, and tradition. Unfortunately, in our fast-paced, industrialised world, crafts are often undervalued, misunderstood, and marginalised.

Our aim is to revalue and preserve crafts, making people aware of their potential in not only preserving cultural heritage and creative industries but also contributing to inclusive economies. We see crafts as a vibrant sector capable of sustainability and responsiveness to climate urgency. They can play a significant role in the cultural, social, and economic development of communities worldwide.

Crafting Inclusive Excellence – The Cometa Story of Empowering Young Lives.

Cometa, founded in 2000, began as a support network for foster families based on the experience of two such families. It has since grown into a comprehensive organisation providing social, health and education services to children, biological families, and foster families.

“At Cometa, the concept of craftsmanship carries profound meaning. We often speak of wise hands, a concept born from experience. The journey started with the recognition of a need: some young individuals had dropped out of school and were uninterested in pursuing any activities. Unfortunately, their lack of training made finding employment challenging.

Cometa launched a pilot project involving these young people, giving them the chance to experience the power of their hands, their wise hands: demonstrating what they can achieve with them! They were invited to work on chair frames, transforming them into unique pieces with the support of Maestri, local craftspeople. This project, grounded in “learning by doing” and “doing with,” ignited their desire to change and grow. The frames they worked on represented more than furniture; they symbolised change, the discovery of beauty, and the authentic fulfilment of their lives. Together with their trainers and colleagues, these young people discovered their uniqueness.

This approach, developed over years and generations, involves apprentices and craftspeople collaborating to create unique artisanal pieces. It also fosters self-awareness of their own uniqueness and excellence. Beyond barriers or differences, trainers guide learners to thrive and allow their talents to flourish. Training isn’t just a programme of activities; it’s a deep exploration of each learner, their distinctiveness, and differences. They possess hidden talents waiting to be discovered. We need to welcome, train, and empower them to thrive, nurturing the value hidden within. In everyday life, we need more warm embraces. Why? This is our truth, our experience. Inclusion isn’t a cold evaluation; it’s a warm welcome to help others thrive, allowing their talents and uniqueness to shine, akin to crafting when we reveal the inner beauty of a material. This is inclusive excellence.”

Erasmus Figini (interior designer)



<https://www.puntocometa.org/>





Craft as *Relational* Production

Craft is at the opposite end of the manufacturing spectrum to industrialised, mechanised production. Craft forges objects through community and culture. It is a relational process that nurtures creativity and excellence. It doesn't produce similarity, but diversity. Craft is often traditional, and deeply rooted in heritage and group identity, but it is also innovative and responsive. It involves a higher percentage of those groups – rural communities, the elderly, female workers – than other professions. Craft products are more than mere objects; they convey meaning and have stories to tell. In an era of digitalisation, the value and appreciation of crafts is growing thanks to its uniqueness and strong connection to the circular economy.

“The phenomenon of craft is its perpetual presence in society, constituting an integral part of the development of civilization, steadily evolving and changing its shape, according to the needs and challenges of each time, while uniquely coexisting with the past, the present and the future, always paving its path towards new horizons.”

“Craft is a celebration of humanity. It influences social cohesion because it connects different generations.”

“Creativity is also about self-discovery. And a circular economy means that every person has a value and that everything has a value. Inclusive excellence is about discovering your value and allowing it to thrive: it's about process rather than only the end product. In the making there is human work on the inside as well as material work on the outside.”



Manual Labour and *Handing* Down

Craft has always been understood as something created with one's hands. It is about manufacturing in the oldest sense of "manu factum"; "made by hand". Manual labour has often been scorned by "white-collar" workers, but the process of cultural transmission is consistently described, in all languages, using metaphors linked to hands: handed down, tramandato etc. It is through our hands that we pass on our knowledge to future generations. All definitions of "craft" encompass a notion of expertise and historical significance. Handmade objects are crucibles of understanding, story, intuition and sense-making. It is through rediscovering an appreciation for manual labour that we will once again find ourselves not only in a man-made world but also in a world made for humanity.

Craft knowledge and skills are profound elements of human existence, serving as a testament to our own abilities. They are shared within communities and societies and passed down from one generation to the next. Every time a new talent enters the craft arena, a wealth of crafting experience from past times welcomes them, guiding their hands.

"Working with your hands keeps alive a bond with your ancestors... it's something to do with your senses making a bridge."


"Crafts is not about things, but about meaning, about meaningful goods and objects. What are we telling younger generations: buy an object that you can put up on shelf and then put in a landfill... or that through your talent you can contribute to the exchange of objects that represent who you are and convey messages about who you are?"





Relocalisation and Territoriality

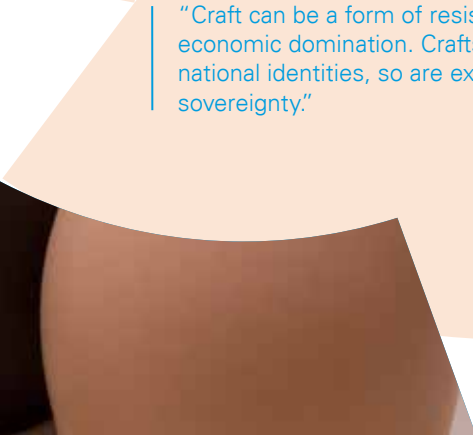
Several participants expressed a belief that we are entering a period of fragmented globalisation and the rewiring of supply chains. Geopolitical shocks, such as the Covid pandemic and tensions with Russia and China, have prompted many policymakers to explore the options of near-shoring and friend-shoring in order to ensure secure critical imports and exports. There is a growing recognition that globalisation has worsened inequalities, leading to a consideration of the adverse distributional consequences. Additionally, consumer worries about human rights violations and environmental degradation have shifted the focus away from solely seeking the cheapest and fastest products. Resilience is now valued as much as efficiency, with “just-in-case” replacing “just-in-time”. As a representation of the explicitly local and regional, craft may have unforeseen advantages and vulnerabilities in this rewiring of the supply chain.



“The knowledge exchange will be global, but production local. Territoriality is about the knowledge stored in a region. Why did Switzerland come to have amazing watch-making skills? How they came to do micro-mechanics is down to history. And territory is about raw materials, what you have to hand.”



“We currently have cotton produced in Africa which is treated in China, then shipped back to Africa to be woven, either because skills have been lost or because of infrastructural capacities. That’s unsustainable, so we need to steward skills, to ensure a line of transmission for skills...”



“Craft can be a form of resistance to economic domination. Crafts are icons of national identities, so are expressions of sovereignty.”

Beauty

Many critics of modernity argue that we have lost our sense of beauty. We are utilitarians who value objects solely based on their monetary value. As Shakespeare wrote in Macbeth, "fair is foul, and foul is fair." The Italian sociologist Luigi Zoja complains that "things are getting uglier and uglier" and argues that "the scarcity of goods is not a problem anymore but we have chronic under-nutrition due to ugliness. The environment has been chewed and spat out, like the peel of a fruit." The beauty and simplicity of crafts counteracts this tendency: it cherishes and nurtures beauty.

| "What would a world without craft be?
We would be Neanderthals."

| "Beauty is complicated and often expensive. Ugly doesn't respect our humanity, it's cheap and fast, creates profit and employment... But there is still this quest, this thirst for beauty..."

| "Beauty should be a universal language. The minute beauty is no longer the universal language but becomes just embellishment and decoration then we are in trouble. A cynical attitude towards beauty leads to cynicism towards justice, cynicism towards respect. All of the constellation of values around us seem to fade away..."

Human *Creativity* in the AI Age

“Technology can be a supporting force for craft, helping with creative design, marketing and so on. Craft will remain a human activity made by hand, mostly, but with new shapes and styles.”

Artificial intelligence blurs the line between what is human and what is not, raising the question of how crafts fit into an AI age. Harvard Professor Michael E. Porter’s Five Forces framework describes the operating environment of business competition: its mention of “the threat of new entrants” and “the threat of substitutes” is highly relevant to the crafts industry in light of AI, robotics, 3D printers and computer-generated imagery. Crafts may become redundant unless the objects produced contain narrative, meaning and authenticity beyond the reach of machines.

“3D technology has penetrated so much of the industry that it might feel as if we don’t need crafts any more. But vice versa, there’s a nostalgia for craftsmanship, a sense that what is crafted will be forever. So there’s this very interesting question of where crafts fit in a post-digital age.”

“Machines are used in design practice, but we shouldn’t be scared of that. They’re just tools that allow us to go further and faster. Craftspeople need the ability to tell their story, though, and very often they don’t have the budget to invest in communication.”



Modelling a Different Kind of *Education*

Crafts have always been educational. The word “artisan” implies instruction. It derives from a word that transforms art from a noun to a verb: the Latin, “artitus,” was the past participle of “artire,” meaning “to instruct in the arts.” Craft encompasses a unique form of education that often diverges from mainstream schooling. It emphasises observation, imitation and experimentation. A master not only models the raw material in their hands, but also models a way of being for apprentices and novitiates. Many believe the craft sector will unveil a new approach to understanding education.

“I imagine a sort of Noah’s Ark that allows for the survival of old skills. Perhaps that ark will be a setting for skills exchanges like new types of guilds or chambers.”

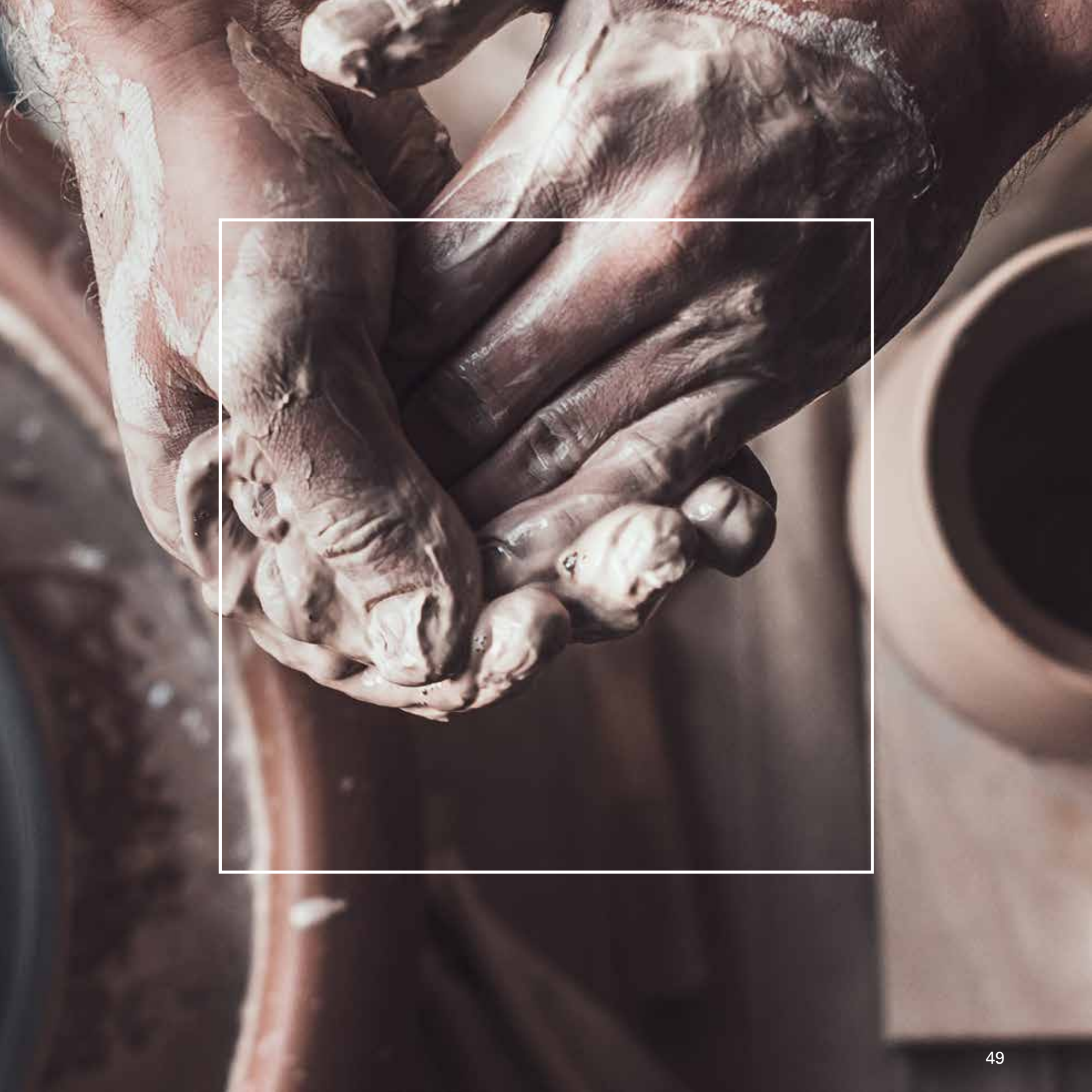
“There’s a desperate need to redesign training in the craft sector which is now completely obsolete. It’s about engaging important stakeholders so that we build that link between the aesthetically pleasing and the economically promising. There should be an integration of crafts and associated skills even at elementary school level.”

“In the future I see an education that is less controlled by schools and universities. There will be a recognition of all types of education, not just the current one where you can’t have a job because you don’t have a degree.”





FIVE SQUARED $[5^2]$:
CRAFTING A
PATHWAY FOR THE
FUTURE



FIVE SQUARED [5²]: CRAFTING A PATHWAY FOR THE FUTURE

How can we turn this vision into reality? It is relatively easy to develop a vision. It is more difficult to turn it into reality. A roadmap has been broadly drawn up for the period between 2023 and 2050, outlining five priorities for action.

“Perhaps we need to remove the stigma associated with craft and instead see it as a form of beauty that brings the past into the future.”



By 2030

Important actions to take:

- Map the crafts ecosystem and its impacts
- Develop national strategies and allocate resources
- Build a regulatory framework conducive to craft support
- Develop institutional support and awareness raising on the value of crafts
- Take measures to ensure policy values and metaverse ethics
- Take immediate action to address disappearing crafts
- Develop skills for green crafts and develop the associated infrastructure
- Ensure curricula change to integrate crafts in schools
- Develop centres of excellence and an education council

Key **priorities** are:

1. **Data and advocacy:** Ensure alignment across sectors and funding, identify and map needs to develop a knowledge bank, outline ethical principles and values, and establish a global agreement.
2. **Engagement:** Focus on crafts for the young generations. Stimulate their interest towards crafts and make working conditions more attractive.
3. **Quality:** Ensure the production of high-quality crafts and create market opportunities by developing awareness campaigns and promoting a shift in mindsets.
4. **Learning:** Integrate crafts into curricula early on in education systems, including the development of manuals and educational tools.
5. **Skills:** Assess needs and ensure that the knowledge base accounts for those crafts at risk and in need of preservation.

“There’s a need to move away from a mono-economic system that only talks about money. We need to talk about the value of energy, the value of waste, the value of recycling...”

By 2040

Important actions to take:

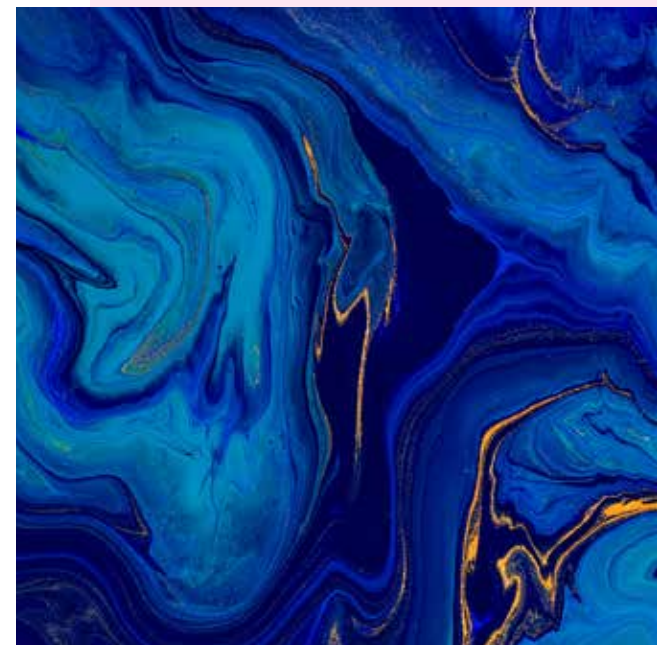
- Organise a World Craft Summit
- Promote heritage tourism
- Develop a campaign on crafts
- Introduce quality standards
- Develop a certificate of origin with associated intellectual property rights
- Develop immersive e-commerce experiences
- Create decent crafts jobs
- Develop master crafts courses
- Ensure career guidance for craftspeople
- Implement crafts passports

Key **priorities** are:

1. **Data and advocacy:** Develop national and regional indicators bringing to together a diverse group of policy representatives to ensure feasibility.
2. **Engagement:** Focus on industry and value-added activities. It is also important to prioritise associations and ensure adequate representation. Paying attention to the importance of unity is crucial in building a positive culture, which can be achieved through forging agreements and partnerships.
3. **Quality:** Focus on skills and standards.
4. **Learning:** Redesign training opportunities for crafts, including content and methodology. Integrate crafts at all education levels by designing a pathway to crafts through lifelong learning.
5. **Skills:** Build a policy framework that enables the development of dedicated programmes and market penetration.



“Craft requires parity in the educational merry-go-round.”





By 2050

Important actions to take:

- Organise a Crafts Olympics
- Foster social appreciation for crafts and the ways in which they represent culture and identity
- Develop a new economic system that prioritises happiness and wellbeing, as well as choice and satisfaction
- Develop a tax-free crafts label
- Create decent jobs in the sector
- Develop sustainable communities
- Document, protect and preserve
- Promote, teach, transmit and recycle

Key **priorities** are:

1. **Data and advocacy:** Develop global indicators for crafts aligned with the (new) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a new value system.
2. **Engagement:** Coordinate and cooperate at policy level.
3. **Quality:** Focus on self-esteem and the transmission of skills and know-how, enabling crafts to become a financially viable and stable career choice and leveraging an ecosystem for crafts.
4. **Learning:** Focus on sustainable careers and the roles of artisans in society. Build supporting structures and infrastructure, foster beauty as a value and policy, as well as a key for meaningful lives. Ensure there is no division between higher education and crafts.
5. **Skills:** Lifelong learning is essential for securing jobs and taking advantage of digital opportunities. Therefore, crafts are chosen as a first career choice because they are appreciated for their value in terms of identity and culture.

As depicted on these pages, many different issues need to be taken on board to boost the sector and support its development. With inputs from all experts, we compiled a list of recommendations that countries can use as inspiration to drive changes in the sector.

Five priorities for action (data, engagement, quality, learning and skills) are briefly introduced, followed by a list of 25 recommendations. This is the origin of 5²!

All five priorities are interrelated and contribute transversally to activities identified in the different fields: data collection to support awareness and reinforce governance; but also economic incentives as an engine to build supply chains (sustainability). All of it while considering the crucial role of education and skills for crafts.

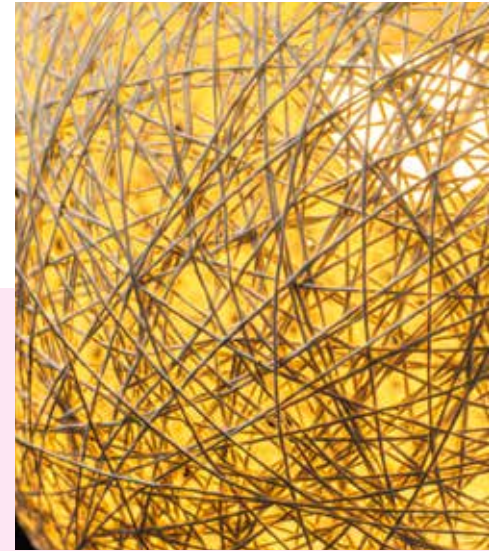
Some recommendations are more traditional, while others are more innovative. At the end of the day, they offer a menu that can only be adopted by countries themselves based on their own needs and specific situation.


RECOMMENDATIONS 1 TO 7

Relying on data...

For the most part, the craft sector does not enjoy the same level of visibility as other industries. Data is scarce and not easily available. There is currently no single source of information about the global crafts industry. Having access to these types of data, both quantitative and qualitative, is fundamental to making evidence-based decisions. Availability on a large scale would support informed access to craft markets and their financing, raise public awareness and shape more evidence-based policies on crafts.

- 1 Develop a multi-stakeholder data-gathering exercise, conducted at both local and global levels, to uncover the challenges and potential of the craft sector. This exercise would provide a comprehensive foundation for developing strategies at both national and international levels.
- 2 Create a digital and accessible “world craft interactive map.” This would be in the form of an interactive inventory that includes not only archival material and a timeline of heritage crafts but also information on emerging ones. This interactive map could be combined with a “shop window,” which serves as a forum for advocacy, direct sales and, most importantly, the storytelling behind each craft.
- 3 Establish an open source knowledge bank on crafts to contribute to and consolidate intelligence on various topics related to crafts, including raw materials, industrial developments, market opportunities, and career prospects.





...and reinforcing engagement and governance

Craftspeople are often invisible or overlooked as mere artisans. Such a negative image of craftsmanship leads to a poor perception of craft products. They are often seen as either extremely high-quality, luxurious and expensive, or as low quality and cheap, with the latter being widely accepted for mass production. Actions are needed to improve the governance and perception of craftsmanship.

- 4 Conduct awareness campaigns to emphasise the societal and individual advantages of pursuing a career in crafts, led by “craft ambassadors” or “influencers”
- 5 Organise an annual “Craft Olympics” to showcase global creativity and innovation, facilitate networking and provide a platform for mutual learning.
- 6 Actively develop national strategies to serve as the foundation for regional strategies, promoting good governance at all levels.
- 7 Reinforce the role of trade unions to support the systematic upgrade of the sector and the skills of craftspeople, aligning them with challenges such as technological advancements and digitalisation.

“The education of the consumer is paramount. We need to sensitise the consumer to beauty and the values of craft, to make people understand what craft is and why it is sometimes expensive.”

RECOMMENDATIONS 8 TO 13

Preserving quality...

- 8 Protect crafts by combatting counterfeit goods through the introduction of stricter legislation and its enforcement. Grant intellectual property and patent recognition for ancient or innovative crafts that are undercut and appropriated by cheaper imitations.
- 9 Establish a quality mark for craft products, that will reassure artisans and consumers of its high-quality standards. Award trademarks or “DOC”-style recognition to provide consumers with the assurance of authenticity.
- 10 Expand research about crafts and implement emergency measures to safeguard endangered crafts.

“Perhaps it’s about breaking down the silos between different types of heritage. People will often go to a world heritage site with not a thought about the inherent artisan behind it.”





Introducing economic incentives to overcome market challenges...

Lack of funding is a recurring challenge for the craft sector, which has a negative impact on all key stakeholders, including manufacturers and consumers. It is important to make crafts economically secure and sustainable.

Raise awareness about underfunding trends in the crafts sector.

11 Implement tax breaks for handcrafted objects of recognised aesthetic importance, such as VAT reduction or increased income-tax allowances for craftspeople.

12 Establish a recognised “living wage” for artisans in order to support the sector.

13

“There’s an interesting tension in craft guilds between sharing knowledge and withholding it, between openness and protectionism.”



RECOMMENDATIONS 14 TO 25

Building virtuous supply chains...

Craft products have the potential to become beacons of ethical trade and virtuous markets, modelling a new form of globalisation in which intermediaries and multinational corporations do not take up a significant portion of the value chain. Using new green technologies and utilising raw renewable or recycled materials should be consistently rewarded as the optimal pathway to pursue in the future.

Introduce “ingredients labels” that outline the materials used, their origin, renewability, carbon footprint, and the object’s “craft-miles” among other details.

14

Offer logistical support to innovative crafts that use new green technologies and sustainable, renewable or recycled materials.

15

Establish a craft “fair-trade” logo to ensure ethical standards and the safeguarding of workers’ rights.

16

Support the establishment of direct-sales outlets and platforms, enabling consumers to buy directly from artisans or craftspeople. This will not only benefit the craftspeople, but also reduce costs for consumers.

17

Promote a new mindset for consumers that supports sustainable production and a green crafts’ approach.

18

Launch a campaign to align crafts with the SDGs through an analysis of new materials, alternative energy sources, transportation methods etc., as well as a reduction in production.

19



“It requires inter-sectoral development: crafts are linked to tourism (agri-food tourism, craft-tourism, the offering of courses).”





...and making it possible through learning and skills

Crafts education, often isolated from mainstream education, limits public exposure and appreciation for the craft profession. Those in the sector lack opportunities to share their expertise, contributing to a perception of craftsmanship as unreliable and undervalued. Additionally, rapid technological advancements outpace skills development in these areas. Bridging the educational gap between traditional school subjects and craft skills, including digital proficiency, is crucial for supporting the sector.



- 20 Incorporate craft education into school curricula starting from primary level through craft lab classes, enabling early exposure and appreciation for the craft field among students.
- 21 Introduce artisan vocations into career guidance offered to students and school-leavers.
- 22 Offer craftspeople flexible courses to learn skills demanded by the labour market, such as business acumen, communication strategies, branding, sales, logistics, finance, IT, and understanding of emerging technologies and environmental impacts.
- 23 Facilitate access to courses by providing recognition for skills and informal learning of craftspeople.
- 24 Re-design training in the craft sector, emphasising the use of new tools and the latest technologies for the production of crafts.
- 25 Enhance teacher training in crafts to ensure they are up-to-date with the latest technologies and specific production techniques relevant to the sector.

“We almost need a credit system, a sort of skills passport.”

Priorities	Actors	Short to medium term	Long term
DATA	Policymakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a multi-stakeholder data-gathering exercise, conducted at both local and global levels, to uncover the challenges and potential of the craft sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a digital and accessible “world craft interactive map”. • Implement a “knowledge bank” on crafts.
REINFORCE ENGAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE	Craftspeople/ Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct awareness campaigns to emphasise the societal and individual advantages of pursuing a career in crafts, led by “ambassadors of crafts”/ “influencers”. • Organise an annual “Craft Olympics” to showcase global creativity and innovation, facilitate networking and provide a platform for mutual learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively develop national strategies to serve as the foundation for regional strategies, promoting good governance at all levels. • Reinforce the role of trade unions to support the systematic upgrade of the sector and the skills of craftspeople.
QUALITY	Policymakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect crafts by combatting counterfeit goods through the introduction of stricter legislation and enforcement. • Establish a quality mark for crafts products. • Expand research about crafts and implement emergency measures to safeguard endangered crafts. 	
ECONOMIC INCENTIVES	Policymakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement tax breaks for hand-crafted objects of recognised aesthetic importance (VAT reduction or increased income-tax allowances for craftspeople). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a recognised “living wage” for artisans in order to support the sector.
ECONOMIC INCENTIVES	Craftspeople/ Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness about underfunding trends in crafts sector. 	

Priorities

Actors

Short to medium term

Long term

VIRTUOUS SUPPLY CHAINS

Policymakers

- Introduce “ingredients labels” which outline the materials used, their origin, renewability, carbon footprint, the object’s “craft-miles” etc.
- Offer logistical support to innovative crafts that use new green technologies and sustainable, renewable or recycled materials.
- Establish a craft “fair-trade” logo to ensure ethical standards and the safeguarding of workers’ rights.
- Launch a campaign to align crafts with the SDGs through an analysis of new materials, alternative energy sources, transportation methods etc., as well as a reduction in production.

VIRTUOUS SUPPLY CHAINS

Craftspeople/
Practitioners

- Support the establishment of direct-sales outlets and platforms, enabling consumers to buy directly from artisans or craftspeople.

- Promote a new mindset for consumers that supports sustainable production and a green crafts’ approach.

LEARNING AND SKILLS

Policymakers/
Education providers

- Offer craftspeople flexible courses to learn skills demanded by the labour market.
- Re-design training in the craft sector, emphasising the use of new tools and the latest technologies.
- Facilitate access to courses by providing recognition for skills and informal learning.

- Incorporate craft education into school curricula starting from primary level through craft lab classes, enabling early exposure and appreciation for the craft field among students.
- Introduce artisan vocations into career guidance offered to students and school-leavers.
- Enhance teacher training in crafts to ensure their familiarity with the latest technologies

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:



The European Training Foundation (ETF) helps transition and developing countries harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training, and labour market systems, in the context of EU external relations policies. By doing so, the ETF helps EU neighbouring countries to improve social cohesion and achieve more sustainable economic growth, which in turn benefits EU Member States and their citizens by improving economic relations. The ETF collaborates on a country-specific as well as a multi-country basis, building frameworks for continuity in policy and promoting the design of evidence-based policy and implementation.



The Michelangelo Foundation for Creativity and Craftsmanship is a non-profit institution based in Geneva which champions contemporary craftspeople worldwide with the aim of promoting a more human, inclusive and sustainable future. The Foundation seeks to highlight the connections between crafts, the wider arts and the design world. Its mission is to both celebrate and preserve craftsmanship and its diversity of makers, materials and techniques, by increasing craft's everyday recognition and its viability as a professional path for the next generations. From engaging educational programmes such as the Homo Faber Fellowship to its signature digital project the Homo Faber Guide and international exhibition, the Homo Faber Biennial, the Foundation fosters a cultural movement centred on master artisans and rising stars¹⁸.



The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) aims to strengthen collaboration and partnership in the Mediterranean region by executing specific regional cooperation projects. Aware of the job-creating potential of the creative sector, with special attention to crafts, and their growing contribution to the region's GDP, the UfM organised three editions of the Creative Forum Ljubljana with the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a fourth planned in 2024. "In times of crisis in the Mediterranean region, it has always been our creative capital that helped us find meaningful solutions. Creativity is an icon of our identity and a defining feature of our essence in this part of the world." – Mohammed Elrazzaz, UfM Head of Sector and Professor of Mediterranean Heritage



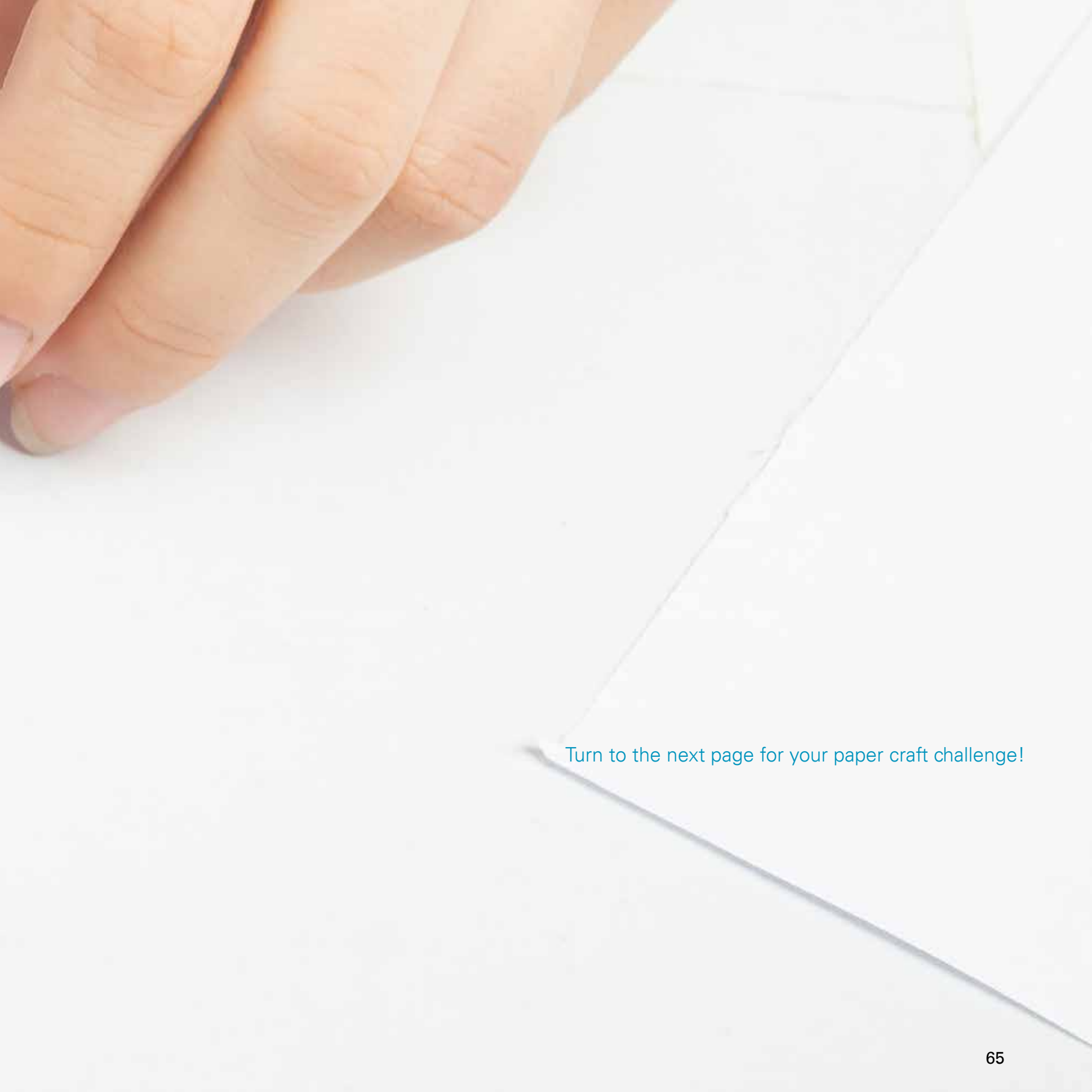
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as the only United Nations Agency with a core mandate in education and in culture, heritage, arts and creativity, provides a unique setting for an intersectoral initiative on culture and education to support Member States in harnessing the nexus between the two in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The synergies between culture and education inform and contribute to the achievement of several SDGs transversally. Within this framework, UNESCO is in a strong position to provide a holistic and intersectoral response to some of the most pressing and complex global challenges, which increasingly require innovative and coordinated approaches.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) supports its member states in further developing their creative industries in several technical assistance projects all over the world. UNIDO supports the growth of the creative industries by creating an eco-system where such enterprises can thrive. UNIDO's support may relate to establishing a conducive policy framework, or capacity building for enterprises as well as service providers in areas such as design and product development, but also business skills, technology transfer, and supporting marketing activities. Often such support is channelled through the establishment of creative hubs.

¹⁸ "For an object to truly be the result of fine craftsmanship, it must have been created according to acknowledged rules of the art with a prevalence of manual workmanship that relies on a constant dialogue between the artisan's mind and hands. The role of any machinery used in the process is strictly one of service to the manual and mental intelligence of the artisan." (Michelangelo Foundation)



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