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# Évaluation du programme Creative Wallonia

Dans le cadre du projet « Wallonia European Creative District »

Executive summary



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## Rapport final

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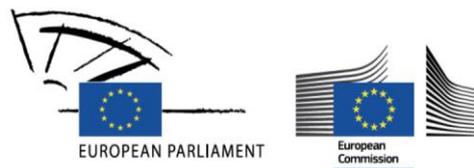
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*Ce rapport doit beaucoup aux contributions et à la mobilisation de ces différentes personnes, toutefois Technopolis [|group|](#) est seul responsable des informations et analyses présentées ici.*



Wallonia Creative District is a Preparatory Action proposed by the European Parliament and implemented through a Grant Agreement by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry

The Creative Wallonia programme was launched in 2010 with the aim of making creativity and innovation central aspects of Walloon social and economic development. The programme's strategic objectives as approved by the Walloon government include:

- To encourage the emergence of innovative, business-centred ecosystems in Wallonia. Innovative ecosystems are characterised by the coexistence of fruitful interactions within a large network of stakeholders with specific knowledge, know-how and skills and a project development-friendly environment that result in a sustainable supply of innovative projects in the economy;
- To stimulate the take-up of new practices in Wallonia (coworking, exchange of ideas, open innovation, etc.);
- To provide project developers with a place to start their business (temporary workplace, meeting rooms, etc.);
- To encourage a wide range of people to creatively engage and stimulate innovation by attracting a diverse audience.

Creative Wallonia is an umbrella programme that has supported about 30 specific actions since 2010. Each action is meant to test a specific innovative approach. Not all 30 actions were launched at the start of the programme; rather, their implementation followed a gradual and iterative policymaking approach.

Openness is the key characteristic of Creative Wallonia. Its core objective is to disseminate innovation in all its forms. This means that Creative Wallonia actions are extremely varied, ranging from coworking spaces and creativity-focused training programmes to projects to intensify the use of ICT in schools, or even support for international missions and prototyping. Overall, the programme focuses on three forms of intervention: i) Impulse to projects; ii) Combination of knowledge; iii) Laboratories for the stimulation of new usages.

In 2012 the European Commission, under the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP), selected Wallonia as part of the call "European Creative District". A European Creative District demonstrates the role that innovation in services and creative and cultural industries (CCIs) can play in transforming a traditionally industrial region. Under the name "Wallonia European Creative District" (WECD), the project kicked off in January 2013. Its objective is to make a large-scale demonstrator of the Walloon approach to creativity – recognised for its unique character – whereby the focus is on innovation in the broader sense (including social and non-technological innovation) and cooperation (breaking 'silos' and moving away from compartmentalising sectors, actors, disciplines and generations), while focusing on cross-cutting actions.

An evaluation of Creative Wallonia, in an international context, is scheduled as part of the WECD project. Its objective is to promote exchanges and mutual learning at transnational level. The evaluation covers the first three years of implementation of Creative Wallonia (October 2010-2013), and specifically intends to:

- Assess the results of Creative Wallonia's innovative approach to promoting creativity;
- Develop lessons learnt and recommendations based on the first years of implementation of the programme;
- Disseminate best practices for creative innovation policies at regional level across Europe in a policy learning perspective.

Following a call for tender - the Directorate General operational for Economy, Employment and Research (DGO6) of the Walloon Public Service commissioned Technopolis Group to carry out the evaluation. The mission ran from January to June 2014 and the final evaluation report outlines its main findings. The evaluation took a participatory and international approach and focused on the societal results and impacts of the programme. Consideration was also given to which indicators and data collection methods are best fitted to assess the impacts of creativity support programmes, which are inherently difficult to capture.

The conclusions of the evaluation are summarised below.

**Creative Wallonia is adequately built on a series of cross-cutting and non-exclusive actions, addressing a wide range of barriers that hamper creativity in Wallonia**

The evaluation highlights the novelty and relevance of the approach taken by the programme. Creative Wallonia is adequately built on a series of non-exclusive and cross-cutting actions: cooperation is a key aspect of the programme and is welcomed by programme stakeholders who underlined its relevance to creating innovative dynamics across Wallonia.

Creativity is still largely associated with the artistic and cultural world in Wallonia. Creative Wallonia helps fill a gap by encouraging the general public and stakeholders from sectors that are not commonly considered as 'creative' to creatively engage themselves.

The evaluation confirms the basic assumption of Creative Wallonia that there is an untapped potential for creativity and innovation in Wallonia because of various barriers that hinder their broad circulation. Creative Wallonia provides solutions to overcome these barriers. The evaluation findings suggest that, despite limited time and resources, Creative Wallonia contributes to create protective "bubbles" (particularly in the field of education and training) within which ideas can be tested and deployed on a larger scale.

Despite wide-ranging interest, participation has been hampered by participants' lack of time to take part in actions that are not seen as central to their organisation's strategy. This is a mirror effect of the programme's ambitious objectives to raise awareness of new practices and is part of a normal learning and acculturation process.

**A wide range of actions, coherent with the broad programme objectives; however the overarching programme structure is hard for the public to understand**

Similar initiatives implemented in other regions and countries are sector-focused (focus is typically on CCIs) or are separate initiatives. No other initiative is implemented through an umbrella programme and target as wide a range of actions on a regional scale as Creative Wallonia. It is unique in the landscape of public support for the creative economy. It puts forward an integrated and inclusive approach with actions focusing on education, training, higher education, as well as enterprises, the public sector and the general public.

The majority of stakeholders who gave their input during the evaluation believe the programme is based on a global coherent rationale that encourages players to participate in the Creative Wallonia's actions. Significant added value comes from the programme adopting a clear vision for regional development and facilitating work at the regional – and not only local – level.

Creative Wallonia actions are wide-ranging. This diversity is coherent with the broad objectives of the programme. The downside is that it makes the programme hard to understand even for the informed public actively engaged in it. The evaluation findings suggest a lack of coordination of the programme as a whole, i.e. beyond the specific actions. This observation does not question the validity of the open and bottom-up aspect of the programme, as it is a highly valued dimension of the programme in the eyes of participants and a core aspect of the philosophy behind Creative Wallonia. Yet stakeholders who contributed to the evaluation agree that a readability and popularisation effort is required to further improve the communication about the programme and to widen the pool of participants involved in the programme.

**A break from the traditional implementation of public action in Wallonia with a complementary, cross-cutting approach**

Creative Wallonia is coherent with the increasing emphasis from the European Commission to the creative economy. Moreover, the programme intends to complement and cut across a number of other regional initiatives that share the objective of developing innovative capacities and cooperation in Wallonia. In this respect, other initiatives are involved in the programme steering committee as well as in the implementation of the specific actions. This confirms the programme's ability to engage a wide range of stakeholders and reach out to a wide public.

Though it might seem paradoxical, the added value of Creative Wallonia is best revealed by differences from existing regional support. The Creative Wallonia objective is to pioneer a new kind of public action implementation in Wallonia and to go against common rigid and compartmentalised practices. Stakeholders involved in the programme steering committee have particularly highlighted the flexibility and openness in programme management, which has contributed to bringing some "freshness" in their work.

The evaluation findings also suggest the need for a clearer distinction and improved coordination with other existing initiatives. One example of this is the gap in terms of how the sustainability dimension - beyond the pilot actions - is integrated into project planning and implementation. Yet, the

sustainability of the effects of Creative Wallonia actions is conditioned to the involvement and engagement of a wide range of stakeholders within the education, business support and internationalisation support communities.

Furthermore and to ensure new strategic directions are maintained in the longer run, broader cooperation opportunities exist. With regard to education-centred actions, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (French language community, responsible for teaching and education policy) could for example be involved in Creative Wallonia, so as to incentivise teachers and student teachers to take-up the creative practices tested with Creative Wallonia. Beyond the Ministry of Economy, the programme's steering could also benefit from the involvement of other Cabinets in charge of initiatives in the fields covered by Creative Wallonia (eg Research, Innovation, Training and education, International cooperation) to increase its inclusiveness and cross-cutting nature.

### **Creative Wallonia has set in motion a strong mobilising dynamic, but its capacity to reach out to the least informed public has been limited**

The open and iterative nature of Creative Wallonia means that the actions are adjusted to the needs and ideas of a diverse public. Given the pilot nature of the actions and their recent launch, it is however not surprising that the programme has reached out more easily to an informed public rather than to audiences that are not usually active in the fields of creativity and open innovation innovation (e.g. companies within some industrial sectors, building industry etc.).

That said, many efforts have been deployed in practice to involve the least informed, including the general public (the Week of Creativity), youth (the ID Campus master programme and the Nest'up start-ups accelerator), the public sector (organisation of lunch conferences around innovation: the "*midis de l'innovation*") and business (studies produced by the international trends observatory).

Opening up actions and convincing a broad public is a challenge that was embraced: i) at the level of the Creative Wallonia programme as a whole – with important communication efforts and the implementation of a variety of actions targeting a wide range of the public, and ii) at the level of each specific action to open up and diversify the audiences, sectors and geographical backgrounds of participants. In addition to people having directly participated and benefited from Creative Wallonia, it should also be noted that many people have been involved in awareness-raising activities set up within the framework of specific actions (e.g. Galas organised within the framework of the prototyping support action Boost-up).

While Creative Wallonia uses a cross-cutting approach to creativity and innovation, there are a number of areas of activities that remain largely untouched by the programme. This is true in particular for the most traditional (i.e. the least creative and innovative) businesses. This can be partly explained by an information deficit experienced by social partners and professional organisations of the added value of Creative Wallonia actions, as well as by the involvement of the private sector in the direct implementation of the actions that still remains too low.

### **Uncertainties attached to the implementation of Creative Wallonia have affected the programme, with difficulties partly offset by the direction and concentration in steering**

The programme's steering is managed by the Cabinet of the Walloon Minister of Economy. It is assisted by a Steering Committee comprised of key regional stakeholders active in the field of innovation including the Agency for Economic Promotion (ASE), Technological Stimulation Agency (AST), Walloon Export and Foreign Investment Agency (AWEX), Wallonia-Brussels International (WBI), Walloon Telecommunications Agency (AWT), Directorate General operational for Economy, Employment and Research (DGO6) of the Walloon Public Service and the office of the Minister of Economy and New Technologies. The steering committee has contributed to dialogue between the different partners and the concerted implementation of the programme. Direction by the Minister's Cabinet has allowed for efficiency and flexibility in the implementation of actions and the better anticipating the difficulties that might arise. Some stakeholders have however pointed to a lack of openness and transparency in the governance of the programme.

In addition, the Walloon Government has acknowledged but never approved the Creative Wallonia framework programme that was drafted in 2010. Instead, the Government has approved each action individually. This means that budget is decided action by action and on an annual basis, causing uncertainty in funding and leading to difficulties in the financial management of some of the actions. For example, some of the actions that started in 2014 are eligible for funding through the European Structural and Investment Fund, but this possibility is limited to a few specific actions and is likely to lead to the burdens and rigidities that are usually associated with EU funding. Still, the findings of the

evaluation suggest that changing social practices and behaviours requires a long-term political commitment that is currently lacking in the programme.

Finally, a monitoring system was recently introduced to collect data for drafting a centralised report on the implementation of Creative Wallonia. The indicators used in the report mainly cover inputs and outputs – but not outcomes or impacts. This underlines the challenges faced when trying to capture and monitor the outcomes and impacts of programmes with large yet elusive intended impacts on society.

### **Evidence of varied, yet emerging results and impacts**

Evidence suggests the outcomes of the programme in terms of increased awareness of the significance of creativity and innovation, as well as increased familiarity and opportunities to experiment new innovative and creative approaches. 60% of beneficiaries (companies, universities, agents or other public sectors having benefited from one or several actions) who responded to the evaluation survey have reported a significant impact in terms of better understanding of creativity and innovation; 54% in terms of development of know-how; and 54% also in terms of take up of new methods / practices / creative and innovative usages. International openness is another significant impact for 53% of the respondents as well as the launch of new ideas and challenges (53% of respondents also).

New practices have been adopted and the programme has contributed to alleviate complexes associated with the concepts of creativity and innovation among institutional partners, actions' operators and beneficiaries. Thanks to the cross-cutting nature of the programme, new partnerships and new meeting places have been established. This has been coupled with the launch of creative and innovative processes within participating organisations, thereby stimulating ideas and commercialisation of new products, services and processes.

That being said the dissemination of the programme's results and transformation in societal impacts is an ongoing process. It remains difficult to draw robust conclusions at the time of drafting the evaluation report. It is a challenge to assess the societal impacts of creativity support programmes that are by nature intangible and take time to emerge. Creative Wallonia started in 2010 and most of the actions included in the scope of the evaluation are still ongoing while others have not yet started, making it all the more difficult to capture evidence of any effect.

Despite these methodological challenges, which are quite common in this type of evaluation, the evaluation reports several examples of diffusion of a culture of creativity and innovation in Wallonia. However, when they exist such impacts are limited to operators and beneficiaries having directly participated in Creative Wallonia's actions, with limited reach to wider public that have not been directly involved within the beneficiary organisations and in beyond in the wider society. While the programme has supported innovative products and companies, it is too early to speak of an overall revitalisation of creative and innovative activities in the Walloon economy. Two of the major achievements of Creative Wallonia are the strengthened collaborative dynamics and the increasing cooperation across sectors, stakeholders, disciplines and levels of policy implementation. Creative Wallonia has contributed to initiate more favourable framework conditions for the development of innovative and creative projects in Wallonia. This has yielded new opportunities for regional stakeholders, some of them having considered for the first time Wallonia as a place to develop their projects and an alternative to going abroad. In the opinions of the stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation, Creative Wallonia has also helped to strengthen the attractiveness of Wallonia by emphasising the visibility of creative activities both in the region and abroad.

### **A combination of leverage effects has contributed to the mobilisation of the target public and to the dissemination of the programme effects**

The evaluation findings suggest that the following leverage effects have played a significant role in the programme implementation:

The nature and management of the programme, which is launched progressively, action by action. This has allowed adjustments to be made and identification of new actions that had not been considered in the original framework programme.

The communication around the programme, which has made use of modern tools such as social media and has established a "Creative Wallonia" brand recognised by stakeholders. This has helped to mobilise the target public and involve various relays, thereby creating the basis for a creative community in Wallonia.

The programme was diffused by a large number of stakeholders, boosting its capacity to spread the word to diverse audiences and stakeholders, and disseminating examples of "good practice" outside the circle of those directly involved in the actions.

The innovative and pioneering nature of the programme as well as the communication about it have contributed to develop a sense of belonging among operators and beneficiaries having taken part in one or several actions. This has resulted in a strong enthusiasm and sometimes a larger dynamic within the organisations and among individuals.

The selection of the European project Wallonia European Creative District gave recognition to the programme abroad and opened up new European partnerships.

In conclusion, these leverage effects have played an important role in the implementation of Creative Wallonia and have contributed to the effectiveness of the programme. Nevertheless, ongoing efforts should be maintained and further deployed in order to exploit the full leverage potential. Moreover, the presentation and communication of Creative Wallonia towards the least informed audience (including users benefiting from the actions) should be clarified by making it less vague and theoretical. One way to do this is to put more emphasis on the dissemination of success stories.

### **Creative Wallonia has set the basis for a cultural appropriation of creativity among the public involved, yet this follows a slow emerging and development process**

The societal impact of a programme such as Creative Wallonia is by nature difficult to assess. The evaluation faced many challenges since took place only shortly after the start of the programme. The timeframe only allows capturing a body of evidence that suggest potential impacts that may occur in the longer run.

Signs of emerging impacts on the organisations involved in Creative Wallonia have been collected during the evaluation. They may lead ultimately to broader changes in behaviour, attitudes and practices among society and should be monitored in coming years. In particular, Creative Wallonia participants have highlighted that the programme has contributed to building their creativity and innovation-related skills and knowledge. The adoption of new practices in different organisations has also been evidenced by the evaluation findings. Some projects supported through Creative Wallonia actions (e.g. prototypes developed with Boost-up or start-ups initiated with Nest'up) have provided the public with new creative and innovative tools, thereby offering new potential for use and dissemination among the Walloon society.

The analysis carried out within the framework of the evaluation also suggests the emergence of a cultural appropriation of creativity among the people involved, which is in line with the objectives of the programme. 74% of the respondents to the Creative Wallonia beneficiaries survey report a positive impact of Creative Wallonia on the vision and knowledge they have of creativity. Participants adopt a new or more positive vision of the creativity concept, whereas they formerly saw it as a negative phenomenon or as something going against the culture of their organisation. It reinforces the idea of an alleviation of complexes associated with creativity, making it a potential for all.

The dissemination of the programme societal impacts is however facing barriers that hinder the diffusion of innovative and creative practices in Wallonia. Although the evaluation findings suggest that Creative Wallonia has partly contributed to overcome these barriers, the pioneer and innovative aspect of the programme has also stirred suspicion and fear. More time is needed to shift from a few examples of wider dissemination into long-term societal impacts. To make it happen faster and convince a wider public, incentives can be implemented but they require longer-term policy framework and cannot only be implemented through pilot actions.

### **Creative Wallonia has created momentum for strengthened collaborative dynamics in Wallonia.**

The evaluation findings suggest that the participation in Creative Wallonia has effectively encouraged Walloon company and research participants to rethink the way they work, thereby creating new opportunities for partnerships and a new dynamic for collaborative projects. This has resulted in a crossover between different worlds and strengthened the cooperative mindset. 74% of beneficiary enterprises that have responded to the evaluation survey report that they have initiated new contacts or collaborations as a result of their participation to Creative Wallonia. 63% of the other respondents (universities, schools, public sector, etc) also report new contacts and collaborations. The evaluation shows several new partnerships and contacts that are the first steps towards breaking silos between sectors and stakeholders and the creation of a true innovative and creative ecosystem in Wallonia.

To a certain extent, these new opportunities have contributed to alter participants' behaviour by deepening collaborative dynamics and by extending the reflection on the added value of creative and innovative approaches within organisations that are not familiar with these practices. Co-creation with other emerging practices was also introduced in Wallonia for the first time and has been taken up.

Although participants declare they intend to continue in this direction, it is still too early to assess the sustainability of the networks that have been created by Creative Wallonia. Altering people's behaviour is a long-term process. Moreover, the evaluation findings suggest that the changes observed involve mainly participants that have been directly taking part in Creative Wallonia actions. Seizing the overall impact of Creative Wallonia, i.e. beyond participants and on the Walloon society as a whole, is still challenging.

**The evaluation provides evidence of effective cross-cutting cooperation across sectors and stakeholders, yet networking effects could have been improved with increased synergies between the specific actions**

The evaluation findings suggest that the programme has led to the development of strong networking effects between Walloon partners, thereby breaking silos that traditionally exist between sectors and stakeholders in Wallonia. The evaluation highlights several examples of collaboration initiated between stakeholders and sectors that are not traditionally used to cooperate together. It was reported that Creative Wallonia also helped to break administrative silos between public sector institutions by undertaking joint actions and promoting cooperation across institutions.

Although examples of new meeting opportunities exist, the evaluation findings suggest that most of them occur for individuals directly involved in Creative Wallonia and are not yet institutionalised within organisations. In addition, stakeholders report that initiating cooperation between certain groups or sectors can prove challenging (e.g. between youths and companies or between the CCIs and other sectors) since it requires overcoming ingrained habits and behaviours.

Going beyond the positive evidence collected during the evaluation, the findings also suggest that increased synergies between the different actions supported by Creative Wallonia could have strengthened the networking effects as well as the cross-cutting dimension. In this respect, one of the most recent actions launched in 2014 within the framework of Creative Wallonia, Creative hubs, is interesting for future synergies in that it aims at strengthening the overall structure and sustainability of Creative Wallonia actions.