



EUROPEAN CLUSTER  
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

# Creative Crossroads: Building Synergies Across Ecosystems with Cultural and Creative Industries

## Summary



EU Clusters Talks  
14 May 2025, 8:30 – 9:45 CET

An initiative of the European Union





## Creative Crossroads: Building Synergies Across Ecosystems with Cultural and Creative Industries

To explore how clusters can support this two-way exchange and unlock the full value of cross-ecosystem collaboration, the European Cluster Collaboration Platform, on behalf of the European Commission, organised the EU Clusters Talk "**Creative Crossroads: Building Synergies Across Ecosystems with Cultural and Creative Industries**" on 14 May, 8:30 – 9:45 CET. The session examined the challenges facing the CCI ecosystem, presented insights from Eurocluster projects, explored cross-sectoral collaboration, and highlighted metaclustering efforts aimed at formalising cross-sectoral partnerships that enable both creative and industrial innovation.

### Agenda of the meeting

Moderation: Chris Burns

1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform  
*Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform*
2. CCI ecosystem overview  
*Kati Uusi-Rauva, Director Regional Hub North, EIT Culture & Creativity North*
3. Panel debate  
*Georgiana Mihailovici, General Secretary, OpenHub Creative Cluster*  
*Raffaele Vitulli, President, Basilicata Creativa, and Project Manager, European Digital Innovation Hub "Heritage Smart Lab"*  
*Genoveva Christova, President, Bulgarian Furniture Cluster & Createch Cluster*  
*Gian Angelo Bellati, President, Venetian Cluster*  
*Céu Filipe, Director, AEP Inovação, Enterprise Europe Network*
4. Funding opportunities  
*Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform*

### Key messages

- Clusters are key enablers of creative innovation, connecting fragmented ecosystems and driving cross-sector collaboration.
- EIT Culture & Creativity builds lasting support systems for creative entrepreneurship, going beyond content funding to strengthen innovation capacity.
- Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) are powerful economic drivers, employing nearly 9 million people and contributing to sustainability and social cohesion.
- Digital platforms and meta-clusters connect regional, rural and urban hubs, expanding reach and shaping policy through collective intelligence.
- Collaboration between clusters and Digital Innovation Hubs accelerates the adoption of AI and immersive tech across traditional sectors.
- Enterprise Europe Network demonstrates how tailored support helps CCIs access funding, internationalise, and prove their economic impact.



- Cascade funding empowers clusters to support grassroots innovation, despite its administrative complexity.
- CCIs are natural prototyping environments, and clusters can harness this agility to test and scale emerging technologies.

## 1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

**Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform**

After the introduction by moderator Andrew Lansley, the following news items were presented:

1. Register for the [EU INDUSTRY DAYS 2025](#), 5–6 June 2025 in Rzeszów, Poland.
2. Register for the [CmR Rzeszów, Poland](#), on 3-4 June 2025.
3. Apply for the [call for expressions of interest](#) to co-host future editions of the “Clusters Meet Regions”.
4. Register now for the [Matchmaking in India](#), on 29-31 October 2025
5. Save the date and register for the [next ECCP events](#).
6. Discover [Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs \(EYE\)](#) and its new destinations.

## 2. CCI ecosystem and the EIT Culture and Creativity

**Kati Uusi-Rauva, Director Regional Hub North, EIT Culture & Creativity North**

Kati Uusi-Rauva began by highlighting the economic significance of the sector, with **nearly 9 million professionals working within it**, and its deep interconnection with other industries and aspects of daily life. Despite its complex and intangible nature, culture and creativity were presented as powerful forces for economic development, societal cohesion, and sustainability. Uusi-Rauva underscored that these sectors are not only vehicles of economic value but also essential contributors to democratisation, identity, and social progress.

She then presented the EIT Culture & Creativity, the ninth Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) under the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). The initiative was officially launched in December and has established six regional offices, with Uusi-Rauva leading the Helsinki hub. The network currently includes **over 60 core and cooperating partners**—ranging from universities and research institutes to businesses and cultural hubs—working to build a Europe-wide support system for creative and cultural entrepreneurship. The focus is on five main industry areas: fashion, cultural heritage, architecture, audiovisual and media, and gaming. In these areas, the initiative seeks to promote circularity, ecological and social sustainability, and smart use of technologies.

Although the initiative is still in its **early phase**, it has already piloted an acceleration programme involving nine companies from across Europe. These pilot cases, primarily from the fashion and audiovisual sectors, aim to develop new sustainable business models. While detailed case studies were not presented, Uusi-Rauva indicated that the EIT Culture & Creativity will provide a growing service portfolio for creative SMEs and startups, including access to funding, skills development, networking, and policymaking channels. She also cited the recent success of a Latvian animated film



that won an Oscar as an illustration of what is possible even in countries with limited support systems, reinforcing the need for EU-wide infrastructure for creative sector growth.

Kati Uusi-Rauva also touched on future directions, noting that **evolving concepts** such as museum transformation and the integration of smart technologies in cultural heritage institutions will be significant areas of development. The creation of a **Digital Hub** was presented as a key achievement to date, providing an open platform for professionals across Europe to connect, share knowledge, and stay informed about developments in the CCI space.

She also clarified the **distinction between EIT Culture & Creativity and Creative Europe**. While the latter focuses on content creation and distribution, EIT's mission is to build the structures and support systems that enable creative professionals to develop sustainable careers. She also briefly mentioned upcoming collaborations with initiatives such as the New European Bauhaus, which aims to link creativity with sustainable industrial and urban development.

Kati Uusi-Rauva called for **greater engagement from all stakeholders** and invited interested parties to join the EIT's platform to shape the future of the cultural and creative industries in Europe. The initiative, still in its early stages, promises a long-term commitment to building a more integrated, innovative, and sustainable CCI ecosystem across the continent.

### 3. Panel debate

Georgiana Mihailovici presented the **FRIEND CCI project**, a multi-country initiative supporting SMEs through cross-sector innovation projects that merge creativity with technologies such as AI, XR, and immersive experiences. She highlighted examples from Romania, including architectural design enhanced by AI and educational tools promoting multilingual storytelling for children.

Raffaele Vitulli emphasised the role of **CCIs as a prototyping ecosystem capable** of reimagining the use of emerging technologies, particularly generative AI. He advocated for collaboration between clusters and digital innovation hubs, particularly in rural areas and small villages, where micro-enterprises and cultural organisations can test and implement innovation models. He described concrete initiatives such as heritage site revitalisation using interdisciplinary teams of artists, researchers, and engineers.

Genoveva Christova traced the journey of the **Bulgarian Furniture Cluster** from a traditional industry focus to a cross-regional and cross-sectoral model. She shared successful collaborations with partners in Romania and Kosovo, delivering major hotel projects, and illustrated how immersive technologies and gaming are now used to modernise the furniture sector. She explained how these efforts led to the creation of a national umbrella cluster that unifies diverse creative verticals under a shared policy voice, thus increasing visibility and funding access.

Gian Angelo Bellati addressed the challenges of managing **cultural heritage in the Veneto region**, particularly in Venice, where overtourism has strained local infrastructure. He stressed the need for EU-level support through programmes like Interreg and highlighted examples such as the 'Gelato on the Road' project, which combines cultural heritage, sustainable tourism, and local craftsmanship. Bellati advocated for meta-cluster structures as tools to maintain cultural heritage while enabling economic activity through new tourism models and green adaptation.



Céu Filipe provided insights from the **Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)**, where she leads the expert group on CCIs. She described how the network delivers tailored support to creatives and SMEs across Europe, fostering collaboration between Northern and Southern Europe in areas such as fashion, handicrafts, architecture, and digital content. Filipe highlighted the need to demonstrate the tangible and intangible value of CCIs to unlock funding, influence policymaking, and encourage cross-sector partnerships. She shared specific examples of collaborations between CCIs and other sectors, such as education, health, and manufacturing, demonstrating the spillover effect of creativity on broader economic and social challenges.

There was broad agreement among the panellists that CCIs are a powerful engine for innovation and societal transformation. All speakers stressed the importance of collaboration, both across creative sub-sectors and with non-creative industries. They acknowledged that while **creative ecosystems are often fragmented and under-recognised**, they possess untapped potential for sustainable growth and digital transition. A recurring point of alignment was the recognition of the prototyping nature of CCIs and their agility in testing and adopting new technologies.

Differences in emphasis emerged. Georgiana Mihailovici highlighted the persistent **challenge of fragmented networks** and the **lack of tailored funding for CCIs**. Raffaele Vitulli focused on the **need to invest in rural innovation ecosystems** and to use cascade funding schemes more effectively. Genoveva Christova brought attention to the **role of clusters in consolidating fragmented sectors under a unified strategy**, while Gian Angelo Bellati called for **more integrated EU support** to protect cultural heritage and boost regional economies. Céu Filipe underlined the importance of demonstrating measurable impact and facilitating tailor-made solutions through trusted networks like EEN.

Panellists agreed that meta-clusters and cross-sector networks amplify impact, strengthen funding access, and enhance Europe's competitiveness. They called for **continued investment** in interdisciplinary projects, rural innovation, and policymaking that reflects the complexity and value of CCIs. The session concluded with a shared affirmation that working together enables long-term growth, creativity, and resilience, embodying the motto: *"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together"*.

## 4. Funding opportunities

**Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform**

Closing the EU Clusters Talk, Nina Hoppmann shared the following examples of funding opportunities:

1. [European mini-slate development](#); deadline 17 September 2025.
2. [Completion of the initial Network of European Digital Innovation Hubs \(EDIHs\)](#); deadline 2 September 2025.
3. [Consolidation of the Network of European Digital Innovation Hubs \(EDIHs with reinforced AI focus\)](#); deadline 2 September 2025.
4. Opportunities for SMEs: Calls from Euroclusters; published on [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#).