

BOOSTING CCI WITH DEDICATED SUPPORT STRUCTURES - CCI HELP DESK

Regional Test Case Documentation

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0. Abstract

With establishing CCI help desk we boosted CCI sector in Gorenjska region. Participating representatives of CCI sector in our region received new skills and knowledge and developed their business. Social networks and connections were spread, not only between individuals but also between relevant CCI stakeholders. The most impressive goal reached has been the project cooperation with national CCI platform - the Center for creativity (CZK) has grown into a constant integration as part of regular work, and it is also a kind of the first pilot case of expanding the activities of CZK to the regional level.

1. Introduction

The development of the CCI sector in Gorenjska Region is in its beginnings. There are some institutions (BSC Kranj and Development Agency Sora) and creative centres (Kovačnica Kranj, Kreativnice Škofja Loka, Arts and Crafts Center of Škofja Loka, coworking Lokomotiva and coworking Mizarnica) that connect individual creatives and there are some practices of support system for their empowerment and development. Despite these positive practices the sector in the region is not interconnected.

Also, we can say that the CCI development support system in Slovenia is centralized and concentrated in Ljubljana Urban Region with the established Center for Creativity platform.

In this test case we focused on CCI support system development in the Škofja Loka Area and connecting existing centres. Moreover, we transmitted services of business support established in Kovačnica Kranj and at the national Center for Creativity. Creative hub Kreativnice, located in the city of Škofja Loka, pushes towards the creation of a homogenous community that deals with the contemporary textile design based on industrial tradition and heritage. Kreativnice is an exhibition and coworking space for textile designers. Education and knowledge exchange are one of the most important contents of the hub. It also represents a rich heritage of the textile industry in Škofja Loka, Slovenia, and it works primarily on promoting creativity and cooperation of creative stakeholders, industry and tourism. The expressed need for more business skills and market-oriented operation of creatives involved in the centre, brought up the idea of establishing a business support for CCI.

Starting from the situation described we wanted to target those challenges:

- How to create support that would meet the needs of CCI sector
- How to invest into the CCI sector, into the people to be more professional and survive on the market
- How to learn and transmit good practices from national to regional and local levels.
- To enhance a CCI community and spread the network

2. Objective

The main objective was to spread the tailored support and consultancy for CCI, including workshop content, individual consultancy with different experts, matching support with industry and promotional activities also in the rural environment. Furthermore, we wanted to build a network of CCI existing in this area, enhance it and encourage their cooperation.

The key outcome was a help desk and its program supporting CCI development. We tested the “satellite” help desk unit in creative center Kreativnice in Škofja Loka. On the basis of the individual CCI needs analysis mentors and experts on the field of business, like marketing, developing business opportunities/products, business planning, communication, networking, preparation of innovative ideas, finances were selected and connected with CCI representatives. Members of an external expert group (the pool of Center for creativity mentors) worked directly with individual creatives and offered their services.

The novelty of our test case is a business support given to all, who work in the field of CCI in the countryside and was established to invest in their growth potential, to enhance their entrepreneurial skills that they can survive in the market on their own. Moreover, a new cooperation between national centre for creativity and Kreativnice was established for the purpose of mentorship. - they offered the network of professional external experts from diverse field of knowledge. The most impressive outcome was, that the project cooperation has grown into a constant integration as part of regular work. And it is also the first pilot case expanding the activities of CZK to the regional level.

From our action CCI entrepreneurs, start-ups and individuals who are working in the CCI sector or they have interest to work in the sector, benefited from our actions. Additionally, the ones who want to push up their business, develop their product, service or network with others, participated. We wanted to reach different branches within CCI sector in the area of the test case. Industrial companies were part of the activities in order to support with connecting creatives with industries.

3. Applied approach

Based on experience working with CCI in Kreativnice and Kovačnica we have found that these are usually individuals who master their work, are creative and advanced, but they have lack of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. According to that fact, we prepared an online survey on the needs of this sector, which are those areas of content where they need professional help. In the following we also explored the operation of similar centres in other major cities and we made connections with the national Center for Creativity platform, where we were able to get suitable experts from different fields who carried out mentoring and workshops. They have the greatest experiences developing the CCI sector, has many international connections and already established a pool of experts and mentors for CCI sector development.

During the test case idea development, we used bottom-up approach with stakeholders included. The needs we addressed came from real needs of the CCI community. Results were incorporated to the help desk concept and the organizational model of the help desk proposal. We followed the structure and programme that was already developed in the Kovačnica business support help desk that offers consultancy to entrepreneurs from different fields and it is situated in the city of Kranj. That was an opportunity to spread the help desk unit to the countryside industrial area of Škofja Loka as Kovačnica’s satellite and establish it as part of the Kreativnice - creative hub.

In the phase of implementation preparations, the database of CCI was created and was updated throughout the whole test case. Graphic design of the CCI help desk was prepared and main information was incorporated on the existing web pages.

Since the general pandemic situation occurred and enabled us to implement all the activities in live, we adjusted the method of implementation. Most of the activities took place in the months of serious restrictions and were implemented online. Despite this, all the workshops were interactive. As feedback followed, all of the workshops met the needs and contributed to the skills and knowledge development of the participants.

For the physical help desk, the set-up plans were designed and the list of equipment needed was prepared in October 2020. Technical equipment was provided in January 2021 and was available for use from all creatives who needed it. Since the center was closed for public because of pandemic restriction it was used individually for the product photography and video production.

During the lock down a creative element, a modular textile wall, which enabled various installations was created, connecting different textile designers. We also procured other equipment for physical set-up, which will be used for further content of the help desk, as well. The additional space was used for activating some of the service of help desk and importantly will enable the sustainability and activities development in the future. The space will continue to provide workshops and individual consultancy for CCI.

The transnational partnership exchange of good practices, crosswise peering activities in the concept phase, implemented actions and plans inspired us to use some chances for transforming the idea of Italian partner help desk test case. Therefore, we followed their point of boosting a creative ecosystem which is an environment of excellence based on creative assets that generates socio-economic growth and development, and comprises three interlinked components: economy (creative industries), place (creative spaces) and people (creative talent).

4. Results

A key feature of the CCI help desk implementation of pilot test was the expansion and establishment of a permanent business support center for creatives in the countryside area. For this purpose, a space with functional and mobile equipment has been arranged within the Kreativnice creative center, which will be used to carry out the activities of the support center. In the test we wanted to show what activities are and will be the subject of additional Kreativnice programme beyond the project duration, as well.

BSC Kranj made an agreement with the Development Agency Sora to take care of the space and programme during and upon the project duration. The current place is settled in the upper part of Kreativnice and business support is offered regularly to those CCI who express their needs.

The equipment identified for the help desk use was bought regarding the defined list in the AF and in the outline plan:

1. Multimedia (ICT technology): laptop, mobile phone, multifunctional printing and scanning device, mobile phone, phone stabilizer and stand, camera stand, photography reflector kit, led lights with stands (4.316,94 EUR in total)
2. Interior furniture: 3 tables that can be dismantled, 20 folding chairs, 5 adjustable chairs, 50 m of exhibition rails, shelves, crates and boxes, magnetic board, creative textile installation (5.372,00 EUR in total)

The testing of the programme was implemented mostly in the period of the worst epidemic situation (from November 2020 until June 2021), when the restriction of gathering more than 10 people was still on, due to the COVID 19.

During the CCI help desk implementation 9 different CCI companies were included in individual consultancy with experts (together 54 hours of individual consulting was

implemented). There were group of 4 workshops implemented addressing common needs of CCI sector (business for CCI, targeting, marketing and tricks to increase sales, brand development...). Two events were implemented with the aim of promoting cross-sectoral integration and product development. One focused on presenting calls and financial support for the companies and one focused on concrete pitching between CCI companies and traditional companies for other sectors. Promotional videos were shot promoting creative community and help desk support program results. Database of CCI representatives was created and it is a living document which upgrades.

Despite adjusting the implementation method, the events were well participated and the feedbacks were positive. We can evaluate that the individual consulting approach was a great success that we will keep and use it also in other project implementations. This approach is custom made for individual CCI companies working with top experts on the field and as a result, many concrete results have emerged. Creatives that have just started their business got useful information on how to set up a business, how to enter the market, how to get first customers and how to take care of them. Already existing CCI companies were guided on more concrete problems they individually had, like how to enter the foreign market, how to position their business, links to other companies on the field they work, how to communicate with customers in a long run, in which media should they appear. As an example, we can point out one carpenter, who works on a traditional way with the use of contemporary design. With the help of individual consultant, he managed to apply for a BIG SEE design award and got the award for a table he designed for one academic painter. In this way, he gained great recognition and a way to new business opportunities. Therefore, we can say that extremely valuable experience was to work with the team of the national Center for Creativity, to learn and exchange with them, to create connection with their pool of experts, which will help us for future collaborations and help desk development.

5. Goal Achievement and Lessons Learned

Working on building a CCI community with monthly workshops open for all interested CCI companies, addressing specific business development topics for the CCI sector, brought us many results. We achieved spreading the network and several different subsectors of CCI were participating (from designers, photographers, visual artists, performers, masters of crafts to the architects). All the participating creative centers are better known within the CCI community and the people working in these centres are connected and started to communicate.

One of the important goals was to create the partnership between existing institutions (BSC Kranj, Development agency Sora, Center for Creativity - Museum for Architecture and Design Ljubljana etc.) and established coworking centres (Kovačnica Kranj, Kreativnice Škofja Loka, Lokomotiva Škofja Loka, Mizarnica Žiri). During the implementation process of the test case partnership shared information and experiences and with created connections the institutions will share all available information on development support programme for CCI and organise some common activities in the future.

According on previous experiences of the participating institutions and the help desk activities, larger companies still do not recognize opportunities of connection with other sectors such CCI sector is and they are not aware of existing financing funds available for such collaborations. As we highlighted these opportunities and tried to create environment where industry and creatives could meet, there is a great lesson learned. To support concrete results and projects there is a need of constant communication with interested and potential companies in the area and concrete financial benefits for cooperation projects. One of the challenges that still remains is to encourage this kind of collaborations and create

starting points for applications on funds supporting creative product development in traditional industries also in the future.

What we also learned is the importance of the team that coordinates, prepares and promotes support programme activities. There is still a lack of understanding that for the sector development we need constant and regular work, constant contact with stakeholders and coordinated content between individual centres.

6. Outlook, Sustainability and Transferability

The test case of help desk for CCI is sustainably oriented. Testing and evaluating the services of help desk (individual consulting, workshops program, connections with industrial companies and promotion) provided us with guidelines how to organize the services of CCI help desk for a longer period. According to the evaluation, the help desk satellite will continue supporting activities for the CCI sector by providing programme and workshops within Development Agency Sora and Kovačnica coworking center activities in the future. These two institutions will still work as the coordinators of the CCI help desk program. They included specialised support programme for CCI and established business consulting program to the yearly working plan.

With the test case we contributed to bring part of national Center for Creativity's support program to Gorenjska region and the results were positively accepted on regional and national level.

Development agency Sora also contributed to the regional policy paper, which we expect will be taken up by the regional Council of 18 mayors in the autumn. Future development and operation of the help desk depends too much from the project finances and activities, therefore their proposals are related to the systematic co-financing of the CCI field from local communities and strong management structure that can be organized as association of interested stakeholders already working on the field of CCI.

At the moment, we relay mostly on the EU project funds, where Development Agency Sora will continue the work of help desk related to other topics and funding projects in 2022:

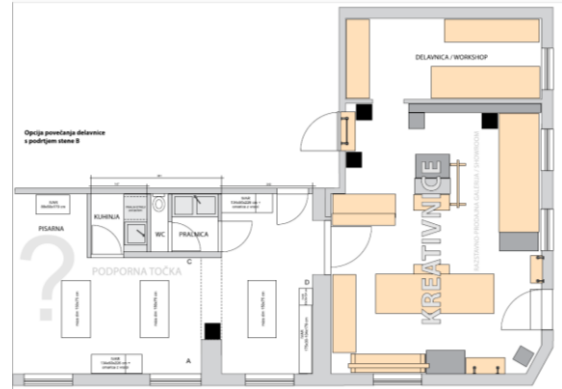
- Adrion - CCI4TOURISM: Strengthen entrepreneurial skills of Cultural and Creative Industries for the valorisation of cultural heritage and the development of sustainable tourism models in the Adriatic-Ionian regions: 15.000 EUR for innovative ideas/products and services in tourism made by CCI companies
- CLLD-cooperation of LAGs - Roko-delci (Crafts): Chamber of craft Škofja Loka will implement entrepreneurship education and individual consulting for creators on the field of arts and crafts: 5.310 EUR

The idea of business support activities for CCI can be transferred also to the other industrial areas in any other regions because there are a lot of institutions already offering business support to entrepreneurs and small companies and they could focus on the field of CCI, as well: No additional investment is required for such enlargement of the activity, help-desk can be organized on many other ways, like in the premises of the creatives, on-line support, as a virtual platform etc. The most important is to recognise the opportunity and invest in the competent coordinator, who will be able to build CCI community and network of business mentors. In our case, it would be appreciated and effective if there was more so called "satellites" spread from the city of Kranj to the country side. There are some potentials of CCI help-desk in other industrial areas, like Jesenice, Tržič, Radovljica, where chamber of crafts and entrepreneurship or development agency- RAGOR could take care of the CCI field.

7. Annexes

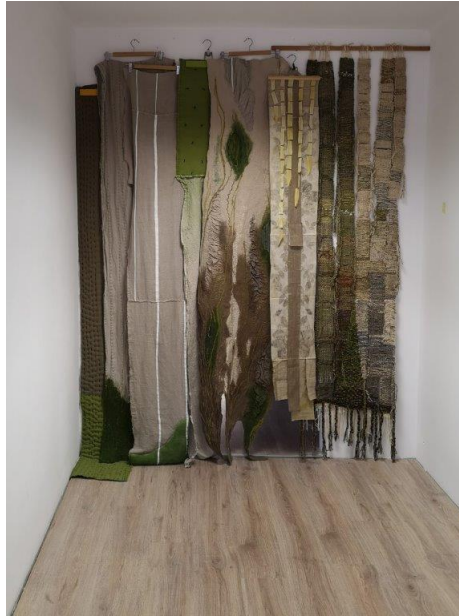
I. INVESTMENT

- Sketches of the space in Kreativnice within outline plan:



- The replacement space of the help desk with equipment:





TEXTILE INSTALLATION - FOREST
PARTITION WALL 450X250CM

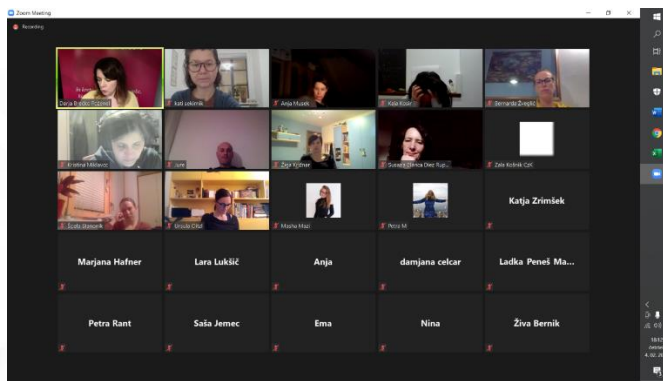


II. PILOT TESTING

BUSINESS SUPPORT SESSIONS FOR CCI

October 2020 - February 2021

- 3.11. 2020, 17.00 - 19.00: Entrepreneurship basics for CCI, dr. Rok Stritar, 16 participants
- 3.12. 2020, 17.00 - 19.00: Defining target groups, Ver Nunič, 13 participants
- 7.01. 2020, 17.00 - 19.00: Sale and tricks to increase turnover, Igor Panjan, 14 participants
- 4.02. 2021, 17.00 - 19.00: Branding, Darja Brečko Poženel 28 participants



INDIVIDUAL CONSULTING

November 2020 - February 2021

Public call for CCI opened until 10. 11. 2020.

Selection of 9 representatives of CCI, they get 5 hours of individual mentorship offered by Center for Creativity experts

FB: Call for CCI



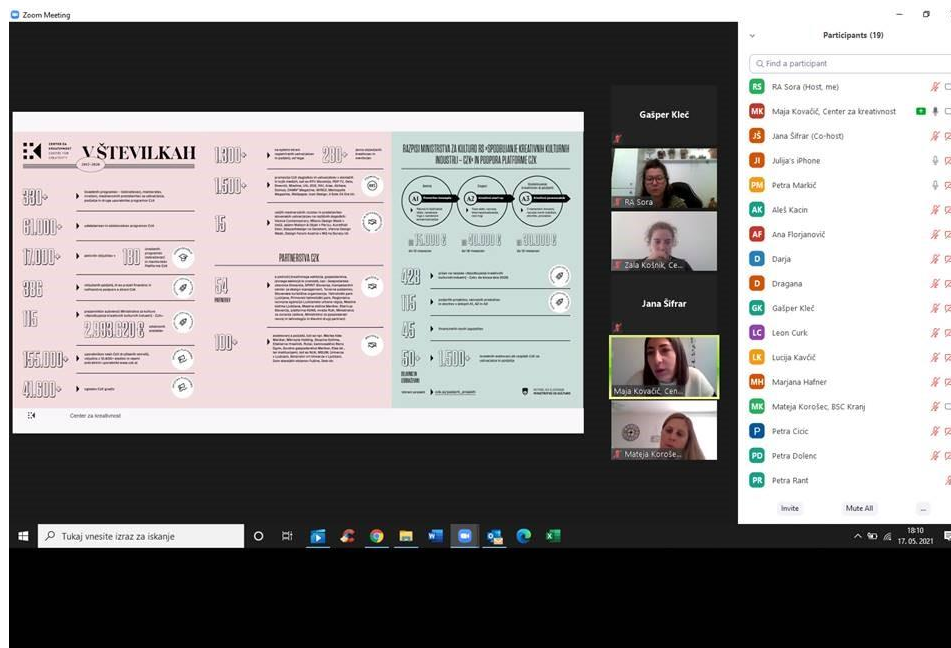
The results of individual consulting were also promotional videos created to boost CCI's work:

<https://www.ra-sora.si/kulturne-in-kreativne-industrije/>

NETWORKING EVENTS

17 May 2021 Connection and opportunities of cooperation between companies and CCI

1 mix-match event - Creatives meet companies (31 August 2021)



Datum: 31. 8. 2021
 Čas: 10.00 - 14.00
 Lokacija: Sokolski dom,
 Škofja Loka
 Z vami bodo: CzK, MAO in
 Meta Grošelj

Interreg
 CENTRAL EUROPE
InduCCI

PODPORNA TOČKA ZA USTVARJALCE NA PODROČJU KKI

MREŽENJSKI DOGODEK, 2.

PODJETJA KREATIVCEM, KREATIVCI PODJETJEM

Udeležba na dogodku je brezplačna. Za udeležbo na dogodku je obvezna prijava na rokodelskicenter@visitskofjaloka.si.

Dogodek je organiziran v sklopu Podporne točke za ustvarjalce na področju KKI na Gorenjskem, ki jo izvajata BSC Kranj in Razvojna agencija Sora v sodelovanju s Centrom za kreativnost in Muzejem za arhitekturo in oblikovanje.



BSC
 Poslovno podporni center Kranj
 Regionalna razvojna agencija Gorenjske



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