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## NETWORK OF SHARED CREATIVE SPACES:

PROFILING & CONNECTING SHARED CREATIVE SPACES ACROSS  
EUROPE'S NORTHERN EDGE

SUMMARY & LESSONS LEARNED

MAY 2018

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## SUMMARY & LESSONS LEARNED

The Network of Shared Creative Spaces was an activity of the transnational EU co-funded '[a creative momentum project](#)' (2015-2018). The main goals of the Network were to share good practice and learning between existing Creative Spaces across the partner regions, to utilise these Spaces as locations for the delivery of other project activities and events, and to ensure the inclusion of creative talent in the NPA areas.

The starting point was to define what a 'Shared Creative Space' is. The partners agreed that a Shared Creative Space should adhere to the following criteria:

1. Should house at least one creative business/entrepreneur with a view to housing at least one more.
2. Should be a structure that provides four walls and a roof to any creative businesses that are working out of these premises.
3. Should have a networking area.

Each of 'a creative momentum project' partner then compiled a database of Shared Creative Spaces in their own region in early 2016. To guide the development of the database, SEED (the Northern Ireland project partner who led this activity) developed 'Guidelines for Developing a list of "Shared Creative Spaces"' and a data collection template. A total of 120 Shared Creative Spaces were identified across the five regions (Mid-Sweden, South East of Northern Ireland, Northern Finland, North East Iceland and West of Ireland). The full lists are included in Appendix 1.

After developing the databases, a series of initiatives were put in place in an effort to establish a Network:

1. **Profile Spaces through MyCreativeEdge.eu:** One of the new functionalities of the re-developed [MyCreativeEdge.eu](#) website was to allow owners and managers of Shared Creative Spaces to register on the site and publish a 'Space Profile' to showcase their Space, its facilities and also if it was currently seeking tenants. By the end of the project (May 2018) 26 [Space Profiles](#) had been published on MyCreativeEdge.eu.
2. **Provide a mechanism to discuss and exchange best practice in relation to the management and running of Creative Spaces:** A Creative Exchange event was held in Northern Ireland in November 2016 designed to engage with managers of Creative Spaces and to capture information and advice relating to best practice for managing, funding or setting up a new Creative Space. Following presentations from managers of a number of Creative Spaces, a speed networking session took place allowing attending creatives to meet each other and ask questions of managers of the Spaces.
3. **Develop an online transnational Skype based Network:** The next stage was to better network the Spaces transnationally. This was done via the promotion and delivery of Skype Network Con-Calls for managers of Creative Spaces in the partner regions to connect and share experiences. The first took place on 23 March 2017, with further calls





throughout 2017.

4. **Physical use of the Spaces in the Network for Creative Exchanges and transnational visits:** Transnational visits to Spaces took place during 'a creative momentum project' partner Operational Management Team meetings and Creative Hotspots (49 creative professionals were supported to attend five Creative Hotspot events (one in each region) during the project). Creative Spaces were also used as venues for Creative Exchange information and networking events in all regions. Creative Spaces in North East Iceland and Northern Ireland were given the chance to apply to be featured on the new Creative Trails mobile apps.

Over the course of the project, the following observations were made in relation to the implementation of this methodology.

#### **Creative Spaces:**

- During the three years of 'a creative momentum project' many of the Creative Spaces engaged with went through substantial changes in personnel, funding, structure etc. It seems to be a fast-evolving sector.
- When it came to finding suitable venues for Creative Exchanges it was noted that Creative Spaces often met the needs of the event better than hotels. For example providing reliable WiFi and current reliable AV hardware with the expertise to deal with unforeseen issues. They also had the ability to promote the event itself within their own networks to reach the desired target market and provide useful local knowledge.
- The majority of Creative Spaces that were renting space to creative businesses in the form of hot-desking, co-working space or private individual space were often part-funded from an external source. In an effort to address the potential for a self-sufficient Creative Space, two managers of privately funded Spaces, both in the process of looking at opening a new space were consulted. Their very success however was a problem as they had limited availability in time or space for events.
- Rural and urban Creative Spaces were observed to work in different ways e.g. parking availability and cost. One thing that united them was strong positive feedback from managers and users in relation to effective, functioning high-end facilities such as high speed WiFi, AV equipment and access to adequate kitchen facilities.

#### **Network of Shared Creative Spaces Con-Calls:**

- It was difficult to set up the Skype Con-Calls due to the fact that not everyone had access to Skype and yet it was still the preferred method of everyone who wished to be on the calls. The time difference was not a big problem as this was clearly explained to all participants beforehand.
- The level of WiFi dictated whether or not video was really practical on the calls, it was noted that during a video presentation of one of the Spaces some of the other participants lost their video feed.
- It was initially anticipated that the calls would take place every month. Although this was met with agreement and enthusiasm, it was very difficult to get availability of the members for such regular calls and ultimately they were less frequent.

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- The members all expressed enthusiasm for the idea of the Network of Shared Creative Spaces Con-Calls, and all were keen to bring issues to the table.

The majority of Spaces engaged with during this activity could be characterised as mainly accommodating artists and crafters with many owned/managed by artists or makers. These Spaces tend to be either currently receiving financial support or attempting to do so. Many hoped that the Network would help to better position them to avail of potential funds. There is however another type of Space. This would be characterised as a Space that exists as a financially independent profit-making business that accommodates and provides working space and facilities for profit-based creative industries.

Therefore any future development of this Network of Shared Creative Spaces should involve one Network called "The Network of Shared Creative Spaces" which operates as an umbrella for two concurrent Networks that operate under it.

<b>"Network of Shared Creative Spaces"</b>	
Overall Network that meets once every 3 months/as required	
<b>"Network of Artist and Crafter Spaces"</b>	<b>"Network of Digital Creatives"</b>
Network of arts & crafts Spaces owners/managers looking to better position themselves to source funding opportunities	Network of profit-based digital creative entrepreneurs who have a need/desire to network and/or have space for meetings or hot-desking

- Network of Artist and Crafter Spaces:** The coordination of Spaces that have the specific goal of working together to better position themselves to avail of potential funding. Support of this Network could also address the shared needs of the Spaces, primarily the need or desire to populate their Spaces with creative entrepreneurs.
- Network of Digital Creatives:** The development of a second Network of Shared Creative Space Con-Calls specific to creative digital entrepreneurs. This would involve networking digital/virtual spaces as these businesses are characterised as producing a digital product or service and are flexible in terms of working location, working from home, in cafés, hotel lobbies, on trains and sometimes availing of hot-desking facilities. Through this Network they could be introduced to fellow creative digital entrepreneurs who may hold the possibility of future partnerships. This Network could then feed into the original Network which may provide somewhere for meetings or for working collaboratively.

The full report 'Network of Shared Creative Spaces: Profiling & Connecting Shared Creative Spaces across Europe's Northern Edge' can be downloaded from the [Knowledge Centre](#) on MyCreativeEdge.eu.





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