



a creative  
momentum  
project

# CREATIVE2CREATIVE MATCHING

A MODEL FOR TRANSNATIONAL PEER-TO-PEER MENTORING

MAY 2018

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## SUMMARY & KEY LESSONS

Creative2Creative Matching is a peer-to-peer mentoring process developed under 'a creative momentum project'. The process pairs creative entrepreneurs from the Arts, Crafts, Design, and Media & Technology sectors from different countries. The process is based on a set of guidelines proposing that each matched pair should work together online over a six-month period (approx. two hours a month) to share their knowledge and experiences of working in different countries.

The Creative2Creative Matching process was led by Lapland University of Applied Sciences (Lapland UAS). The regions who participated in the process were:

- Northern Finland
- Mid-Sweden
- South East of Northern Ireland
- West of Ireland

The project partner organisations implementing the process were:

- Lapland UAS
- Technichus Mid-Sweden Ltd
- Armagh City, Banbridge, and Craigavon Borough Council (ACBC) on behalf of South East Economic Development
- Western Development Commission (WDC)

### STARTING THE PROCESS

From preliminary investigations led by Lapland UAS, it emerged that mentoring is mainly provided for students, start-ups or well developed businesses (generation replacement, growing businesses or new innovative enterprises). There were no region or industry-specific programmes available; multiple methodologies existed and there did not seem to be a methodology specifically tailored to the creative industries sector.

Given the transnational focus of 'a creative momentum project', project partners agreed to develop an activity centred on *peer-to-peer mentoring* which matched two creative entrepreneurs from different countries as a way of growing international links and facilitating knowledge transfer across partner regions. A Model and set of implementation guidelines were developed by Lapland UAS offering information about the step-by-step process and some do's and don'ts. Guidelines included templates for each matched pair to set objectives, end the process and information about digital tools for collaboration.

It was agreed that each matched pair would be assigned a regional co-ordinator:

- Lapland UAS: Saila Puukko
- Technichus: Kristina Jeppson
- SEED: Niall Drew

- WDC: Silvia Guglielmini

## **MATCH-MAKING**

Creative entrepreneurs were selected to participate through four open calls for applications. The project received 57 applications and matched 48 creative entrepreneurs (23 pairs). The majority of applications came from the West of Ireland (42%) and SEED (29%).

Creative entrepreneurs applied via Google Forms. The application form was designed to collect details about each entrepreneur and better understand their 1) key strengths 2) development needs and 3) overall motivation/objectives. Creative entrepreneurs also had the opportunity to indicate whether they wanted to be matched with someone from a particular *creative field* or *region*. More than half of applicants respondents (57%) did not express any particular preference with regard to the creative field of their potential match. The majority (70%) did not have any specific requirements concerning the geographical location of their 'match'. Twelve applicants indicated 'Mid-Sweden' as their preferred region.

The matching process was challenging because of the imbalance in the number of applications from different regions. Due to a lack of suitable candidates, it was impossible to find a match for all applicants. Once a match was made, regional co-ordinators emailed each entrepreneur separately, to seek approval. If both entrepreneurs approved the proposed 'match', regional co-ordinators sent an introductory email to connect the two entrepreneurs.

## **FACILITATION**

When submitting an application for the Creative2Creative Matching programme, creative entrepreneurs agreed to carry out the process independently, i.e. without the support of a third party. Regional co-ordinators were to be seen as the first point of contact for a 'match', should issues emerge. However in January 2017, due to a lack of progress with many matches, partners agreed to contract one external consultant for each region to facilitate communication and collaboration between the matched creatives. 'a creative momentum project' recruited the following consultants:

- Northern Finland: Oulu Business Networks (OBN)
- SEED: Brilliant Red
- West of Ireland: SCCUL Enterprises CLG (SCCUL) through a network of mentors called *Bizmentors*.

Due to budget issues, Techichus did not contract any external consultant. As Swedish creatives were paired with professionals from the West of Ireland, the WDC and SCCUL Enterprises CLG were responsible for facilitating these matches.

Ultimately half of the 'matched pairs' – 12 of the 23 – completed the Creative2Creative Matching programme, most of them thanks to the input of external consultants.

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## FEEDBACK FROM CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS

To collect feedback on the process, 'a creative momentum project' developed an online survey. Participants were asked to complete this survey and submit a final report on their overall experience with Creative2Creative Matching. The project received twelve (12) responses to the online survey, nine (9) written reports and two (2) participants were also interviewed about their experiences. In addition, conversations between regional co-ordinators and applicants have been a further source of feedback for the project.

The results of the feedback survey are given in Section 6. From the feedback gathered, it emerged that changes in personal and professional schedules often prevented creatives from establishing connections. Sometimes one party was unresponsive, causing the other party to lose motivation. Most participants were comfortable with digital tools such as Google Hangouts, Skype, What's App, Facebook and emails. Digital tools were important for creatives to establish and manage their connection. Language constituted a barrier for some.

Establishing a common set of goals was a necessary condition for collaboration. Participant feedback was broadly positive in saying that pairs formulated common objectives. Most (83%) agreed that the objectives set were realistic and that they were revised as necessary (75%). The majority of participants were also satisfied about the participation of their match. At the same time, pressures created by wider demands of their business impacted on their own ability to participate in the process effectively, but that adaptations were made to maintain communication.

A similar professional background was an important condition for the establishment of durable connections. Involving creatives working in the same creative field, but through different styles and with different business models, can be beneficial.

External consultants were seen as a positive addition by the majority of creatives (75%) who completed the online survey. The feedback survey also assessed if the external consultant helped set common objectives and review outcomes. The majority of feedback was good, however some (25%) were unhappy with this part of the process.

According to survey respondents, the top five achievements of the Creative2Creative Matching process for them were:

1. New contacts (83%)
2. Connections with like-minded entrepreneurs, on an international scale (83%)
3. Exploration of joint projects (75%)
4. Learning from someone else who is running a business (75%)
5. Time to reflect on own business and its future (67%)

Creative2Creative Matching was also effective in creating connections that should sustain beyond 'a creative momentum project's' funded lifetime. According to the online survey, most participants (92%) intend to stay in touch with their 'match'. Some mentioned specific plans including face-to-face meetings or ideas for joint projects, though no timeline has been provided yet.

Funding represented an issue for creatives who would like to further explore their connection and eventually work on a joint project.

## IMPROVING THE MODEL

Developing a Model for peer-to-peer mentoring was one of the objectives of the Creative2Creative Matching activity. Peer-to-peer mentoring has proven a useful concept. However, lack of time can affect the way in which entrepreneurs (especially sole traders) engage with the activity. Creating compatible 'matches' is crucial: participants must feel that the time spent together is worthwhile and that they are involved in a mutually beneficial knowledge exchange.

To create the 'perfect' match, regional co-ordinators must set aside time to thoroughly analyse all applications and, sometimes, set up face-to-face meetings. It would be good if applicants could select their own 'match' from the outset. For example, online application forms could include public lists of participants (anonymous profiles with skills) and tools for quick conversations (e.g. chat).

The Model should consider face-to-face meetings as a crucial next step to evolve the online Creative2Creative Matching process to stronger collaboration and knowledge transfer. It may be good to 'reward' successful matches by providing an opportunity to meet in person to develop a joint project, especially if this project is listed as one of the objectives shared by the 'match'.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report outlines the experience of ‘a creative momentum project’ in developing and implementing the ‘Creative2Creative Matching’ activity during 2015-2018. This report was written by Saila Puukko, Project Manager, Lapland University of Applied Sciences. Substantial inputs were provided by the other regional co-ordinators of this activity: Dr. Silvia Guglielmini, Project Administrator, WDC; Ms. Kristina Jeppson, Project Officer, Technichus Mid-Sweden; and Niall Drew, Project Co-ordinator, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council. The analysis of the feedback survey results in Section 6 was undertaken by Dr. Aisling Murtagh, Post-Doctoral Researcher, NUI Galway.

We would like to thank all the participants and external consultants who took part in this activity. Their feedback has been very valuable in preparing this report.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

'a creative momentum project' was a €2m, 3-year (2015-2018) transnational project to support the creative industries sector across Europe's Northern Edge. It was co-funded by the EU's [Northern Periphery & Arctic](#) (NPA) Programme.

'a creative momentum project' supported individuals and enterprises working in the creative and cultural industries. The activities covered were Arts, Crafts, Design and Media & Technology. 'a creative momentum project' supported artists, craftspeople and creative sector enterprises to:

- develop their creative and business skills and innovate new product/service ideas by providing mentoring, new online knowledge resources and supporting collaborative product, service and organisational innovation;
- connect with other creatives to develop new opportunities locally, regionally and transnationally by supporting shared spaces, events and gatherings; and
- get their products and services to market by supporting them to attend Trade Fairs and showcase their work online and to the tourist market.

'a creative momentum project' conducted research on the processes operating in the sector to improve understanding of the sector's needs and make the case for public policy to support the sector. Further information on the project can be found at [MyCreativeEdge.eu](#).

The project was implemented by six partner organisations:

- [Western Development Commission](#) (WDC), Ireland
- [National University of Ireland, Galway](#) (NUIG), Ireland
- [Cultural Council of North East Iceland](#), Iceland
- [Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council](#), Northern Ireland on behalf of South East Economic Development
- [Technichus Mid-Sweden Ltd](#), Sweden
- [Lapland University of Applied Sciences](#), Finland

It was implemented in the following regions:

- West of Ireland (counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway and Clare)
- South East of Northern Ireland (Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council, Ards & North Down Borough Council, and Newry, Mourne & Down District Council areas)
- Mid-Sweden (Västernorrland)
- Northern Finland (Lapland, North Ostrobothnia)
- Iceland (North East)

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## 2.0 WHAT IS CREATIVE2CREATIVE MATCHING?

This activity matched creative sector companies from different partner regions. During the programme, each pair of entrepreneurs held online meetings for a minimum of two hours each month over a six-month period. At the start of the programme, participants received guidelines on implementing the programme and were instructed to jointly set objectives to be achieved. At the end of the programme creatives submitted a report of the outcomes. Participation was on a voluntary basis and the activity was implemented online. Some of the creatives had a chance to meet face-to-face during other activities such as Creative Hotspot events. There was no charge for participation.

### 2.1 OVERVIEW

The Creative2Creative Matching programme<sup>1</sup> was led by Lapland University of Applied Sciences (Lapland UAS). The regions who participated in the process were:

- Northern Finland
- Mid-Sweden
- South East of Northern Ireland
- West of Ireland

The project partner organisations implementing the process were:

- Lapland UAS
- Technichus Mid-Sweden Ltd
- Armagh City, Banbridge, and Craigavon Borough Council (ACBC) on behalf of South East Economic Development
- Western Development Commission (WDC)

In each of the four participating regions, there was a designated regional co-ordinator. Co-ordinators connected with the matched pairs, helped with creating the first connection and setting up common goals. Help was also available when selecting digital tools, if needed. Co-ordinators followed-up with the matched pairs and gathered feedback reports. Individual reports were collected at the end of the programme.

The co-ordinators in each region were:

- Northern Finland: Ms. Saila Puukko, Lapland UAS
- Mid-Sweden: Ms. Kristina Jeppson, Technichus Mid-Sweden
- Northern Ireland: Mr. Niall Drew, ACBC
- West of Ireland: Dr. Silvia Guglielmini, WDC

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<sup>1</sup> This activity was called 'Mentoring in Internationalisation' in the original application for 'a creative momentum project'. For the first call for applications it was called 'Peer-to-Peer Mentoring in Internationalisation'. The name was changed to Creative2Creative Matching for all subsequent calls in response to feedback from potential applicants.

In January 2017, due to a lack of progress with many pairs, the WDC suggested recruiting an external consultant to give some “outside help” to matched pairs at the beginning and end of the process. Co-ordinators from WDC, ACBC and Lapland UAS estimated that their project budget would allow this. The idea was as follows:

1. Each matched pair would receive two, two-hour online sessions with a business consultant. The consultant and the matched companies would be on the call together. The first session would be at the start of the process to help the pair identify and define their joint goals. At the end of the process, the second session would assess the achievement of the goals and plan for any future collaboration.
2. WDC, Lapland UAS and ACBC would each contract an external consultant (or a number of them) to provide the support. The consultant(s) would provide support to the matched pairs that that partner organisation was responsible for co-ordinating. For any matched pairs co-ordinated by Technichus, whichever region the ‘match’ is from would provide the consultant for that pair.

The WDC drafted a “Request for Quote” template to contract the consultants. The document was edited in each region based on their national, regional and organisational guidelines and regulations for procurement. The consultants recruited were: Northern Finland, Oulu Business Networks (OBN); West of Ireland, SCCUL Enterprises CLG (SCCUL); and Northern Ireland, Brilliant Red. More about the external consultants was [written on MyCreativeEdge](#) (May 2017).

## 2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODEL

Creative2Creative Matching is *transnational mentoring for peers*. Planning of the mentoring Model started in August 2015. Lapland UAS, with input from all project partners, investigated the current status and gaps of mentoring support in each region. They developed mentoring guidelines and a step-by-step process Model based on this information and their own experience with previous similar programmes.

The original aim of the activity was to deliver mentoring support from “alpha” creative industries to “beta” companies on a transnational basis. Mentoring was aimed to improving capacity for accessing international markets among early stage creative entrepreneurs leading to their business and marketplace growth, as well as, network growth among mentors and mentees. The original idea of ‘mentoring in internationalisation’, as it was called in the project application, was also to find and map organisations who could co-ordinate mentoring (=mentoring programmes/organisations) and secure continuity after the project. There was also an idea to organise some training and meetings for mentors in respective regions. Eventually by adopting a ‘peer-to-peer’ mentoring Model instead, there was no need to organise events or training for mentors. Though, some promotional events were organised to market the opportunity regionally.

## 2.3 POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR PARTICIPANTS

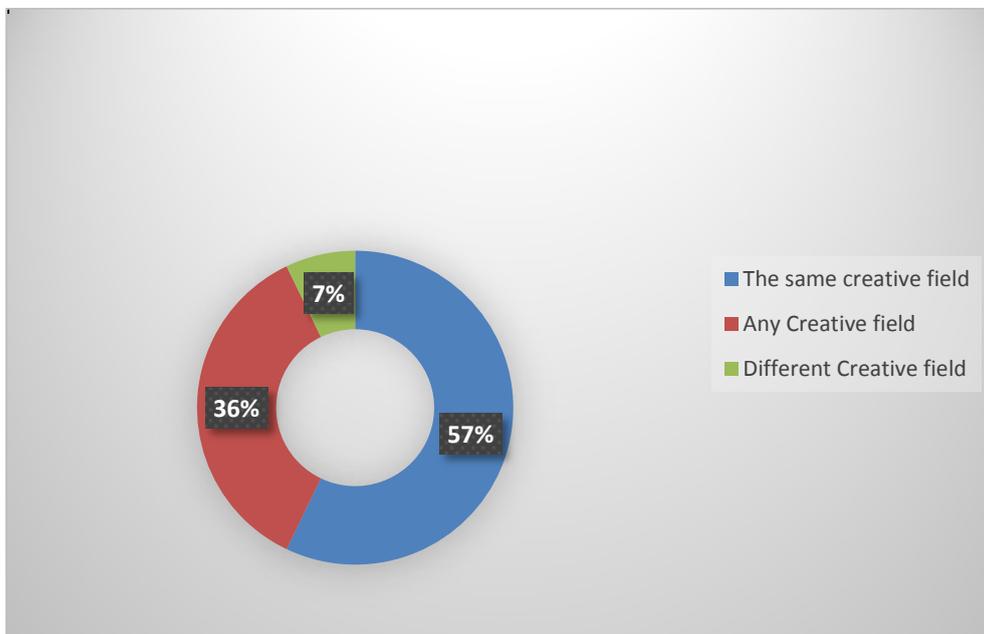
Participating companies had a chance to:

- Learn about their sector in their respective regions and countries;

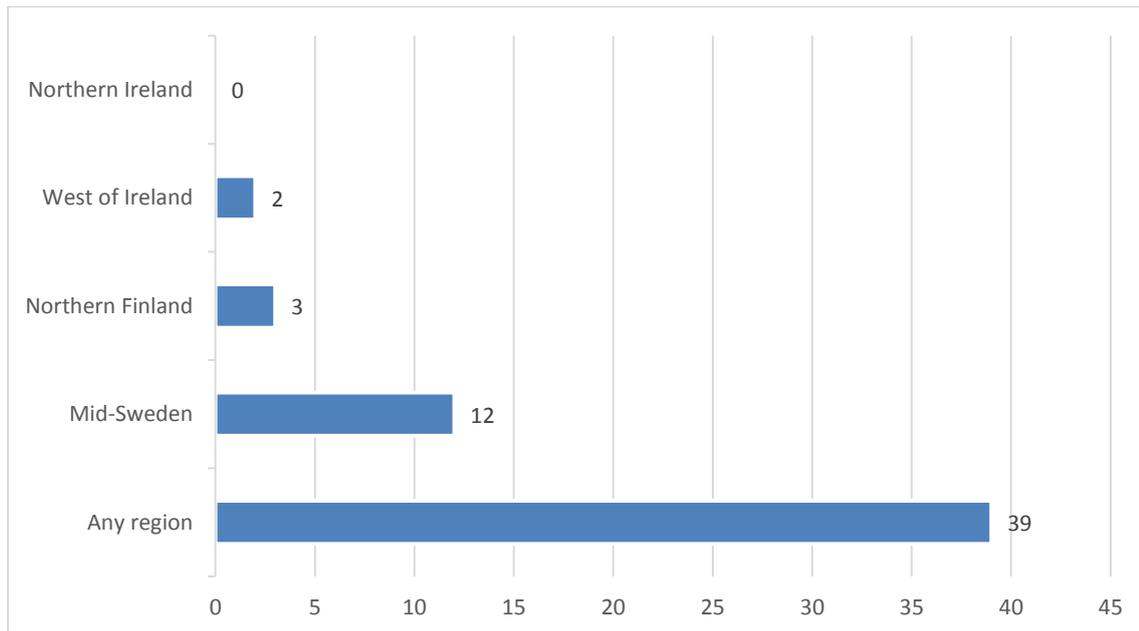
- Share their experiences of working in the sector;
- Gain international contacts and knowledge;
- Increase their understanding of export markets;
- Explore opportunities for joint international projects;
- Gain a competitive advantage in the international market.

Many creatives who applied were mainly looking for new networks and contacts in another region. They were quite open to being matched with different kinds of companies. Some did have more specific goals and needs. Over half (57%) of applicants were looking for a match from the same creative field. 39 (70%) applicants did not have any specific requirements on which region they hoped to be matched with. Twelve applicants were especially looking for a match from Mid-Sweden.

**FIG. 1: ARE YOU INTERESTED TO BE MATCHED WITH...**



**FIG. 2: ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BEING MATCHED WITH A COMPANY IN...**



## 2.4 GUIDELINES & STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS MODEL

Guidelines for applicants were created by Lapland UAS to instruct participants how to prepare themselves for the process. Guidelines offered information about the step-by-step process and some do’s and don’ts. Guidelines included templates for setting joint objectives, ending the process and information about digital tools for collaboration.

The step-by-step process for guide participants involved:

1. Before first meeting - Introduction and contact detail exchange (email) with help of the co-ordinator; Reading the guidelines; Testing and selecting the preferred e-tool to be used for first meeting; Setting the initial meeting.
2. Kick it off - Discuss and agree goals for the process and share with co-ordinator; Agree on practical issues, like frequency and timing of meetings.
3. During process – Online meetings for minimum of 2 hours per month; Updating shared document with common goals/questions/topics; Progress review; Update co-ordinator every 2 months.
4. Ending process - Summing it up together; Agreeing any future plans; Final reporting; Feedback to co-ordinator.

FIG. 3: CREATIVE2CREATIVE MATCHING PROCESS



Process of  
**Creative2Creative**  
Matching

## 3.0 HOW IS CREATIVE2CREATIVE MATCHING DIFFERENT?

When investigating mentoring models at the start of the process, it was noted that the main challenge was that there was no universal model for mentoring which could be adopted for our project purposes. It was also realised that partners did not have enough resources to recruit expensive business consultants to offer a full mentoring service. That is why the programme was developed to be based on peer-mentoring. Below are some of the results of the investigation.

### 3.1 MODEL OF VOLUNTEERS

In Finland and Sweden mentoring is supported mainly by volunteer mentoring experts. The programmes are hosted by regional and national entrepreneurial associations. For example, some associations offer a limited amount of mentoring for start-ups. One of the organisations offering such support in Northern Finland is The Regional Organisation of Enterprises in Lapland and Rovaniemi Development Agency. Nationally, mentoring support is offered by Business Mentors Finland.

Mid-Sweden also has a tradition of volunteer mentor programmes. Mentor programmes are offered by organisations like Almi and Nyföretagscentrum. Mid-Sweden University offers mentor programmes for their students. Nyföretagscentrum focuses on new companies, start-ups, while Almi specializes in companies that have been running for at least one year. The mentors work on a non-profit basis and do not get paid.

### 3.2 MANY WAYS TO DO MENTORING

Mentoring in Ireland is co-ordinated by a range of organisations and groups. Mentoring appears to be delivered in three broad ways:

- A specific mentoring service offered by an organisation to assist business development (e.g. from Local Enterprise Offices).
- Delivered as part of a wider business development programme (e.g. New Frontiers National Entrepreneur Development Programme).
- Focus of a specific programme (e.g. Commercialisation mentoring offered by NUI Galway Ignite Technology Transfer Office).

The majority of service offerings are broad business based. Mentoring in Ireland can be free to businesses or they may pay a portion of the cost. A commercial rate may be paid, but this is uncommon because those seeking mentoring often lack the means or desire to pay. Nationally, two-thirds of business mentoring is carried out by paid mentors and one-third by unpaid mentors.

In Northern Ireland there have been several mentoring programmes, but most of them were already ended when partners evaluated the situation. There has been very little mentoring specific to the creative industries sector in the SEED area.

### 3.3 DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF EXISTING MENTORING MODELS

Overall there were different systems in the participating regions. Several national and regional programmes were also identified,

but there were many deficiencies when analysing the situation in different regions. For example, it was noted that mentoring is provided mainly for students, start-ups or well developed businesses (generation replacement, growing businesses or new innovative enterprises). There were few region or industry specific-programmes available.

The main challenges with existing mentoring programmes were summed up as follows:

- 1) programmes were at an early stage of development/not well established;
- 2) differences in how regions understood the word mentoring; and
- 3) how will did existing programmes benefit sparsely populated areas? Was guidance less available for start-ups and SMEs in rural areas, because of distances and high cost of travelling?

From the more developed of the mentoring programmes, the main development needs identified were:

- 1) little mentoring specially targeting the creative sector;
- 2) no universal approach to training of mentors;
- 3) more systematic follow-up and better methods to evaluate the impact of mentoring needed;
- 4) integration of mentoring with other forms of business support;
- 5) increased scope for mentoring for established companies (not only for start-ups);
- 6) specialised mentoring for micro and small enterprises;
- 7) central resource and organisation managing mentoring needed; and
- 8) need for high quality mentors with strong entrepreneurial experience.



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## 4.0 RECRUITMENT & SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Following the investigation of mentoring in the partner regions and development of the guidelines and process, the project organised its first [open call for applications](#). This was to seek participants from enterprises based in Northern Finland, Mid-Sweden, Northern Ireland and the West of Ireland.

As co-ordinator of the Creative2Creative Matching activity, Lapland UAS drafted an online application template (using Google Form) with input from partners. In addition to basic contact and company details, co-ordinators wanted to gather information about the entrepreneur's development needs, key strengths and their motivation/objectives in applying. There were questions about their interest to be matched with a company in the same or a different creative field and their interest to be matched with a company in a specific region/country.

Project partners agreed the following criteria for applicants to be considered for the programme: 1) they needed to be based in participating regions, 2) be registered members of MyCreativeEdge.eu and 3) operate in a creative sector listed. In practice applicants who had not published a Profile on MyCreativeEdge.eu were not excluded from the process, instead they were encouraged to join the 'MyCreativeEdge.eu' community. Thus, the Creative2Creative Matching programme was used as a recruiting mechanism for MyCreativeEdge.eu to increase the number of Profiles on the website and the project's overall reach.

Terms and conditions were set out in the application document created in [Google Forms](#). Every applicant was requested to complete the application form online, but some participants who were approached directly to take part (see below) did not fill in the online form. The information in the application form was shared with the relevant regional co-ordinators and external consultants.

Selection criteria were drafted, but eventually it was clear that the main criteria was *suitability of match with other company*. Other criteria were: *motivation to participate; and background and relevant experience*.

Project partners agreed that the activity would recruit participants through four quarterly calls (or Rounds). The Creative2Creative Matching programme was launched in June 2016. Each call for applications would remain open for three months, but basically co-ordinators accepted applications at any time during the process.

The calls were as follows:

- 1 June 2016 – 31 August 2016
- 1 September – 30 November 2016
- 1 December – 28 February (=extended to 31 March 2017)
- 1 March – 31 June 2017 (=extended on early Autumn 2017)

On the third call it was decided to extend the application time because a new 'targeted approach' was adopted. Partners were looking for more applications from Finland and Sweden to be matched with a large number of earlier 'unmatched' applicants from the West of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Find out more about the targeted call [here](#). The last (fourth) call was not very structured and focused on trying to find matches for existing applicants rather than attracting any new applications.

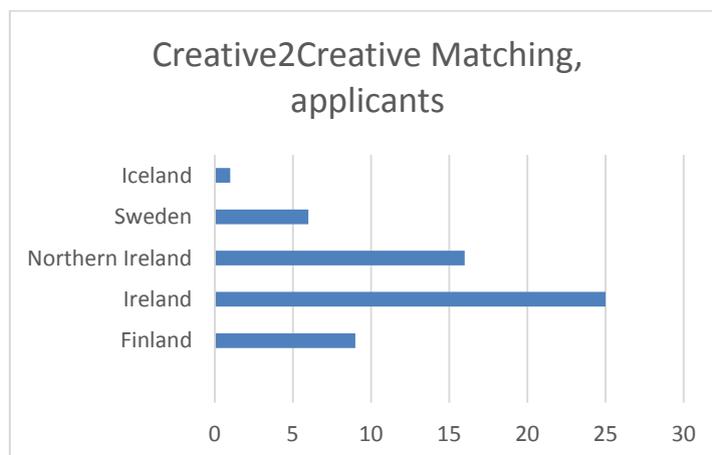
Evaluation and selection of the applicants was done jointly by all co-ordinators mainly via fortnightly con-calls and partner meetings. Lapland UAS made the initial suggestions on the matching, but final matching was agreed jointly. At first, there was a high number of companies applying and it was difficult to see who would be good matches.

If a company was not selected, due to the lack of an appropriate match, their application was carried forward to the next call. Lapland UAS drafted a "bio" document of the 'unmatched' applicants and this document was promoted on MyCreativeEdge.eu when promoting the third call for applications. This document was updated during the process by all partners. For the last calls the main aim was to search for appropriate matches for 'unmatched' applicants from previous rounds.

A detailed discussion about the 'unmatched' applicants was held during the eight Operational Management Team meeting in Bangor (November 2017), where the WDC proposed a number of solutions that involved directly contacting specific creative professionals from the 'MyCreativeEdge.eu' network, or other networks known to regional co-ordinators, to ask them to participate to be matched with a specific company.

During the process, a total of 57 applications were sent via the online system and 47 entrepreneurs participated to some extent in the process with 23 matched pairs created (=one match had three members). Most of the applications (72%) were from the West of Ireland or Northern Ireland. All the applicants were not eligible (=from outside the participating regions). One applicant applied from North East Iceland, even though Iceland was not participating in the activity. Partners discussed including the Icelandic applicant anyway, but eventually they withdraw.

**FIG. 4: CREATIVE2CREATIVE MATCHING, APPLICANTS**



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## 4.1 PROMOTION, SELECTION & EVALUATION IN NORTHERN FINLAND

### 4.1.1 RECRUITMENT & PROMOTION OF THE OPEN CALLS

The first round of the open call for applications was set up in June 2016, the final call was officially closed at the end of June 2017, though applications were still accepted during Autumn 2017. For the first call promotion was mainly done via group emails and social media marketing, also through some articles published on MyCreativeEdge.eu (see below). After the first round, it was clear that the most effective way to promote the activity was to contact entrepreneurs individually via email and phone. The number of applicants from Northern Finland was quite low compared to Ireland / Northern Ireland. After the second round, Lapland UAS concentrated on more targeted promotion to reach entrepreneurs.

After the first call, Swedish co-ordinator Kristina Jeppson pointed out that the original name "Peer-to-Peer Mentoring in Internationalisation" was not attractive for potential applicants. It was also a bit unclear for non-native English speakers. It was agreed to change the name to Creative2Creative Matching. There was some discussion about the language also. Even though language itself was not a big problem in Finland, it was seen that the Finnish language was more useful when promoting the opportunity. In Finland, Creative2Creative Matching was called simply *peer-mentoring = vertaismentorointi*.

The following five articles were written by Lapland UAS about matched entrepreneurs or entrepreneurs looking to be matched:

- [Creative2Creative Matching: Pasi Hakkio and David Henderson](#) (8 November 2016)
- [Creative2Creative matching: Antti Kaarlela & Emma Owen](#) (30 November 2016)
- [Creative2Creative Matching Story from 2nd Round; Heidi Sarjanoja](#) (16 February 2017)
- [Farm Escape entrepreneur from Finland is participating on Creative2Creative Matching](#) (6 June 2017)
- [Transnational photographic tours on Creative2Creative Matching](#) (5 April 2018)

### 4.1.2 CHALLENGES OF PROMOTION

During the open application process, the feedback from companies varied; for some it seemed a clear opportunity, but some thought that they did not have enough time to participate – even though they were interested. Most of the companies were self-employed and it seemed difficult to find time to dedicate to it. For the Finnish co-ordinator, it was easier to promote the opportunity when there was something to show; a list of companies who had already applied or some concrete results from the activity.

It was also difficult to reach all regional creative entrepreneurs. The creative industry is changing continuously; new companies are established and some companies vanish. All creative companies cannot be found online. Therefore, good connections to Associate Partners and networks within the creative sector is valuable. At the beginning of the project Lapland UAS had close co-operation with regional entrepreneurial organisation called The Federation of Finnish Enterprises, Lapland. They did active promotion to their contacts about the open call. Other valuable contacts were ELY-centre in Lapland and small creative associations working in the region.

The large region was one of the biggest challenges. When there is a limited number of people working on the project, it is very important to create good contacts everywhere in the region. It is also good to have regional events to attract people all over Northern Finland. Thus, it was not possible because of distances and lack of personnel to promote the activity as widely as we would have liked.

#### **4.1.3 OVERVIEW OF THE APPLICANTS**

In total nine applications were received from Northern Finland: four applicants in first round (June-August 2016); two applicants from second round (September-November 2016); three applicants from third round (December 2016-March 2017). There were no new applications from round four. Most of the entrepreneurs were from the media sector (film and photography), but overall there was quite a diverse group of applicants from a variety of sectors.

Most were from Oulu (4), with others were from Rovaniemi (1), Tornio (2), Kemi (1) and Sodankylä (1). Seven out of the nine were matched with another company. Their matched pairs were located in the West of Ireland or Northern Ireland. Five were looking for a match from the same creative field as themselves and five were also interested to be matched with a company in any region. Two applicants were looking to be matched with a company in Mid-Sweden and one company in West of Ireland.

The most important development needs listed were: marketing and visibility; finding international contacts; and co-producing opportunities. Some of the companies were looking for more specifically targeted co-operation in order to develop i.e. animation skills or finding partners from another region, some were looking mainly to share ideas and thoughts. Based on the applications it seemed most of the companies were quite open minded about what they were looking for. Key strengths of the applicants companies were listed as: local contacts; marketing skills; photographic/visual skills; and IT. The motivation and objectives of the applicants included internationalisation of the company, production abroad, new contacts and networking. Four of the nine applicants have not yet published a Profile on MyCreativeEdge.eu but have been encouraged to do so.

The actual selection and matching process was based on the applications. It was clear that we could not meet every wish our applicants had. Luckily most of the applicants did not have a too specific wish-list and most were open-minded to work with a company in any creative field. The challenge was the quite large number of applicants from the West of Ireland and Northern Ireland. After the second application round, there was a clear need to take a more targeted approach in Northern Finland.

*The Matching process was fruitful in creating a point of contact to the other market and building a bond between myself and the matched partner. Learning about the similarities and differences between the markets was really enlightening in processing coproduction ideas. (Antti Kaarlela, film producer, Northern Finland)*

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## 4.2 PROMOTION, SELECTION & EVALUATION IN THE WEST OF IRELAND

### 4.2.1 RECRUITMENT & PROMOTION OF THE OPEN CALLS

Applicants were asked to submit their application form through Google Forms. Some applicants from the West of Ireland were not keen to be matched with candidates from SEED (Northern Ireland) simply because of the proximity of this region and the idea that the Creative2Creative Matching programme could help them develop new working relationships in more distant and unexplored markets in the Nordic countries.

Several applicants from all participating regions but mostly from the West of Ireland were 'unmatched' by the end of the third open call for applications. On 6 March 2017, the project announced a one-month extension of the deadline for applications for the Creative2Creative Matching programme, Round 3. At this point, the WDC adopted a more targeted approach with regard to finding suitable participants. This approach was extended in Round 4.

The WDC approached potential participants at different types of events including conferences and festivals, and by email (e.g. 'MyCreativeEdge.eu' network). It also worked with other project partners to identify suitable 'matches' for applicants from the West of Ireland. This approach has proven successful:

*Luckily I was matched up perfectly! Not only with someone who was in a complementary field of work, but more importantly with someone who was similarly interested in making the match a success. We both committed the time for regular meetings and were enthusiastic about what we could do with the experience (Ruth Graham, illustrator, West of Ireland).*

*The relationship proved very positive with both Fiona and Emma supporting each other and also accommodating each other during busy times (Dymphna Ormond, consultant facilitating Fiona Concannon, visual artist, West of Ireland & Emma Whitehead, visual artist and gallery owner, SEED).*

From an administrative point of view, the downside of the 'targeted matching' approach was that some new participants who were contacted directly to participate did not fill in an application form. Formal applications may be missing or may have been created by project partners, which in turn caused additional workload for the regional co-ordinator.

The WDC promoted the Creative2Creative Matching programme on MyCreativeEdge.eu, through social media (Twitter and Facebook) and email marketing (monthly Newsletter). All social media posts produced by the WDC were organic and untargeted (e.g. they could have reached any person who visited or had liked the social media pages linked to the project). Social media posts as well as Newsletter call-outs directed potential applicants to the articles on MyCreativeEdge.eu.

On MyCreativeEdge.eu, the WDC published three types of articles to promote the Creative2Creative matching programme across the participating regions:

- [Call for applications](#) – providing general information on the programme, deadline, and link to Google Form.
- [Focus on participants](#) – presenting the creative professionals involved in the programme and encouraging new applicants.

- [Targeted call](#) – looking for creative professionals who could be paired with the ‘unmatched’ applicants from Rounds 1, 2, 3. The WDC sought permission to include the ‘unmatched’ applicants’ details in the targeted call.

The regional co-ordinator also supported the publication of ‘MyCreativeEdge.eu’ stories from participants [Creative2Creative Matching: Can find more than good advice online](#).

The regional co-ordinator was open to discussing the Creative2Creative Matching opportunity with applicants over the phone. Being approachable and positive about the programme is important, and has helped retain applicants who were unsure about their match.

The WDC adopted an inclusive approach with regard to the selection of participants. Given the focus of this programme on business development and self-improvement, all applicants from the West of Ireland were deemed as suitable candidates. Before the ‘targeted matching’ approach was introduced, the WDC gave particular importance to the skills/knowledge that each applicant could share, as well as the needs outlined in the application forms.

#### **4.2.2 OVERVIEW OF THE APPLICANTS**

25 applications were submitted from the West of Ireland. Two applied in the first round, five in the second and four in both the third and fourth rounds. Overall applicants were from different creative sectors. Most notably in the second round most of the applicants were from digital marketing and design companies. There were quite a lot of applications also from the Crafts sector.

More than half of the applicants (52%) were open to be matched with a creative company in any creative field and 76% to be matched with any region. Five applicants were especially interested to be matched with a Swedish creative entrepreneur. Companies were ultimately matched with creative companies coming from all other partner regions.

The most important development needs were quite similar to those from other partner regions. The main needs were listed as: creating new contacts and networking; broadening international markets; and overseas sales. There was a clear need also to enhance the company’s visibility and develop skills on (online/digital) marketing.

Key strengths listed included knowledge of the Irish retail market, good handle on using social media for promotion and sales and overall high expertise and long experience. It was also good to note that one of the key strengths listed was *surviving in the rural areas*.

### **4.3 PROMOTION, SELECTION & EVALUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

#### **4.3.1 RECRUITMENT & PROMOTION OF THE OPEN CALLS**

The first round of promotion of the programme was delivered in Northern Ireland in the three Council areas that made up the Northern Ireland partner. This involved putting out an advert in the local papers of all the Councils. This was complemented by a

series of informative e-zines on the opportunity and by engaging with potential participating creative businesses one-to-one at Creative Exchanges. From the beginning of the project it was envisioned that the promotion of the activity would consist of newspaper advertisement backed up with e-zine content from 'a creative momentum project' officer in Northern Ireland, from other Councils in Northern Ireland and social media content as well as promotion at 'a creative momentum project' events such as Creative Exchanges.

The results of the promotion and marketing of the first round yielded two applications from the Northern Ireland partner region. After reviewing the promotion methods and engaging with some creatives who did not apply, a new approach was taken to engage with creatives in the Northern Ireland region. The following was determined as points to be addressed after round one:

- The local papers were either not reaching the desired audience or the advert itself was ineffective in its messaging;
- The name "Mentoring in Internationalisation" was confusing and created a marketing and promotional problem.

To resolve this, the Northern Ireland partner created a [Promotional video](#) that would attempt to address both of these issues. The video conveyed in a visual manner, backed up by text (rather than rely on text) the idea behind the activity "Mentoring in Internationalisation". The video was created in a manner that it could be used by all partners to promote the activity in all regions. This was uploaded to the project Facebook page and was then promoted in Northern Ireland with a small amount of paid advertising. This resulted in what was, comparatively, a huge spike in applications from Northern Ireland for round two, resulting in 10 applications

The video was then used as content at Creative Exchanges as well as being used for providing content for power point presentations to promote the activity. There was also a video interview with [Martin Murtagh](#) one of the Northern Ireland participants. These videos helped provide some useful content for the e-zines as well as for social media. This helped strengthen the Northern Ireland creative industries e-zine for companies that were relevant to 'a creative momentum project'.

The third call attracted a further four participants. Given the level of engagement the project officer in Northern Ireland had with the creative industries, it was possible to make some direct calls to potential participants. This resulted in being able to recruit further eligible matches that specifically met identified matching criteria for other 'unmatched' applicants. This proved to be quite a time-consuming exercise but it did give a return by bringing in participants that were very interested and motivated in the activity.

#### **4.3.2 OVERVIEW OF THE APPLICANTS**

In total 16 applications were submitted online. Round one brought in two, round two brought in 10 and round three brought in four, with none for round four. The project co-ordinator was able to bring three more businesses into the activity through direct calls. This resulted in two more matches. 11 out of the 16 applicants have not published a MyCreativeEdge.eu Profile yet. From engaging with the Northern Ireland participants and viewing the application forms, it was clear that the big attraction for applying businesses was the opportunity to meet and develop a potential working relationship with EU businesses, particularly in Scandinavia.

It was also noted that some of the applications were not eligible, some were from outside of the project partner region or were clearly not creative businesses. The majority of participants fell into the arts or crafts sectors. However, some of the most engaged participants were from design/digital media backgrounds (Martin Murtagh, David Henderson and George Kingsnorth). These participants demonstrated clear motivation to be part of the activity and needed little guidance or instruction.

11 applicants (79%) were open to be matched with a company from any creative field and 10 applicants (63%) were willing to be matched with any region. Four were looking for a pair from Mid-Sweden. However, the majority of the applications to the programme came from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland which was felt not to be ideal. This resulted in some applicants choosing to not move forward with their allocated match.

## 4.4 PROMOTION, SELECTION & EVALUATION IN MID-SWEDEN

### 4.4.1 RECRUITMENT & PROMOTION OF THE OPEN CALLS

In Mid-Sweden, open calls were promoted via Facebook in a group called *Kulturella och kreativa näringar i Västernorrland*. It is a Facebook group especially for the creative sector. The co-ordinator also wrote stories in both Swedish and English to promote the activity on MyCreativeEdge.eu and on Facebook. Printed posters, spoken words and e-mails were other methods used to reach the target group in Mid-Sweden. In addition, Technichus co-operated with key persons in a larger network who helped to reach people in the region.

At first it was difficult to attract Swedish participants. During the process, it was decided to change the name of the activity to Creative2Creative Matching in order to attract more participants.

### 4.4.2 OVERVIEW OF THE APPLICANTS

Six people from Mid-Sweden applied. There were no applications from the first round, but the second round resulted three applications. The third round resulted in one application and the fourth round in two applications. In total, four of them got personal e-mails from the project co-ordinator about the activity, one was contacted by one of our key persons and one knew about the process already. All six were matched with a creative enterprise abroad but unfortunately all of them did not go ahead with the process. Two out of the six applicants have not published a MyCreativeEdge.eu Profile yet.

Towards the end of the process Mid-Sweden got one new participant from Sweden and two were on-going. More about one of the successful matches can be found in this article [Textile experiences and art ideas weaved together in international collaboration](#) (6 December 2017)

Swedish applicants were mainly from the graphic design and crafts sectors. Companies were looking to expand their networks and increase international sales. One applicant was also interested in knowing more about new types of funding opportunities for art and design projects. Applicants were happy to share their artistic ideas and experience about Scandinavian design. Half of the

applicants were looking for a match from the same creative field, but most (4) of them were open-minded to be matched with any region. One was looking for a match from Northern Finland and one from the West of Ireland.



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## 5.0 THE CO-ORDINATION OF MATCHED PAIRS

The process of the matched pairs was co-ordinated by four regional co-ordinators. After each open call, the applications were analysed in order to find suitable matches. Decisions were made by the project team. A regional co-ordinator sent a separate email to those who were matched in order to confirm their willingness to start the collaboration with the suggested match. It was agreed that co-ordinators would send the first email to each participant separately. After receiving confirmation from the participants that they were happy to proceed with the match, a joint email was sent (by the co-ordinator) to both in order to start the mentoring process. Guidelines and some basic instructions was also given in this email.

The co-ordinator could also suggest a date for an online meeting. It was basically up to participants if they wanted, or needed, the co-ordinator to be involved in the first meeting. One of the responsibilities of the co-ordinators was to follow-up on the process every other month. The follow-up was done via email, because one member of each pair was in another country. Sometimes the co-ordinator may meet the participants in their own region.

In January 2017, due to a lack of progress with many pairs, it was decided to contract an external consultant to facilitate the work between the matched companies. The regional consultant was selected in Northern Finland (OBN), West of Ireland (SCCUL) and Northern Ireland (Brilliant Red). At the end of the process, the consultants were expected to sum up the work done together with their matched pairs.

The first online meetings of the matched pairs were mainly about getting to know each other and sharing some information. The next step was maybe more challenging if no common objectives could be found.

At the end of the process, Lapland UAS drafted a report template for participant feedback. All partners contributed to the development. It was agreed that the regional co-ordinators would contact participants located in their own region. NUI Galway (Aisling Murtagh) created an online survey and analysed feedback results (see Section 6).

### 5.1 CO-ORDINATION OF MATCHED PAIRS IN NORTHERN FINLAND

#### 5.1.1 THE PROCESS & OVERALL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ENTERPRISES

The matched pairs co-ordinated by Lapland UAS (Saila Puukko):

- Antti Kaarlela, EverWhatProductions (FIN) & Emma Owen, Babyjane Productions (IRL) – completed
- Panu Pohjola, Forestcamp entertainment (FIN) & Marting Murtagh, Martin Murtagh - Smart Online Marketing (NI) – not completed
- Pasi Hakkio, Visual Norden Oy (FIN) & David Henderson, David Henderson Design Ltd (NI) – not completed
- Anna Koivukangas (FIN) & Lorna Watkins (IRL) – not completed
- Heidi Sarjanoja, Valokki Design (FIN) & Therese MacKenna, Storyburst (IRL) – not completed
- Liisa Koivisto, Farm Escape (FIN) & Paddy MacGuinness, Derryhick Sticks (IRL) – not completed

- Thomas Kast, Salamapaja (FIN) & Michael McLaughlin, Michael McLaughlin Studios (IRL) & Will Harnett, WHP (NI) – completed

Only two matches completed the programme successfully. Some pairs did start a conversation via email or social media but they never agreed an online meeting, partially because a common time for an online meeting was not found.

The co-ordinator Saila Puukko took part in three start-up meetings with matched companies. In one case, the co-ordinator also took part in another two meetings during the process. She contacted some of the Finnish participants separately and had face-to-face meetings with them. After the first contact and online meeting, the process very much depended on the participants, there was very little communication between the co-ordinator and companies.

The digital tools used were mainly Skype and Appear.in. Many times, email and social media was also used as a communication tool. Pairs followed-up via email, but it was quite hard to get any updates. In one case, it was agreed to continue via email. One pair had an opportunity to meet face-to-face during the Creative Hotspot Galway Film Fleadh in Ireland (July 2017). Another pair also had an opportunity to meet in Galway during the final conference (February 2018), but due to adverse weather the event and meeting were cancelled.

Two matched pairs were in active contact during the whole process and are developing common projects. The other active group/pair was three photographers Thomas, Will and Michael who were developing a common project together, they were also interested to meet each other. Unfortunately, the project could not offer any financial support for their travels as it was not budgeted in the project. One of the key learnings from this process, is the importance of a face-to-face meeting. It can also increase the motivation when companies have a chance to meet each other.

Because of some difficulties with the Finnish expert consultant (see below) two of the matched pairs started late (in December 2017) considering that the project and activity was going to end soon. It was a pity because they seemed quite interested to collaborate together.

The matched pairs were quite motivated to start the process, the one key challenge was to find a common time for a first meeting. As time passed, motivation dropped. Almost all participants were individual entrepreneurs/micro companies which could also effect prioritisation/lack of time. Sometimes it took a lot of time to agree a common meeting time.

One challenge was also to set common goals or specify the needs. During the first meeting the co-ordinator had a good chance to talk about the process and the overall goals, maybe even to make some plans for the next meeting to ensure that the process would continue. Some of the pairs were really active and needed very little guidance during the process. In these cases, the objectives seemed to be very clear and it was easy to start the collaboration. Overall if the company has specific motivation to find a transnational match – the motivation was good.

Digital tools were not a problem. Most of the participants were familiar with Skype or other tools. The co-ordinator was also available to help if they needed assistance. That was one reason why the co-ordinator was there at the first meeting. When agreeing the first meeting there was a discussion about the tools to use. For some, none of the digital tools were familiar. For them [Appear.in](https://appear.in) was suggested by the co-ordinator. Appear.in was an easy and free tool for maximum four persons. There was no registration needed.

### 5.1.2 THE EXTERNAL CONSULTANT

The procurement of an external consultant was done during spring (March-May 2017). The call for offers was sent out to five companies in Northern Finland. At first there was no offers from anyone by deadline. In April 2017, the project co-ordinator contacted Mikko Pesonen, Senior Consultant & Partner Oulu Business Networks, to ask if they could make an offer. Time-resource for consultation was limited to one and a half days per participant.

The actual consultancy work was supposed to start in May 2017. In August-September all Finnish participants were contacted by OBN. During Autumn OBN had face-to-face meetings with six (out of seven) Finnish companies to know them better. OBN made initial contact with their matched partners in West of Ireland / Northern Ireland via email. There was no communication with two of the Irish enterprises matched from the third call. Setting up common online meetings with the matched pairs and the consultant did not succeed. One separate online (Skype) meeting was arranged with one of the entrepreneurs from West of Ireland. Two of the pairs matched in the first and second rounds had already communicated with each other so when the external consultant was joining the communication it did not seem that relevant.

Overall, the support from the external consultant was insufficient. Some of the Finnish participants were happy about the opportunity to have a talk with the consultant, but it did not really give much to the activity itself. Discussion revealed that the obvious reason for all the difficulties was lack of time and motivation from both sides. Therefore, the process was delayed. Eventually, the contract was terminated (December 2017).

## 5.2 CO-ORDINATION OF MATCHED PAIRS IN THE WEST OF IRELAND

### 5.2.1 THE PROCESS & OVERALL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ENTERPRISES

After consulting with both the Finnish and the Northern Irish project partners, the WDC agreed to co-ordinate a number of 'matches' involving creative professionals based in the West of Ireland.

Round 1		Outcome
Allan Cavanagh, Allan Cavanagh Caricature Artist, WoI	Helen Sharkey, Strangford Lough Gallery, NI <i>Replacement:</i> Adele Pound, Adele Pound Artist, NI	Completed
Fiona Concannon, Fiona Concannon Artist,	Rachel Sayer, The Culture Standard, NI	Completed

WoI	<i>Replacement:</i> Emma Whitehead, Top Floor Art, NI	
Éamonn Fitzgerald, GalwayPens, WoI	Maria Joyce, Kimaria, NI	Dissolved
Ciarán MacLochlainn, DIAGA, WoI	Laura Robinson, self-employed, NI	Dissolved
<b>Round 2</b>		
Leon Quinn, Reverb Studios, WoI	Sara Stierna, Stiernform, SE	Dissolved
Oliver Ferris, KDM Studios, WoI	Laura Robinson, self-employed, NI	Dissolved
<b>Round 3</b>		
n/a		n/a
<b>Round 4</b>		
Frances Crowe, Frances Crowe Tapestry Artist, WoI	Margareta Sorlin, SE	Completed
Ruth Graham, Aye Do, WoI	Kristina Jeppson, No Gadget Design, SE	Completed
Bernice Cooke, Canvas to Candles, WoI	Maria Joyce, Kimaria, NI	Dissolved
Siobhán Shiels, Great White Lies, WoI	Anna Carin Löfgren, The Cherry Tops, SE	Completed

Over the course of the programme, 'matches' changed or simply did not work out. One participant from the West of Ireland decided to withdraw from the programme, after refusing to be 'matched' with a creative based in the SEED region: being based in Co. Donegal, the applicant already had multiple work-related contacts with professionals based in Northern Ireland and was keen on finding new contacts in Nordic countries. The programme did not receive any new suitable application from Mid-Sweden and/or Northern Finland and, by the time the targeted approach was introduced, they were no longer interested in the programme. The SEED applicant was matched with a new individual.

Two creative professionals based in the SEED region left the programme because of new professional commitments. The WDC liaised with the Northern Irish regional co-ordinator to identify new 'matches' for the individuals from the West of Ireland who were originally matched with them.

Two 'matches' did not work out, although a first attempt to connect was made. It should be noted that, when this attempt was made, external consultants had not yet been introduced into the programme. The WDC proposed to find new matches for all parties involved (i.e. four professionals, two based in the West of Ireland).

One individual left the programme immediately due to a change in personal circumstances. Another professional was found a new 'match'. The pair was introduced to an external consultant, but it was impossible to set a date for a common meeting. The consultant liaised with the two professionals on an individual basis. It was not possible to find new 'matches' for the two other applicants.

As a co-ordinator, the WDC engaged in the following activities:

1. Introducing 'matched' professionals

2. Checking-in
3. Discussing activity progress with project partners involved: the external consultant
4. Briefing contracted pool of external consultants
5. Collecting reports

### ***1. Introducing 'matched' professionals***

The WDC emailed each 'match'. The email profiled each creative professional, introduced Silvia Guglielmini as the official point of contact, and provided the activity Guidelines in attachment. When an external consultant was introduced, the email also advised 'the match' that SCCUL Enterprises Ltd would be in touch to discuss how the 'matching' activity would proceed. Occasionally the WDC engaged in phone calls to better explain the project activity. Before 're-matching' any individual, the WDC liaised with all parties before sending the 'introduction' email. This was to ensure that all parties were happy to proceed with the activity.

### ***2. Checking-in***

In November 2016, the WDC got in touch with all 'matches' to communicate that the programme had been renamed. On this occasion, the WDC asked whether 'matches' had made any progress. Some individuals noted that setting up online meetings and agreeing common objectives had been difficult. In addition, the WDC had witnessed the dissolution of a number of 'matches'. At this point, the WDC developed the idea of introducing external facilitation/consultancy. Before this measure was introduced no 'match' co-ordinated by the WDC had proceeded according to the Activity Guidelines. So, it was not possible for the WDC to 'check-in' on progress three times in the course of six months, as the Guidelines established.

The WDC emailed the 'matches' consulted by SCCUL Enterprises Ltd twice:

1. In the middle of the process: approx. three months after the consultancy had started;
2. At the end of the process: approx. one month before the 'second call' with the external consultant. At this point, the WDC reminded each party involved about the online feedback form and the final report.

### ***3. Discussing activity progress with project partners involved: the external consultant = facilitator***

The WDC discussed the progress of the Creative2Creative Matching programme during fortnightly con-calls and at Operational Management Team meetings. The WDC also contributed to the 'bio' document, which was prepared by Lapland UAS as a way of promoting the Creative2Creative Matching programme and keeping track of 'unmatched' applicants.

The WDC proposed the idea of contracting an external expert (i.e. a professional business mentor) to work with 'matches'. A Request for Quote (RFQ) for a service provider for the 'Provision of business mentoring support to participants in online Creative2Creative matching programme' was issued by the WDC on 8 February 2017. The RFQ was e-mailed to the following seven providers:

- Arms Marketing
- Westbic

- 
- SCCUL Enterprises Ltd
  - Momentum Consulting
  - Secure Privity
  - Dolmen
  - Barry Walsh

In March 2017, SCCUL Enterprises Ltd was contracted as a service provider. SCCUL Enterprises Ltd integrated the Creative2Creative Matching programme into Bizmentors – their mentoring programme for start-ups and existing businesses. The programme involves 111 professional mentors. To select the most suitable mentors, SCCUL took into account industry background, relevant experience, area of expertise, and mentoring experience.

SCCUL estimated 10 hours mentoring support for each 'match'. This support would include one two-hour group call during which each 'match' would agree common objectives, and one two-hour group call to discuss the peer-to-peer mentoring process and future endeavours. Only one professional mentor reported that the process took longer than the 10 hours allocated. In the meantime, the WDC got in touch with ongoing matches to ask whether they would be interested in working with a professional business mentor. The response was mostly positive.

#### **4. Briefing contracted pool of external consultants/facilitators**

In August 2017, the regional co-ordinator Silvia Guglielmini met five mentors selected by SCCUL. The purpose of the meeting was to provide the mentors with an overview of Creative2Creative Matching. At the meeting, it was agreed that:

- The main point of contact for mentors was Silvia Guglielmini; Mentors should not contact other regional co-ordinators, should they experience any issue with a 'match';
- Two, two-hour calls with a 'match' may be too intensive. Mentors may engage in multiple, shorter contacts using technology that would best suit all parties.
- SCCUL sent an 'activation' email to each matched pair. The purpose of this email was to notify 'matches' about their business mentor. Subsequently, each mentor got in touch with their 'match' to agree on a meeting (e.g. date and technology). Meetings did not generally involve the regional co-ordinator, and most individual mentors did not copy the regional co-ordinator in their correspondence with the 'matches'. Should the programme happen again, it would be advisable to make sure that regular updates are delivered to the WDC by the contracted party (e.g. SCCUL)
- The WDC 'checked-in' with individual mentors twice: approx. three months after the start of the process and approx. one month before the end of the process, to make sure that the 'second call' would occur on time.

#### **5. Collecting reports**

At the time of the second 'check-in', approx. one month before the end of the activity, the WDC emailed each 'match' reminding participants of the deadline for submitting their reports and completing an online feedback survey developed by NUI Galway, in

collaboration with all participating partners. The scope of the report was to collect information on various aspects of the Creative2Creative Matching programme, from the application process to outputs and learning.

The WDC received seven reports, five from professionals based in the West of Ireland. All reports were submitted within the deadline agreed by the participating partner organisations: 10 April. On 13 April, the WDC received a final report from SCCUL Enterprises Ltd. This included reports compiled by each mentor involved in the Creative2Creative Matching programme. These reports have been used to inform this report.

## **5.3 CO-ORDINATION OF MATCHED PAIRS IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

### **5.3.1 THE PROCESS & OVERALL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ENTERPRISES**

Five matched pairs were co-ordinated by Northern Ireland co-ordinator Niall Drew. Three of those established connection, but one pair only had an initial connection and one pair did not connect at all.

1. Neil Bradley, Food Safe System (NI) – Julia Dunin, Julia Dunin photography (IRL) – not completed
2. Sarah Majury, Sarah Majury Art (NI) – Michael Hawthorne, Michael Hawthorne Design (IRL) - initial connection only
3. David Knight, Willow Design (IRL) – James Kelly, J S Kelly T/A SignArt (NI) - completed
4. Raquel Walsh, Creative Clay (IRL) – Trevor Wood, Mount Ida Pottery (NI) - completed
5. David Pierce, Black Hole Studio (IRL) – George Kingsnorth, Gullion Media (NI) - completed

All engagement with the enterprises resulted in positive feedback on the potential of the activity itself. The idea of using Skype or an online tool to communicate did not intimidate any of the applicants, despite varying degrees of comfort in IT. In one case the internet coverage of one of the matches was so poor in their area that it was felt the only way to progress was an actual land line phone call. 'a creative momentum project' offered to try and find a way, within the scope of the project, to pay for this but the applicants were determined to pay for it themselves, such was the enthusiasm and generosity of some of the applicants.

One problem that occurred with the calls was that by the time someone was matched with someone else, quite a long period might have elapsed since they applied so it did prove difficult at times to get some people to re-engage. Some participants had dramatically different situations than they would have had when they first applied. These included:

- Emigration;
- Child dependency;
- New full-time employment.

The overall feedback and engagement with the Northern Ireland businesses demonstrated that they felt it was a worthwhile programme and hoped that it might still prove further value to their business.

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### 5.3.2 THE EXTERNAL CONSULTANT

An expert mentor was selected, Paul Reavey from Brilliant Red Consulting. Paul has been involved in mentoring for over 10 years. The consultant succeeded in contacting most of the entrepreneurs, even though all participants did not complete the process. There was a lot of discussion about the common goals and exchanging ideas, contacts and different networks. Most of the matched pairs had a desire to build upon existing connections.

One pair had an only initial connection online, the collaboration seemed very good and both were happy to stay involved, but much happened since their first meeting. Another pair felt that Creative2Creative Matching is a good platform to introduce like-minded people to connect to talk about their business.

In some cases, Paul offered Brilliant Red to be available for phone advice if required beyond common conversations. Brilliant Red also offered for instance an opportunity to conduct a website review and an opportunity to discuss software development issues.

## 5.4 CO-ORDINATION OF MATCHED PAIRS IN MID-SWEDEN

### 5.4.1 THE PROCESS & OVERALL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ENTERPRISES

Lack of time from the Swedish participants was one of the reasons why it did not turn out as well as we hoped. Other reasons were that one of the Swedish participants moved from the region and one did not get any answers from her Irish match. But at least two of the Swedish participants of the Creative2Creative Matching programme turned out to be involved in successful matches.

Those were:

- Margareta Sörlin, Margareta Sörlin (SWE) & Frances Crowe, Frances Crowe Fibre Artist (IRL)
- Kristina Jeppson, No Gadget Design (SWE) & Ruth Graham, Ruth Graham Illustration & Design (IRL)
- Anna Carin Löfgren, The Cherry Tops (SWE) & Siobhan Shiels, Great White Lies (IRL)

The other matched pair that did not go ahead was:

- Hanna Simu, Hanna Simu Graphic Design and Illustration (SWE) & Ciaran McLochlainn, DIAGA (IRL)

There were two other Swedish applicants who were not eventually matched.

When the external consultant was hired, it was agreed that the WDC would take over the co-ordination of the pairs co-ordinated by the Swedish co-ordinator as there was no external consultant in Mid-Sweden.

Two success stories were written by Kristina Jeppson, Mid-Sweden:

- [Textile experiences and art ideas weaved together in international collaboration](#) (6 December 2017)
- [New friendship abroad through a Creative2Creative Matching Programme](#) (30 January 2018)

## 6.0 PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK RESULTS

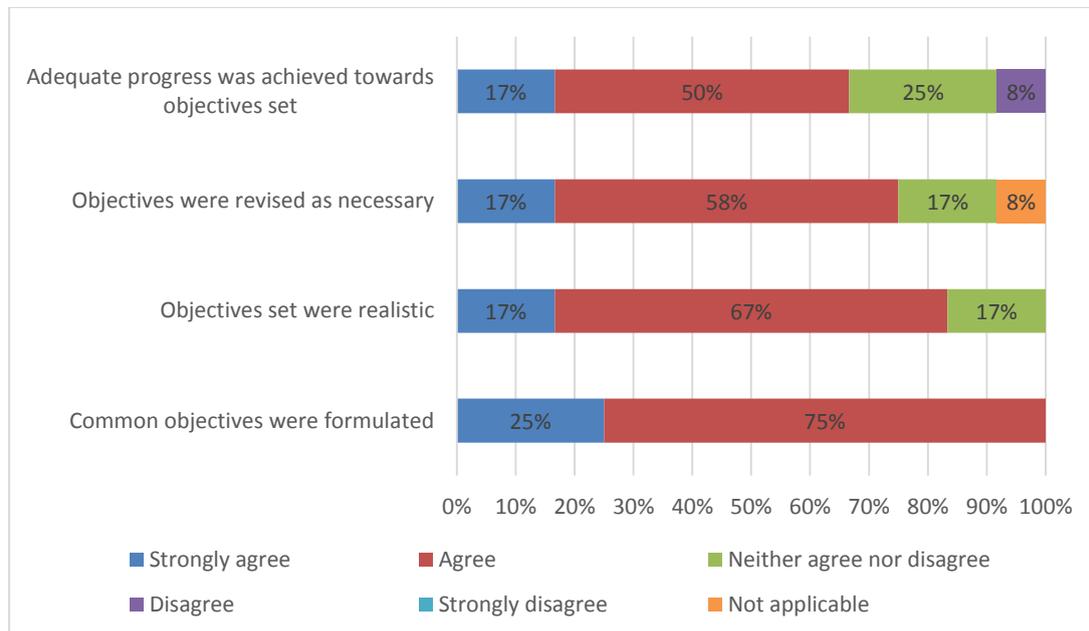
### 6.1 RESPONDENT PROFILE

Participants in the Creative2Creative Matching programme were asked to complete a [feedback form](#) providing insights on their experience of the programme. Overall, there were 12 responses, which included respondents from all the participating project regions. There was a balance of male (45%) and female (55%) respondents. Most (58%) were in the 25-44 age group. Enterprises were classified as mostly sole traders (67%) or freelancers (25%). Most were working in the arts (58%) sector, followed by media and technology (25%), design (25%) and crafts (25%).

### 6.2 PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Through our feedback form we asked participants if they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements in relation to their expectations of the programme (see Figure 5). Participant feedback was broadly positive in relation to this. All agreed that common objectives were formulated. Most agreed that the objectives set were realistic (83%) and that they were revised as necessary (75%). Progress towards meeting the objectives set was also overall good with 67% agreeing that this was adequate. One respondent indicated that adequate progress was not achieved toward objectives.

**FIG. 5: EXPECTATIONS AND OBJECTIVES**

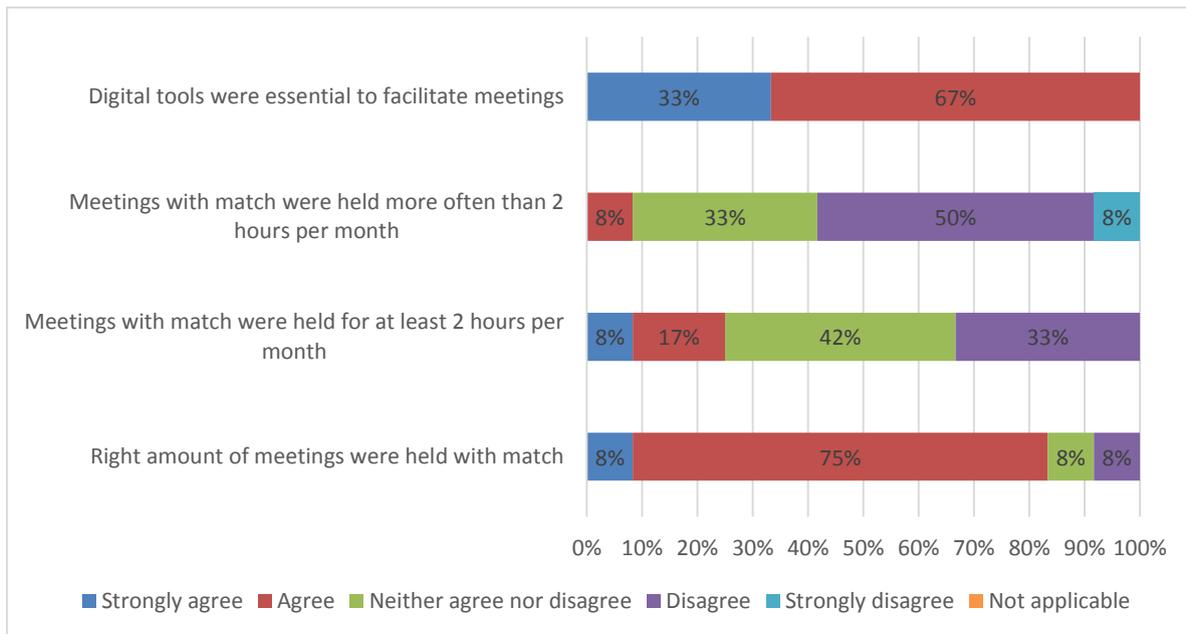


### 6.3 MATCH PARTICIPATION AND MEETINGS

The feedback form also assessed how meetings worked by asking participants if they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements in relation to this (see Figure 6). Creative2Creative Matching is a transnational programme and as expected all

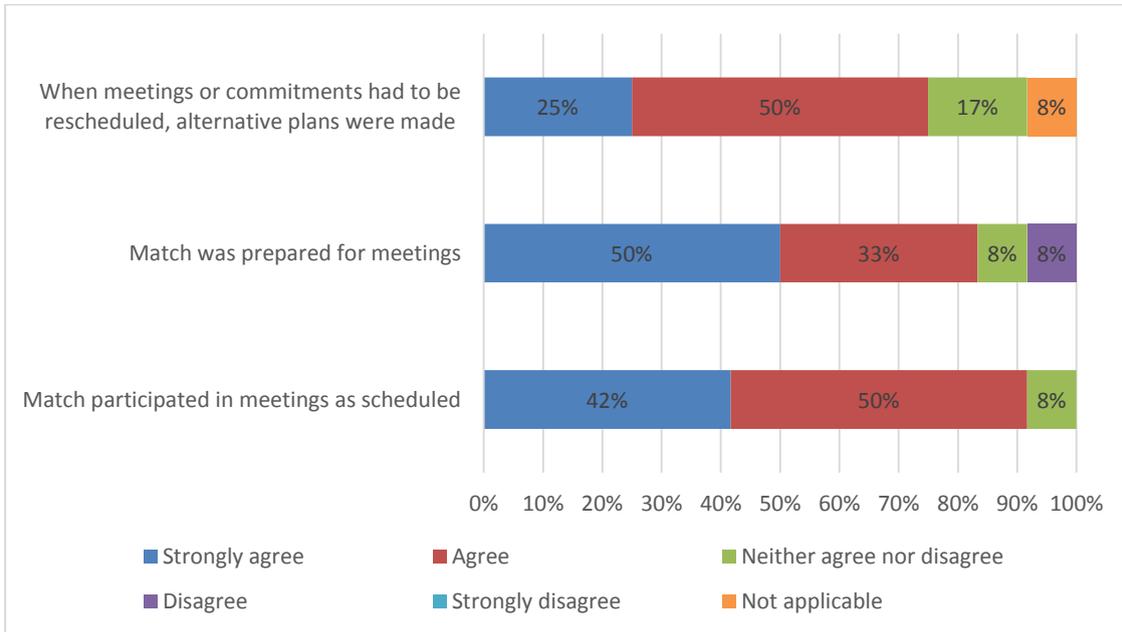
participants agreed that digital tools were essential to facilitate meetings. Most participants (83%) felt they had enough meetings with their match, however one participant disagreed. Frequency of meetings were at least two hours a month for three participants and more than two hours a month for one participant.

**FIG. 6: MEETINGS WITH CREATIVE2CREATIVE MATCH**



Good feedback was also received overall on how matches participated (see Figure 7). When meetings were scheduled 92% said their match participated and 83% said their match was prepared for the meeting. If meetings needed to be re-scheduled, alternative plans were made in most cases (75%). Broader comments highlight the importance of participants having skills and comfort in the use of digital communication software such as Skype. Also, some frustration with digital communication software was reported. Participants also noted that time pressures created by wider demands of their business impacted on their own ability to participate in the process effectively, but that adaptations were made to make efforts to maintain communication, such as through emails when online meetings were not possible. A language barrier is also mentioned as making communication difficult at times in some cases.

**FIG. 7: PARTICIPATION OF MATCH**



**6.4 INVOLVEMENT OF THE CO-ORDINATOR AND EXTERNAL CONSULTANT**

Each match was co-ordinated by ‘a creative momentum project’ regional co-ordinator. Participants gave positive feedback on the support received from the co-ordinator with 75% agreeing this was provided when necessary. In relation to updates provided to the co-ordinator on progress, feedback was a little more mixed - 50% agreed and 17% disagreed that updates were provided every two months.

For some Creative2Creative participant matches, an external consultant (e.g. Brilliant Red (Northern Ireland), SCCUL Enterprises (West of Ireland) and Oulu Business Network (Northern Finland)) was appointed to provide additional support. The feedback form also assessed if the external consultant helped set common objectives and review outcomes. The majority of feedback was good, however some were unhappy with this part of the process. 58% said that the consultant helped set common objectives and review outcomes, however 25% disagreed that this occurred. Wider feedback also helps to illustrate how the external consultant helped to facilitate the process, and those who did not have this assistance felt it could have helped:

*The initial meeting with [the consultant] was vital in getting the whole process going, as it gave [us] a good idea of what we were meant to do, and how.*

*[The co-ordinator]...really helped us to set up time for meetings and talk about common goals and so on...[the consultant was]...a little bit pushy and I think that's what you need in a process like this!*

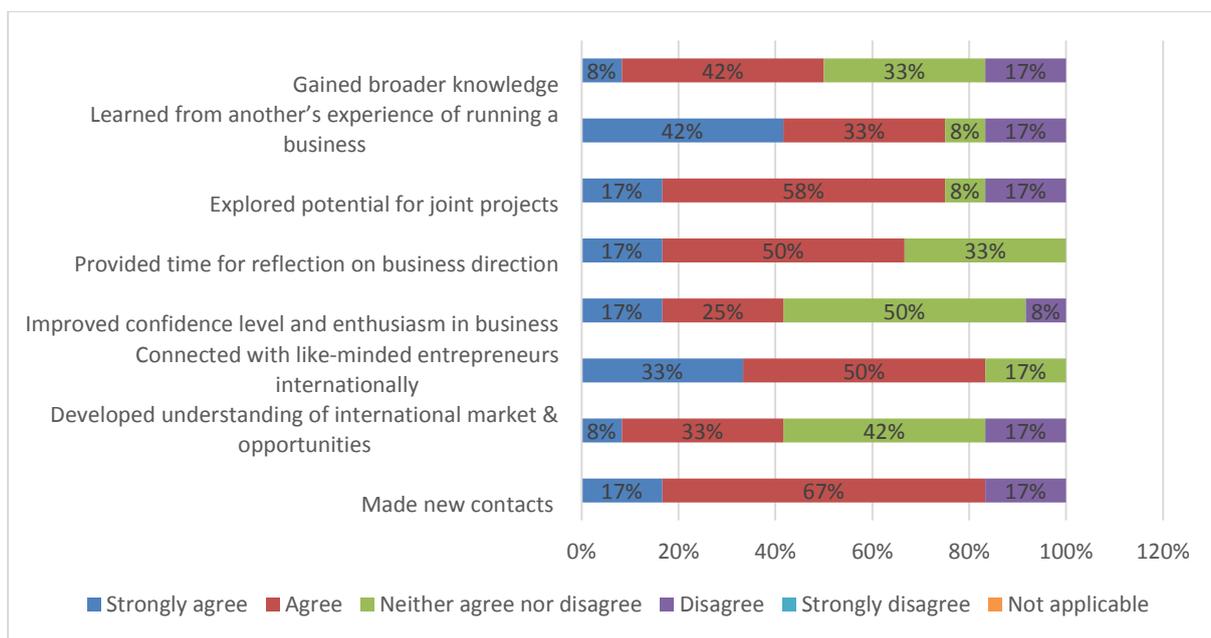
*The external consultant / mentor was key in helping us through the process. I don't think we would have been as productive without that.*

Unfortunately, we didn't have [a consultant] to advise us on what objectives we were to formulate; thankfully between the three of us we came up with a selection of ideas on what was common between us.

## 6.5 ACHIEVEMENTS OF CREATIVE2CREATIVE MATCHING

Through our feedback form we asked participants if they agreed or disagreed with eight statements around what was achieved because of their participation in Creative2Creative Matching. Participant feedback was broadly positive in relation to these areas (see Figure 8).

**FIG. 8: ACHIEVEMENTS OF CREATIVE2CREATIVE MATCHING**



The top outcomes that most respondents indicated was achieved were: making new contacts (83%); and connections with like-minded entrepreneurs internationally (83%). Also high were: exploring potential for joint projects (75%); learning from another's experience of running a business (75%); and time for reflection on business direction (67%). Half or more said the following were not achieved, or they neither agreed nor disagreed that they were: Developed understanding of international market & opportunities; improved confidence level and enthusiasm in business; and gained broader knowledge. Wider feedback also helps to illustrate how depending on the experience of both participants, one participant can gain more from the matching process than the other:

*I feel that as my contact is only starting out in the business that I may have offered more to her than she did to me.*

*I have learned more about using websites and social media more effectively. My match has much greater experience and expertise in this area.*

## 6.6 FUTURE PLANS TO STAY CONNECTED

Creative2Creative Matching was also effective in creating connections that should sustain beyond 'a creative momentum project's' funded lifetime. Feedback form results indicate an overwhelming majority (92%) of participants intend to maintain contact with their match in the future. Some participants also mentioned specific future plans, such as a face-to-face meeting, helping each other establish further contacts in the regions and collaborative projects. For example:

*I'm planning a solo exhibition and will be asking my match for information on gallery contacts in Northern Ireland.*

*My contact will visit here next month, we will plan an exhibition together in 2019 in Sweden and Ireland.*

*We were matched perfectly as we have the same ideas and are looking at synergising our businesses in the future.*



First signs of collaboration, during a game of Pictionary

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## 7.0 CONCLUSIONS & LESSONS LEARNED

### 7.1 WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

47 creative entrepreneurs, in 23 pairs, participated to some extent in the programme. Just over half (12) of the matched pairs completed the programme. Many of the pairs who did not complete the programme did make some initial contact online or through email or social media, while others did not connect at all. Collaboration did not proceed for a variety of reasons, like lack of time or an inappropriate match. Many were motivated at first, but as time passed, motivation dropped. Working online was not the main problem, but language barriers were an issue.

Where both of the participants in the match had clear goals, the collaboration was satisfying for both. Some ideas for common projects did arise, but it is still too early to see if those projects will progress. Overall it seems that those pairs who did create a connection and completed the programme are motivated to continue the connection contact after the programme ends.

Developing a Model for Creative2Creative Matching was one of the objectives of developing and testing the peer-mentoring approach. Below are some of the lessons learned from the experience of implementing the Model.

### 7.2 IMPORTANCE OF THE RIGHT KIND OF MATCH

The evaluation and selection of the applications was time-consuming for all of the regional co-ordinators. There was variety of variables to be considered:

- Different applicants;
- Different partner regions;
- Applicants from different calls/rounds;
- Non-matched applicants waiting to be matched.

'Matches' involving creatives with different professional backgrounds were encouraged, although sharing a similar professional background seems to have been an important condition for creatives to be able to establish a durable connection.

*Make sure the participants are compatible, i.e. want to achieve the same objectives. Someone who works in the same area/discipline, etc... (Fiona Concannon, visual artist)*

Involving creatives working in the same creative field, but through different styles and with different business models, can be beneficial:

*Both mentees work for themselves on their own. The match was seen as a great support mechanism. Allan said that normally he does his business planning in his head and this programme to include the regular chats with Adele allowed him to revisit things and put more structure on his thinking. It also increases accountability. Allan is set up to operate on a more commercial basis than Adele – I imagine she learned a lot from this approach. (Donncha Hughes, consultant facilitating Allan Cavanagh, caricature artist, West of Ireland & Adele Pound, visual artist, SEED)*

*Allan has a lot of experience with social media, websites and the technical side of optimising these to get content seen. He was able to answer my questions and give me some tips for my own marketing. I have increased my reach on Facebook and Instagram with his advice. I am currently trying to rebuild my website with WordPress and he has also helped me with this. He is open to continuing to help with any further questions (Adele Pound, visual artist, SEED)*

According to SCCUL Enterprises Ltd – the company contracted by the WDC to carry out consultation / facilitation through their network of professional mentors – the initial contact between two peers seeking to exchange knowledge and skills is indeed of pivotal importance:

*The initial match between mentees is crucial although they do not have to be in the same sector. (As long as there is the potential to establish collaborative goals).*

### **7.3 ROLE OF EXTERNAL CONSULTANT**

The external consultants played a pivotal role in facilitating the establishment of a durable connection. When a consultant did not appropriately engage with a 'match' and this 'match' included people from different professional backgrounds, the connection was difficult if not impossible:

*Mentor seemed detached and made no effort to progress the matching ... Apart from initial conference call, there was no contact other than an arrangement to meet during a visit to Ireland by my 'partner'. Unfortunately, the meeting did not happen due to the cancellation of the seminar at which we were to meet. (Paddy McGuinness, craftsperson, West of Ireland. Match: Liisa Koivisto, IT expert, Northern Finland)*

*At the beginning my matches and me were pretty much lost, we should have had a guy from Oulu supporting us but for some reason it didn't work out. Then time went by and we kind of started the project pretty late. Better guidance and regular contact with the mentor would have been good. (Thomas Kast, photographer, Northern Finland)*

*... with Emma Whitehead [it] was a perfect match. I think it really helped to have the input of our mentor on our first video conference, as it really helped to confirm what we were to do, and how to achieve our goals. (Fiona Concannon, visual artist, West of Ireland)*

All matches co-ordinated by the WDC, and successfully facilitated by an external consultant, involved creatives from very similar professional backgrounds. Some 'matches' involved individuals at different stages of professional development. This did not seem to prevent the establishment of a connection, as long as the creatives showed their commitment to the programme and external consultants have the ability to 'build bridges' between the creatives involved:

*The mentor was excellent and explained the matching process very well, she was patient and kind and really seemed to understand my process and commitment to my work, my match was also a tapestry weaver from Sweden ... We continued to communicate by email and text. I have invited my match to visit and she has booked to come in May ... For the moment, I feel that my contact has gotten a lot more from me than the other way around, but I am hopeful that she can organise an event on her side. (Frances Crowe, tapestry artist, West of Ireland. Match: Margareta Sorlin, tapestry artist, Mid-Sweden)*

*Both mentees are tapestry artists at different stages of business development. ... The facilitator has experience in the creative sector and was able to understand the specific issues and opportunities relating to potential collaboration. ... Facilitator contacted each mentee individually and helped them to identify their own goals. Then used this information to suggest a few potential synergies so that both mentees would see a benefit to the programme. (Linda Ford, consultant facilitating Frances Crowe & Margareta Sörlin)*

#### **7.4 TOP TIPS FROM PARTICIPANTS**

When collecting feedback, the project team also asked all participants and external consultants (=facilitators) to share some tips important to them. The importance of creating strong connections and common goals was highlighted. Another important point was to support any fruitful connection created during the programme. One of the potential support activities could be the opportunity to meet face-to-face.

Following are some tips from participants, should a future edition of the Creative2Creative Matching programme be implemented:

*[Before the first call] It may be best for the facilitator to contact each mentee individually, in order to identify their goals. This information can be used by the facilitator to suggest a few potential synergies so that both mentees would see a real benefit to the programme. (Linda Ford, facilitator)*

*During the first meeting both parties shared their reasons for applying and what they wanted from it. We explored the importance of creating strong goals, measurements and priorities to enable them stay focused, motivated and committed. This worked well. (Dymphna Ormond, facilitator)*

*Face to face time should be incorporated into the design of the project. Creative techniques hard to describe alone, need to be shown. Funding for exchanges should be found and exchanges incorporated. (Allan Cavanagh, caricaturist)*

*I think there would maybe be scope for a discussion with someone about what Creative Momentum/other organisations can do for us as a match in terms of advice for taking ideas forward and making this connection more concrete. We've had a great match and we've collaborated on some interesting ideas, it would be really great to have the option to get further support to bring it to fruition. In our case, we would like information about where to go next to make this happen, but with any match that worked I'm sure there's more that they want to do and it's just about helping us with more info on how to continue to strengthen and develop the international link that this wonderful project has helped us to make. (Ruth Graham, illustrator)*

*Where a match isn't working out this should be addressed as early as possible and a new match sought. My experience was the purpose of the project fading from memory over time, and by the time I'd been successfully matched I was hazy on what I should be doing. (Allan Cavanagh, caricaturist)*

*Be open. Talk openly about your ideas. You never know what the other one might have been developing or dreaming about and you might well end up finding more than you hoped for. (Antti Kaarlea, film producer, Northern Finland)*

#### **7.5 KEY LESSONS**

1. An attractive and understandable name is important when promoting. It is also good to think more about how language

barriers can be tackled, when promoting.

2. The initial match between peers is crucial, especially if the two 'matched' professionals do not work in exactly the same creative field. The introduction of professional mentors as facilitators made this contact easier, as the mentors helped creatives establish collaborative goals.
3. External consultants can help professional creatives to achieve set targets and goals. They can keep momentum up by motivating the 'match'.
4. External consultants should have experience of the creative sector i.e. they should be able to understand specific issues and opportunities.
5. External consultants should be prepared to take a flexible/innovative approach to the programme. For example, a consultant stayed in contact with the mentees throughout the process through emails. Others established from the outset that they would be available for advice, but would not attend the online meetings between peers.
6. Consider simplification of the Guidelines document, especially if an external consultant is introduced to the project. The Guidelines could take into account common contingencies (e.g. what to do if my peer does not reply to my messages, and so on).
7. It may be useful for the regional co-ordinator to organise an online meeting with each 'match', to go over the Guidelines and answer any questions. Face-to-face meeting with the external consultant is also a good idea.
8. The application form should gather more detailed information on the needs of applicants. It is easier to match people with specific needs.
9. It can be difficult for participants to commit two hours to both their initial and final meetings. Several shorter meetings could be held at the commencement of the programme and at the close. This approach allows for reflection and progress to be made between meetings.
10. Technological support may be required as not all people in the creative sector are tech-savvy or confident in using video conferencing. A combination of digital tools was used by the participants to stay in contact. Google Hangouts, Skype, What's App groups, Facebook and emails were amongst the digital tools used.
11. There should be budget available to organise a face-to-face meeting between the matched pair, or to implement collaborative activities that have emerged through the Creative2Creative Matching programme.
12. The potential benefits of the programme should be communicated to participants prior to commencement and their personal commitment ascertained. SCCUL noted that "some mentees were of the understanding that the programme was to generate sales B2B (neither mentee was interested in this as a benefit)".
13. Information about opportunities and sources of funding should be offered by the co-ordinators.

## **7.6 REVISION OF THE MODEL - HOW THE MODEL COULD WORK BETTER**

There is no single solution. Improvement of the Model is also a question of financing and resources. When discussing with regional creative companies, the mentoring itself was seen as very interesting and a needed activity. In practice however, there is always an issue of the time needed to invest in the process, how much involvement is needed from the (often self-employed) entrepreneur. This can be challenging for entrepreneurs working alone.

It is crucial also, that the match is suitable and that both feel that they receive something from each other. The aim for collaboration should be clarified for both. It is sometimes difficult to see all the wishes and needs behind the application form and it requires more time to analyse all the applications – on the other hand it would be good if the Model would allow all applicants to select the best match themselves, this would lower also the administrative burden during the matching process. One option is that MyCreativeEdge.eu would allow some online communication among applicants to facilitate match-making.

One really concrete improvement would be the possibility for face-to-face meetings between the matched pairs. Unfortunately, it was not possible in the activity, even though some pairs managed to have a face-to-face meeting through other project activities or their own resources. Supporting a meeting would be an option only available to those pairs who had more developed ideas for a joint project/co-operation. This would of course need some resources. One option is also to give more guidance on different financing instruments for the participants to continue the collaboration. The problem is that there might not be relevant regional/national financing instruments for such purposes.







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