



CRAFTSMAN BUSINESS GUIDEBOOK: USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT HOW TO DEVELOP A CRAFT BUSINESS IN DIFFERENT EUROPEAN COUNTRIES



Grant agreement n.2020-1-IT02-KA227-ADU-095006



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

AUTHORS

- Anziani e non solo società cooperativa sociale - Italy
- Assoc - Asociatia Profesionala Neguvernamentala De Asistentă Socială - Romania
- Magnetar Ltd - Cyprus
- Mad'in Europe Scrl - Belgium
- Georgian Arts & Culture Center Foundation - Georgia
- Aproximar- Cooperativa De Solidariedade Social, Crl - Portugal
- Balkanplan – Bulgaria

This output was coordinated by Magnetar and Assoc

March 2022



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

INDEX

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| METHODOLOGY | 2 |
| BELGIUM | 3 |
| BULGARIA | 12 |
| CYPRUS | 20 |
| FRANCE | 26 |
| GEORGIA | 34 |
| ITALY | 42 |
| PORTUGAL..... | 48 |
| ROMANIA | 55 |
| CONCLUSIONS | 65 |
| COMMON MESSAGES FROM INTERVIEWS | 66 |

INTRODUCTION

The passion for tradition and creativity, the family heritage and the desire to express themselves through tangible products are some of the main elements that distinguish the craft sector. The element that characterises the craft business are the crafts people, or rather, the activity carried out by the crafts people, who must not limit them only on working personally in the production process, but must run the business in a very comprehensive way. This sector includes very heterogeneous craft activities carried out by professionals who sometimes work informally, part-time or on weekends. The reasons behind this choice can be manifold, starting with the demanding bureaucratic paths, the numerous requirements and the ability to innovate and adapt to the challenges of the new century. Among these challenges, the acquisition of digitization skills emerges as particularly relevant, which on the one hand can help in the innovation process of their products, training and access to funding, and on the other hand are fundamental for the promotion of their products and access to a digital market. However, these difficulties can be even more relevant for craft people older than 50 years old. This group may have received an informal education and have a difficult access to modern marketing tools and digital solutions that are fundamental to increase the visibility and revenues of their business and may impact on success and economic survival.

Based on this, the Craft 50+ project through the transnational partnership involving 7 partner organizations from Italy, Portugal, Belgium, Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Georgia will provide older craftsmen with new tools to develop their skills in creating and promoting their work, reconciling tradition with innovation thanks to the digital transition.

To this end, during the first phase of the project, desk researches and interviews with elderly craftsmen were conducted by all partners, in order to investigate in their national context initiatives to promote the use of ICT in crafts, existing support for craftsmen and policies and legislation.

This document is a guidebook addressed to craftsmen over 50 in order to provide them support through information:

- National best practices and case studies related to the use of ICT to support any step of a craft business creation and maintenance;
- Existing support such crafts organizations, funding opportunities and possibilities to improve digital and professional skills;
- National policies and legislation and reported legal challenges; and

- A roadmap that visually offer an overview of the process for creating a successful and innovative craft business when you are 50+.

METHODOLOGY

The development of this document started with desk research combining important information and disseminates the support measures that the craftsmen in each partner country can access. All partners provided their data of their respective countries and additionally a chapter about France which has a very well-established craftspeople sector (databases, information, stakeholders etc.).

The first step in initiating the research was to establish shared criteria for investigating areas and issues relevant for supporting the activity of older craftsmen. The partners agreed that the main areas of investigation should be:

- Design, creation and maintenance of a business - therefore collecting national examples of use of ICT to support the steps of a craft business creation or maintenance, with a special focus on how digitalisation has met traditional crafts at national level;
- Existing support for craftsmen - identifying national organisations and services aimed at supporting the craft activity and the craftsman as entrepreneur in the development of his business and support digitalization and/or upskilling of older craftspeople;
- Policies and legislation - providing an overview of craft legislation in each country and requirements for the development of craft activities.

In order to enrich the research with the direct contributions of the final beneficiaries and to realise the roadmap on the basis of real and concrete factors, structured interviews were carried out by the project partners, each of them involving at least 5 craftsmen over 50. As the aim of this empirical research activity was to hear as many voices and opinions as possible and to have professionals from various sectors represented, the various types of craftsmen most present in the partner countries were first profiled in order to help partners and inspire them in the diversified research of craftspeople. During the interviews, specific questions were asked to the craftsmen in order to identify on the one hand their path and difficulties encountered in the creation and maintenance of the activity and on the other hand their relationship with the digital world and their skills in this respect.

In addition, to enable the production of this guidebook, the results that emerged during this research phase will also be used and inspire the future phases of the project. They will be the starting point to further support craftsmen over 50 years old through a Training course to boost craft businesses and an Arts and Crafts toolkit. The result of this document is a European report about the findings in each country. All researches investigate the same areas country by country, but presents the specific rules and

opportunities that each partner country offer and defines. This report combines country information, analyses the differences and similarities across countries, and most of all compile information about craft in 6 European countries, plus Eurasia.

A large graphic consisting of a light green horizontal bar. In the center of this bar is a large blue circle. The word 'BELGIUM' is written in white, bold, uppercase letters inside the blue circle.

BELGIUM

INTRODUCTION

Belgium has a rich and diversified tradition of craftsmanship in many domains due to historical reasons and to the cultural division of the country in two communities, the French-speaking (Wallonie) and the Dutch-speaking regions (Flanders). In both areas, crafts have been crucial for economic development.

The cultural heritage of Flanders is enriched by the sophisticated [art of lace making](#), mostly carried out in the area of Bruges. It is estimated that almost 47,000 lacemakers existed in Belgium in the early 20th-century. Today, there is no official list of professional lacemakers, since it is hardly possible for them to be fully-employed in this activity. The region also gained its popularity from the diamond industry of Antwerp, where the [art of diamond-cutting](#) techniques combines with its fruitful economic activity.

On the other hand, Wallonie offers other traditional forms of craftsmanship. In particular, a long tradition of glassmaking, including the [art of crystal working](#) (blowing, turning and engraving) is carried out in the area of Liège and Namur where we still find the famous Val Saint Lambert firm, which groups very highly skilled craftspeople. Stained glass is also very active in Belgium, especially after the Art Nouveau period. Many stained glass makers are still active in Belgium. The traditional work of [master stonemasons](#) flourishes in the area of Gobertange, where a particular stone is extracted and processed for craftsmanship of buildings and fine crafts. The ancient work of [bell founders](#) is also deeply rooted in the region, but it has unfortunately disappeared from Belgium after the II World War. The know-how of [blacksmiths](#) is particularly cultivated in the small village of Ostiches, located in the province of Hainaut and specialized in the crafting of knives. Also to be mentioned is the importance of the [metal hand-engraving technique](#) on fine armoury and on knives (also known as *guilloché*), which was developed in the region of Liège in the 16th century and is still taught nowadays and very strong in the local cultural heritage. Music being deeply enrooted in Belgian culture, musical instruments manufacture is part of its crafts heritage and many luthiers and other musical instrument makers are still active. Belgium is the country of [art Nouveau](#), [art Déco](#) and it is therefore mandatory to mention guilding, sgraffite, furniture making and more in general wood and metal work as part of the 19th century heritage.

Last but not least, Belgium has a rich heritage in textile and for centuries it has represented a hub for textile commerce. Many [weavers](#) are still active today. As further developed in the *Policies and Legislation* section, it is necessary to mention that there are no consolidated figures about how many crafts professionals are active in Belgium, nor how much this sector represents in terms of turn over. Statistics and figures would include beer, chocolate and any other kind of SMEs. According to a study made by

[Syndicat Neutre pour Indépendants \(SNI\)](#), in 2019, the average age of craftsmen in Belgium is rather high. Indeed, 7 out of 10 craftsmen are over 40 years old.

DESIGN, CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF A BUSINESS

STARTING A CRAFT BUSINESS IN BELGIUM

To start a craft business in Belgium, entrepreneurs can rely on a step-by-step supporting guide. All necessary information to achieve this goal is available on the [SPF Economie](#) website. The portal guides future entrepreneurs, including by listing [requisites](#) and formalities needed to create a business (legal requirements, nationality conditions, social insurance, formalities of activity). Other support to comply with appropriate legislative formalities is available on [NSSO website](#) or on [Social security website](#).

A centralized assistance office ([Les guichets d'entreprises](#)) supports self-entrepreneurs to face all these steps, which makes the whole process quite fast and easy compared to other European countries.

GETTING FUNDING AND OTHER SUPPORTING TOOLS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

[Flanders Innovation and Entrepreneurship](#) aims at supporting the development of new entrepreneurs with several tools. It is an established contact point for entrepreneurs and it provides information on training, advice and investments. For example, it has activated the SME e-wallet to financially support entrepreneurs who want to upgrade their skills and purchase certain services, such as learning how to build a communication plan or pursue a new training course. It also offers several [subsidies](#) for enterprises that want to improve their research and development activities. IT skills development is not covered by this support.

[SmartBe](#). It offers administrative, legal, fiscal and financial advice and training tools to support the development of the professional activity of self-employed workers. It also simplifies and legalizes professional activities in the creative industry.

[HUB BRUSSELS](#). This is a Brussels-based centralizing agency that supports any starting point of a business creation. It provides a detailed Business Guide to start or develop a business in Brussels. It provides free legal advice and it includes information on several European Programs, through the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), which helps European companies to innovate and launch on the international market and find partners.

[SDI - La Fédération des Commerçants, Artisans et Entreprises du Syndicat des Indépendants](#). This federation has the aim to identify and provide help with problems encountered by professionals of these sectors. It aims to protect and develop the professional, economic, social and ethical interests of entrepreneurs in the craft industry, small and medium-sized trade and small and medium-sized industry. Its members also have access to other SDI services such as legal and promotional assistance.

[SNI - LE SYNDICAT NEUTRE POUR INDÉPENDANTS](#). The SNI represents the interests of more than 42,000 entrepreneurs of Belgium. It is an independent organisation and a partner of self-employed, liberal professions and SMEs. It aims to help small independent entrepreneurs and it also supports the work and the rights of Belgian artisans, specifically advocating for better work conditions.

Note: None of these organizations has specific programs only targeted to CRAFTS SECTOR. They address self entrepreneurs and SMEs.

EXISTING SUPPORT

CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS

In Belgium, there are several organisations representing craftspeople:

[BECRAFT](#). Becraft is a Belgian association specialized in contemporary fine crafts. Their activity is mainly based on presenting creations in their own gallery in Mons. They are members of the World Crafts Council Europe. They represent about 80 crafts professionals, of which 41 members are over 50 years old. Most of them are ceramists.

[Union des Artisans du Patrimoine](#) (UAP). It is the Wallonia Association representing craftspeople in the area of Heritage. Woodworkers, blacksmiths, roofers, musical instruments manufacturers, stone cutters, carpenters, mosaic makers, gilders, furniture restorers. They have about 85 members.

[HANDMADE IN BRUGES](#). Handmade in Bruges wants to strengthen and support traditional craftsmanship inspired by the past and the future. This is done by developing a surprising offer for the public, by creating creative pools in the city, by facilitating meetings and crossings, and by sharpening the entrepreneurial skills of the creators of crafts.

[LA SPIRALE](#) - This small association promotes about 50 craftspeople in several areas of fine crafts and organises exhibitions of their work.

[Le Centre d'expression et de Créativité – Les Chiroux de la Province de Liège](#). This centre, promoted by the province of Liège, organises a series of training courses every year with the purpose of transmitting the know-how of experts of endangered crafts. This is intended for professionals but also for all those who wish to acquire specific craft skills. In 2021, some of these courses focus on the introduction to techniques of soft carving, harpsichord and lutherie working, and pottery.

[MADINEUROPE](#). Mad'in Europe is a Brussels-based company that connects European fine and traditional craft professionals and heritage restorers to an international audience. Its aim is to provide marketing solutions for craftspeople, raise awareness among the public and contribute to the transmission of knowhow to new generations. It's activity is mainly driven by the portal [madineurope.eu](#).

[SPF - SERVICE PUBLIC FEDERAL ECONOMIE](#). In 2016 this national public service elaborated a chart which defines the status of “craftspeople” in Belgium. (See below for the corresponding legal frame). It is involved in the organisation of the following initiatives dedicated to the craftsmanship of Belgium:

[LA JOURNEE DE L'ARTISAN](#). Once a year, since 2006, SPF Economie organizes an event called “La Journée de l'Artisan” (the Craftsman's Day), with the support of the Minister for the Self-Employed and SMEs. This event allows many craftsmen all over Belgium to open the doors of their ateliers and demonstrate their know-how to the general public. The purpose of this initiative is to highlight the work of hundreds of craftsmen still active in the country and to promote their activity. In 2020, due to the severe restrictions caused by Covid-19, this day transformed into "Le Mois de l'Artisan" (the Craftsman's Month). Citizens of Belgium were encouraged to discover local artisans and purchase their products online, therefore also prompting craftspeople to improve their digital skills and create their own online platform.

[LA VITRINE DE L'ARTISAN](#). This is an annual national competition, supported by SPF Economie and other public and private partners, designed to promote Belgian craftsmanship and inspire young people to become craftsmen. Each year, 10 ambassadors are selected by a Committee of experts to represent the diversity and the quality of Belgian crafting activities.

The [SIEP](#) has published an interesting list of 40 professions including a description of each, skills/know-how related to the profession, some interviews of craftspeople as well as useful information about requirements to learn the profession, addresses for training and business opportunities.

FUNDING PROGRAMMES

[1819 - HUB BRUSSELS](#). 1819 is a service promoted by HUB BRUSSELS. It is both an online platform and an information point available for any person who wants to grow or develop a business in Brussels. It provides information and advice on existing programmes that support future entrepreneurs. In particular, a [specific guide](#) is devoted to advice on getting started in the craftsmanship world and it also promotes [existing forms of subsidies and financial aid](#).

[AWaP - Agence wallonne du Patrimoine](#). The AWaP offers numerous training courses dedicated to heritage and heritage-related professions. In addition to training courses, its online platform also provides [information](#) on scholarships, competitions and grants devoted to artisans or aspiring artisans. For example, a specific scholarship is dedicated to craftsmen in building restoration who want to develop their skills in the centre of Europe.

[PROMETHEA](#). The purpose of Prométhéa is to develop a corporate patronage in the field of culture and heritage. The association participates in particular in the improvement of the legal and fiscal framework of patronage in Belgium. It also promotes services and training courses, such as “L'école du mécénat”. Also, Prométhéa has entered into a cultural partnership with a crowd giving platform ([Gingo](#)), a collaborative philanthropy platform that allows projects to find funding and build a network.

DIGITALIZATION AND UPSKILLING PROGRAMMES

The [Institut wallon de Formation en Alternance et des indépendants et Petites et Moyennes Entreprises \(IFAPME\)](#) is particularly relevant in the field of craftsmanship development programs. A specific program, [La formation Artisan](#), aims to create qualified craftsmen in different sectors. The extensive set of courses promotes know-how in the most endangered crafts and it is delivered in 16 training centres. The objective of these training courses is to encourage the establishment of new entrepreneurial businesses or the promotion of their maintenance. It offers tailored diploma courses in a wide range of craft professions (leather and metal working, textile, fine crafts, reparation of musical instruments, etc). The target age group is 18+ years old, without any age limit. The Institute is also involved in several projects that support the acquisition of digital and entrepreneurial skills, including the [Start Digital](#) and [STARTCRAFT - Craft Entrepreneurship Training](#) projects. However, these are not specifically aimed at a 50+ years old audience.

[Centre des métiers du patrimoine - la Paix-Dieu](#). This Centre aims to preserve and transmit knowledge and know-how in the field of architectural heritage and ancient buildings. Various [training activities](#) are organised for the public, reaching from the youngest to oldest learners, given by professional craftsmen and specialists in different subjects. This training center depends on

AWAP, together with the [Pole de la Pierre](#), another center, specialized in stone crafts and providing courses.

[The EPF - SFPME: centre de formation de métiers](#) is a training center in Brussels. Within the basket of courses aimed at developing [craft skills](#), the program "[Passeport réussite](#)" is specifically designed to improve [entrepreneurial skills](#). Several courses are also offered to improve the entrepreneur's [digital skills](#) in the field of [marketing and social media](#). No specific course is provided to aging professionals.

There are also local centers that promote training activities and are also digitally active. For example, the [KantCentrum](#) of Bruges hosts a Museum dedicated to the handcrafting of lace. It offers short- and long-term lacemaking courses and lace workshops for any age. A specific workshop teaches [how to draw patterns with the computer](#). The majority of craftspeople of the Center are 50+ years old women who practice it as a hobby. During the pandemic, KantCentrum relied on its digital skills to promote online courses. Indeed, the new Lace Museum presents interactive and multimedia installations. As mentioned below, none of the active lace makers is a professional.

[Digital Wallonia](#) supports and promotes initiatives focused on the development of digital skills in the Wallonia Region through several projects, such as the Digital Transformation for Businesses and the Digital Commerce 2021 projects.

[BeCode](#). BeCode is an organization based in Brussels with campuses in Liège, Charleroi and Antwerp. It organizes several training courses to teach digital skills useful for work purposes. The courses are aimed at both young and older people. BeCode has carried out several projects focused on the digitalization of older entrepreneurs:

[EUnitedWeCode](#) is an Erasmus+ funded project that aims at ensuring access to the digital world for all, focusing on adult education and digital skills. It took place in 2019.

[Learning2gether](#) is also an Erasmus+ funded project that aims at bridging the intergenerational knowledge gap between young people and older SME workers. An online learning platform allows both sides to share their soft skills and digital skills with one another. This project targets [50+](#)

years old SME workers and NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) youngsters under 25 years old (ongoing project in 2021 - partners from Belgium, Bulgaria, Spain, Iceland).

POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

LEGISLATION

In 2016, a legal framework for the status of craftspeople in Belgium was provided (law of 19 March 2014). Belgium officially recognizes the [status of the artisan](#) through the Craftsmen's Commission of SPF Economie. According to the Belgian law, a craftsman is defined as «a natural or legal person active in the production, processing, repair, restoration of objects, or provision of services, whose activities have an essentially manual character, developing certain know-how based on quality, tradition, creation or innovation».

The artisanal product must at least be based on one of the elements listed below. These criteria relate either to:

- the intrinsic qualities of the product (raw material components)
- the manufacturing processes. The product must be the result of transformation, repair or restoration, and these activities must have essentially manual aspects, an authentic character, developing a certain know-how focused on quality, tradition, creation or innovation.
- nature or quality of the ingredients/components and in particular of the main ingredients/components or characteristics of the final product.
- small-scale or even very small-scale manufacturing.

The certification covers all sectors of crafts: wood, metal, ceramic, building crafts, food, musical instruments, fashion, health and beauty, wine and other alcohols.

In order to apply for legal recognition, certain conditions are required. Like any other entrepreneur, craftspeople must be registered with the Banque-Carrefour des Entreprises (BCE), have less than 20 employees and meet the legal description of craftsmanship activity.

This recognition confirms the authenticity of the activity, the manual aspect of the work and the crafts know-how. The SPF provides greater visibility to professionals who obtained the recognition. The Certified Craft label is valid for a period of 6 years and it represents a real commercial asset for recognised

craftsmen, a guarantee of their know-how and the characteristics of their activity. However, it does not provide any tax advantage (VAT) nor access to particular services.

According to the most recent data collected by SPF Economie, as of 14 September 2021 there were 1835 recognised craftspeople active in Belgium. West Flanders, East Flanders, Antwerp, Liège and Namur are the provinces with the most crafts professionals.

The vast majority of recognized craftspeople are micro-enterprises with less than 5 employees (1,307 or 91% of the total). The status of sole proprietorship (or natural person) is preferred by most of the craftsmen (958, or 66.7% of the total). Almost all companies (or legal persons) are LTDs, of which there are 396 (82.8% of companies). The majority of craftsmen are men (887, or 61.8% of the total). The economic sectors with the most recognised craftspeople are: food products (399), furniture and interior decoration (219), wood (195), textiles (177), luxury goods (138) and construction (119).

However, it is essential to emphasise once again that it is not possible to have a correct knowledge of all existing and actively working artisans of Belgium, as the number of [registered craftsmen](#) does not correspond to their real presence on the territory.

POLICIES

On the basis of this research, we were not able to find meaningful differences in national policies regarding the valorization of older craftsmen compared to the youngsters.

LEGAL CHALLENGES

Some of the potential challenges for the craftspeople of Belgium can be related to national legislation. Indeed, the law establishing a legislative label for artisans was only recently implemented and requires several criteria to be met. The “label” can be asked by professional craftspeople on a voluntary basis, it is not mandatory. Many professionals have not started the certification process yet, also because the advantages of having it are not clear or tangible enough. Some organisations (SNI) are pushing to reduce VAT rate for certified craftspeople. On top of this, many Belgian craftspeople find it difficult to make a living solely from this activity and carry out this job as a side-line. This does not encourage them to have a “certified status”.



BULGARIA

INTRODUCTION

According to the data from the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, in 2020 there were 398.4 craftsmen, of which 296.9 male and 101.5 female. They are almost equally dispersed in the country with higher concentration in bigger cities. Among them the cities of Kostenets (knife making and copper smiting) and Triavna (wood crafting and pottery) are among the most famous. Silversmithing, leather objects production and lace production are also well established throughout the country.

The products developed are important in the niche market of handmade products and some of them have recently increased their importance (and pricing) such as handmade knives for master chefs and lace in the fashion industry. Others like handmade carpets production have steadily declined, while some of the largest and most expensive carpets are still being produced in a few factories in the country. The [factory](#) in the city of Kostandovo is producing handmade carpets for the British crown and other big clients.

The Crafts Act in Bulgaria contains a list of 57 types of crafts, divided in 2 main groups: 1/ Traditional (folklore) arts and crafts (such as artistic leather processing, production of leather products, making jewellery, manufacture of wrought iron products, artistic casting, bell ringing, knife-making) and 2/ Others (such as foundry of bells, manufacture of glass products by blowing glass, painting and engraving on glass, manual bookbinding, production and repair of modern musical instruments and accessories for them).

DESIGN, CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF A BUSINESS

Regional Chambers of Crafts provide training related to the acquisition of a qualification in the field of crafts, but not specifically for the development of business skills or the use of ICT.

As a good practice can be mentioned the training carried out by the Union for Business Initiative in 2020 in the town of Haskovo within the project CB005.2.22.093 "[Increasing the cross-border tourism potential between Haskovo and Edirne](#)" (CrossTour), co-financed under the Interreg-IPA CBC Bulgaria-Turkey program. The training was provided to craftsmen on two topics: "Legal aspects of the craft activity - Law on Crafts and Law on Cultural Heritage" and "Rights and Protection of Intellectual Property".

The first training module addressed the issues of the national and international legal framework on crafts, the legal definition of a craft, the insurance and tax aspects of the craft activity, the structure and activity of the organizations of the craftsmen, the problems of the craft training. In the second training module, the clarification of the range of objects of copyright, as well as the distinction between copyright and patent law and the differences between the two regimes of protection were discussed. A special attention was given

to ideas and concepts, as well as to folklore works, as an exception to the objects of copyright and the reasons why copyright does not protect them. The definitions of authorship and co-authorship and the differences in the legal regimes, as well as the property and non-property rights of the author were also considered. According to the information about the training, the trainees showed particular interest towards the clarification of the regime of free use of a copyright protected work and the issue of the duration and inheritance of copyright.

EXISTING SUPPORT

CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS

[National Crafts Chamber of Bulgaria Association](#)

The subject of activity of the Association is defined in the Bulgarian Crafts Act and it includes: 1. Cooperation with organizations, institutions and individuals in the country and abroad; 2. Publication of materials in the field of craftsmanship; 3. Organisation of paid and free seminars, conferences and others, thematically related to the subject of craftsmanship; 4. Organisation of advanced training courses in order to protect the qualification degrees according to the Crafts Act; 5. Assisting the members of the Association in the organisation and implementation of craft training and conducting examinations for masters.

Association “Craftmanship of the masters of folklore art crafts - Sofia”

The aim of the organisation is to preserve and disseminate the rich material and spiritual culture of the Bulgarian people, its originality and aesthetic sense. It works predominantly in the Western part of Bulgaria and strives to create conditions for the development of folklore applied art, to support the "masters of folklore crafts" in their pursuit of improvement, and in their performances, providing conditions for equality between members.

[Regional Crafts Chamber – Sofia](#)

The Regional Crafts Chamber – Sofia was established in 2002. It is the largest chamber in Bulgaria, covering three districts – Sofia City, Sofia Region and Pernik. The main aim of the chamber is to protect the interests and support craftsmen. It also assists the State and municipal administration in their efforts to promote the development of crafts through economic policy and targeted funding of programs and projects related to crafts.

The Chamber also assists its members in organizing and carrying out craft trainings, conducts examinations for the recognition of craft qualifications and issues certificates for journeymen. The Chamber controls the quality of the craft services.

[Regional Crafts Chamber – Plovdiv](#)

The aim of the Chamber is to protect the interests of its members and to support them, to assist in preventing unfair competition between them. It also supports the State and municipal administration in their efforts to promote the development of crafts and ensure the quality of the provided craft services. The Chamber organises trainings and events.

According to the Official Register for the non-profit associations, Regional Crafts Chambers are operating in 12 regions of Bulgaria.

FUNDING PROGRAMMES

[The Union for Private Economic Enterprise \(UPEE\)](#)

The Union for Private Economic Enterprise (UPEE) was established in 1989 as the first non-governmental association of private entrepreneurs in Bulgaria. UPEE has been recognized as a nationally representative employers' organization since 1993 and according to the latest data of the National Social Security Institute represents the interests of over 10 500 enterprises with over 120,000 employees, 66 branches and 103 municipal organizations throughout the country. Today UPEE aims to represent the micro, small and medium business and crafts in Bulgaria. The mission of UPEE is to support the protection and development of the business of its members; to foster the entrepreneurial spirit and the establishment of new enterprises and jobs; to work actively for the economic and social progress of the country.

[EU Structural Fund for Bulgaria \(Single Information Web Portal\)](#)

The portal offers complete and systematized information on the financing of projects with the help of the Operational Programs in Bulgaria.

Regional Craft Chambers in Bulgaria

The portal offers complete and systematized information on the financing of projects with the help of the Operational Programs in Bulgaria.

DIGITALIZATION AND UPSKILLING PROGRAMMES

In Bulgaria, crafts are mainly supported through EU co-financed operational programs that aim to promote entrepreneurship in medium and small enterprises and to support rural development. For example, in 2018 artisans/craftsmen had the opportunity to receive funding under the [Rural Development Program \(2014-2020\)](#), Selection Procedure № BG06RDNP001-6.002 "Investments aimed at the development of crafts" under sub-measure 6.4.1. "Investments in support of non-agricultural activities". The aim of the measure was to promote employment, to create new jobs, as well as to preserve existing jobs. Under this measure, EUR 3 million was provided to finance projects for investments in non-agricultural activities aimed at the development of crafts (including the provision of services related to the participation of visitors in craft activities). Eligible costs included the purchase of real estate, the acquisition of software, etc.

The [new programme for the rural development for the period 2021-2022](#), will support the crafts providing funding for craft related activities.

POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

LEGISLATION

In 2001 Bulgaria adopted the **Crafts Act**, which aims to stimulate the development of crafts by providing conditions for the development of entrepreneurship, protection of craftsmen's interests and protection of craft services consumers.

According to the law, a craft is an activity for the production of products and/or the provision of services in a craft way. The enterprise for production of objects or for provision of services is organized in a craft way when the following requirements are simultaneously fulfilled:

1. the activity is included in the list of crafts according to the law;
2. the work is performed by hand or with the help of manual or other craft-specific tools; the final product or service is similar to others of the same type or is unique;
3. for the performance of the activity shall be required respective knowledge, production-technical skills and practical habits, acquired with craft training and qualification, with professional training in the system of the secondary and higher education, with courses for acquiring or raising the qualification, as well as with professional experience;

4. the activity shall be carried out by craftsmen - self-employed persons or united in companies under the Obligations and Contracts Act.

The Crafts Act contains a list of 57 types of crafts, divided in 2 main groups: 1/ Traditional arts and crafts (such as artistic leather processing, production of leather products, making jewellery, manufacture of wrought iron products, artistic casting, bell ringing, knife-making and 2/ Others (such as foundry of bells, manufacture of glass products by blowing glass, painting and engraving on glass, manual bookbinding, production and repair of modern musical instruments and accessories for them).

The craftsmen may practice one or more crafts, provide only craft services and trade only in their own products. They can work as self-employed persons or collaborate in the legal form or a company registered under the Obligations and Contracts Act.

Craftsmen can unite in regional chambers of crafts, which are non-profit legal entities. There can be only one regional chamber of crafts in one administrative region. The Regional Chambers of Crafts:

- protect the interests of its members and assists them; helps to prevent unfair competition between them;
- assist the State and municipal administration in their efforts to promote the development of crafts and ensure the quality of the provided craft services and in the development of legislation, programs and projects related to crafts;
- assist its members in the organization and implementation of the craft training, organize examinations for recognition of a craft qualification and issue certificates for journeymen;
- cooperate with institutions from the system of the vocational education and training and from the system of the higher education;
- prepare programs for training of craftsmen according to the needs of the region, coordinate the programs with the National Chamber of Crafts, which sends them for approval by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training; publishes the approved programs on its website;
- assist through the National Association "Association of Masters of Folklore Arts and Crafts" and the branch organizations - members of the National Chamber of Crafts, for the practical training of craftsmen and opening of jobs for gaining experience and qualification of journeymen from the branch organizations;
- publish on its website the samples of documents approved by the managing bodies of the National Chamber of Crafts, with which the craftsmen declare the origin of their products, as well as other certifying documents in the cases regulated by law;
- create and maintain a regional register of craftsmen - its members

Every craftsman can voluntarily be a member of the regional chamber of crafts, in the area of which he wants to practice a craft. The members of the regional chamber of crafts are entered in the register held by the regional chamber. The register is public and is announced on the website of the respective chamber and on the website of the National Chamber of Crafts.

The National Chamber of Crafts is the representative organization of craftsmen in Bulgaria. The regional chambers of crafts are members of the National Chamber of Crafts. The National Chamber of Crafts:

- pursue a common policy for protection of the interests of the craftsmen and their organizations, ensuring their equality;
- participate in the development of projects and prepare opinions on the normative acts, related to the crafts and the craft training;
- prepare standards for training in the individual crafts, which shall be approved by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training;
- coordinate the training programs for the separate crafts and submit them to the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training for approval;
- prepare rules for conducting examinations, which shall be approved by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training;
- issue master certificates;
- summarize the information received from the regional chambers of crafts and, if necessary, refer to the competent authorities;
- keep a national register of craftsmen on the basis of the regional registers;
- coordinate the activity of the regional chambers of crafts;

According to the Crafts Act, artisans are divided into craftsmen, journeymen and apprentices. Apprentices are people who work and learn a craft. Journeymen are persons who permanently practice a certain craft in an enterprise organized in a craft way. The Regional Chamber of Crafts issues a certificate for journeymen.

A master in a certain craft is a person who knows in detail the whole work process to the extent that he can carry it out on his own, has the necessary practical skills and theoretical knowledge for the craft and has a master's certificate issued. The National Chamber of Crafts issues the master certificate.

Although no serious problems have been identified related to the application of the current national legislation in the field of crafts, it also cannot be assumed that the positive effect of its implementation is sufficient to encourage and support the development of crafts in Bulgaria. The main benefits of the current Bulgarian Crafts Act are related to the provision of more favourable opportunities for participation in the exhibitions organized by the Chambers of Crafts, as well as to some reliefs related to the tax reporting of the activity. Many entrepreneurs and individuals who are engaged in applied arts and other activities, defined as crafts according to the Bulgarian law, do not register under it and prefer to carry out their activity as an ordinary commercial activity. It is suggested that adopting new legislation providing for tax breaks or subsidies for the first years of crafts activities as well as possibilities for interest-free credit would be very helpful for the craftsmen.

POLICIES

In accordance with the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, knowledge and skills related to traditional crafts are part of the intangible cultural heritage and as such they are protected in the policies of Bulgaria.



CYPRUS

INTRODUCTION

The richness and quality of Cypriot crafts, which have existed for many centuries, is illustrated by numerous unique objects — genuine works of art, which have either been discovered during archaeological excavations, or carefully preserved and passed down from generation to generation in villages. Today many of them — which demonstrate to us the great mastery of Cypriot artisan and create a rich picture of them and their subtle irony — are parts of collections in archaeological and regional museums - *The Encyclopaedia of Crafts in Cyprus Review, 2018*.

Deputy Ministry of Tourism/Traditional Handicrafts Article

Handicrafts are practised in specific villages where the traditional methods have been handed down from generation to generation, as well as at the island's Handicraft Centres. Many workshops welcome visitors to observe craftsmen in action as they skillfully create in the old, preserved ways, whilst also providing information on the origins and history of the items being made, making them all even more special. You can also find a wide array of folk art at souvenir shops.

Lace: The famous 'Lefkaritika' embroidered linens are handmade lace pieces produced in the mountainous Larnaka (Larnaca) village of Lefkara since Venetian times.

Another form of lace embroidery - that of narrow knit lace - is also practised in many traditional villages, and makes a lovely souvenir to take back home, or as a gift.

Woven goods: The practise of weaving was highly developed during Byzantine times and is still traditionally practised in the Pafos (Paphos) village of Fyti, which makes colourful geometric textured designs on undyed cotton cloth - particularly rectangular napkins, tablecloths and bed covers.

Pottery: Pottery is a very ancient craft on the island, with the red clay vessels constituting an integral part of daily life in olden times when they were used to store and transport liquids such as wine and water, as well as for the storage of agricultural products.

Copperware: Cyprus is traditionally the island of copper, and the base metal was an important export for the island during ancient times.

Silverware: The art of filigree, known as 'trifouri', is a delicate craft that twists fine silver wire into beautiful hand-made jewellery such as earrings, pendants and brooches, as well as decorative cutlery and tableware, with a resulting 'cobweb' effect.

Basketry: Basket making dates from ancient times, when baskets were made to serve a range of specific practical purposes from carrying agricultural produce to dressing bottles to avoid liquids leaking.

Decorated Gourds: The gourd is a vegetable of the marrow family that hangs from a climbing vine and comes in a range of shapes and sizes.

DESIGN, CREATION, AND MAINTENANCE OF A BUSINESS

One of the most fundamental shifts in the cultural heritage sector is to be found at the intersection established over the past years, between heritage management and the rapidly growing field of digital technology. In the wake of these developments, the striking majority of professionals in the heritage sector are facing the challenge of integrating ICT technologies in various workings, functions and purposes of their field (i.e. preservation, restoration, recording, analysis, interpretation, publication, exhibition). At the same time, digital technologies are becoming an integral part of cultural management (project management, event management, collection management, etc.) but also of cultural communication and public outreach. The analytical significance of this project stems mainly from the fact that it constitutes the first systematic attempt to chart (both quantitatively and qualitatively) all postgraduate programs of study on cultural heritage that are currently available across Departments and Universities in Cyprus. The combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis of heritage studies curricula in both countries also provides us with an elaborated and refined picture of the professional skills promoted by different academic curricula as regards ICT skills and their implementation in heritage studies. As such, this mapping enterprise can be a useful tool for analytically appreciating the connection between curriculum content and job requirements and by extension, act as a starting point for creating a sustainable model of synergy between heritage studies and ICT in Cyprus for the next decades. *Catapoti, Despina & Nikolaou, Polina & Andriopoulou, Despina. (2020). ICT and Cultural Heritage in Greece and Cyprus: A critical overview of current postgraduate curricula. International Conference on Cultural Informatics, Communication & Media Studies. 1. 10.12681/cicms.2731.*

Cyprus has several crafts schools providing categorized training mainly in the subject of each craft itself. The first coordinated action related to support the craft businesses creation and maintenance (including ICT Skills) is something that is developed at the present 2021, by the Cyprus Handicraft Service under the Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Cyprus. The information gained by the

Service mentions, among other benefits, the financial contribution by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus.

EXISTING SUPPORT

CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS

Created and managed under the auspices of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, the Cyprus Centre of Craft has the main aim of reviving traditional Cypriot folk art and gradually developing it into a modern trade. The Handicrafts Centre provides the following activities and services to its guests:

Studying and conducting various examinations on traditional items of folk art.

- Manufacturing and developing the design of handicraft items.
- Perfecting all details in the production process.
- Conducting experimental works with new materials and techniques.
- Educating new craftsmen
- Production and sale (assisting in the sales distribution of products to all artisans, both male and female, from all of the island's regions).

The [Cyprus Handicraft Service](#) aims to support and enhance the sustainability of the handicrafts sector, inter alia by reviving traditional folk art and handicrafts, developing relevant activities and training programmes and providing incentives to artisans based in cities and in the countryside. The Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry, through the work of the Cyprus Handicraft Service, places special emphasis on supporting and preserving traditional techniques and professions, which are part of Cyprus' intangible cultural heritage. The objective is to implement a comprehensive strategic action plan for the preservation and development of traditional professions, in order to prevent the risk of losing them forever.

At the Cyprus Handicraft Centre, visitors can see the artisans engaged in the traditional crafts, at the Centre's workshops. They can also visit the Centre's shop, where fine examples of authentic Cypriot handicrafts are on display.

FUNDING PROGRAMMES

There is not any dedicated database for craftsmen regarding funding opportunities.

The most useful and relevant tool for all sectors where craftsmen can choose their fields of interest is the [portal](#) created by the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development of Cyprus. For this portal registration is required for receiving targeted information via email. There is a filter process upon registration that craftsmen can use to receive information relevant to their needs and fields.

DIGITALIZATION AND UPSKILLING PROGRAMMES

At this moment (2021), there is generally low support and a small number of training courses for upskilling older craftsmen and helping them with digitalization procedures.

As mentioned before, the first coordinated action related to supportive skills for craft businesses creation and maintenance (including ICT Skills) is something that is developed at the present 2021, by the Cyprus Handicraft Service under the Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Cyprus.

POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

LEGISLATION

The [Companies Law](#) (Chapter 113) describes the legislation of creating a company or trade name under which a craftsman/craftswoman develops a business.

POLICIES

Based on our research, we didn't identify any policies expressly aimed at older craftsmen.

There is, though, a move towards the creation of funded training programs in the form of apprenticeships for passing on the trade. This is another initiative that is developed for implementation during 2022 by the Cyprus Handicraft Service.

LEGAL CHALLENGES

Due to the absence of national legislations dedicated to craftsmen and the craft industry, the challenges faced are mainly related to little guidance and regulation of this sector. Although this gives more freedom of activity regarding the craft itself, capitalizing and creating a business goes through the broad road of the general Companies Law of Cyprus which can be confusing and costly for older craftsmen, in the sense that they need to hire consulting services for financial and legal activities.



FRANCE

INTRODUCTION

The European country that presents the higher number of initiatives and the higher level of innovation in the craft field is France. With 1.3 million craft businesses, 3.1 million workers and 300 billion euros in turnover, the craft industry has a very huge potential for growth, innovation and creation of qualified jobs.

The creativity and the professional knowhow of French craftsmen is expressed through very different methods and materials, since each zone of French has been under different influences, cultures, environments and ways of living.

In summary:

In the **North** of France there could be found:

- Dieppe ivory. Locals have worked ivory imported from Africa since the Middle-Age and used it for a variety of objects, from doorknobs to sculptures. Nowadays using ivory is forbidden, but local craftspeople adapted, and are now working with materials close to ivory or restoring ivory pieces.
- Sèvres porcelain
- Toile de Jouy, which is characterized by its monochrome colours; it is a cotton fabric (also called indienne) depicting sceneries and people.

In the **South** of France there could be found:

- the production of ceramics and faience in Moustiers;
- Gloves production in Millau;
- Creation of perfumes, which follows the gloves production, since essential oils are used to perfume gloves;
- Puy laces, used for adorning costumes and linen from the countryside and for showing local pride;
- Santons, which are figurines adorning a representation of the manger in which Jesus was laid;
- Laguiole cutlery, using of different type of woods according to the future use of the knife

In the **West** of France, there could be found:

- Normandy Dinanterie (brassware). It is the creation of utilitarian utensils in copper, brass and even bronze, all of this work done with one single tool: the hammer.
- Quimper faience

In the **East** of France, there could be found:

- Crystals from Baccarat, also called “Kings’ crystals” as it was imported to European royal courts; Daum crystals, Lalique crystals and Saint Luis crystals;
- Épinal imagery: famous for its woodwork techniques, those images were mainly describing religious rites at first, but in the 18th century they gradually started to represent everyday scenes.
- Printed fabrics from Alsace (indiennes)
- Sarreguemines faïence
- Fayl-Billot Basketry

In the **Centre** of France, there could be found:

- Puisaye sandstone, objects made of clay
- Limoge porcelain
- Thiers cutlery
- Aubusson tapestry
- Manufacture des Gobelins. This manufacture was created in the 17th century in Paris to preserve the Crown’s tapestries and restore them. It is also closely linked to the production of Puy laces.
- Furniture of Faubourg Saint-Antoine

EXISTING SUPPORT

CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS

As France hosts a wide range of initiatives concerning arts and crafts, there is also a considerable number of craft organizations with the aim of collecting, promoting and carrying on these activities.

The most important one is [Institut National Métiers D'art \(INMA\)](#), which is a public organization financed and governed by the French state. INMA is the main referral point for craftsmen both to receive any relevant information and news related to this sector, and to make their business and products known at national and international level.

For instance, INMA organises every year the European Days of Craftsmen ([Journées Européennes des Métiers d'Art - JEMA](#)), which include meetings, workshops, exhibitions and tours. The European Day of Craftsmen can be organised individually by every European State, but the promoter and coordinator entity remain INMA.

INMA created an official [list of all the possible crafts](#) that can be found in France, to which a craftsman can belong. Currently the recognized craft professions are 281: for each of them, it is given a definition about

what that specific profession includes. Moreover, it is provided a link to the existing training courses and useful services offered at present for each specific profession, in addition to the name of the organizations designed to help specific craft professions. All craft institutions coming from the rest of Europe can use this list as a standard, to create pre-established professions to which craftsmen can belong.

Every two years, Institut National Métiers d'Art carries on the selection procedure to acquire the title of [“Master of Art”](#). This title was created in 1994 by the French Ministry of Culture, in order to safeguard the rare know-how held by crafts professionals, both in the field of artistic creation and heritage preservation. It concerns specific techniques which can only be transmitted within workshops and for which there is no training elsewhere. Since 1994, INMA has appointed 132 masters of art. On the website, it can be found all the requisites to become a master or an apprentice. A particular request is that craftspeople can become a master only if they accept to have an apprentice learning from them: this is the most efficient method to ensure the transmission of knowhow, techniques and culture, particularly the ones that cannot be transmitted in a written way and, otherwise, would be lost.

Moreover, INMA has also been entrusted by the State with the management of the [“Entreprise du Patrimoine Vivant”](#) (Living Heritage Company) label. This label is a mark of recognition, released for a fee by the French Ministry of Economy and Finance, which distinguishes French companies with excellent craftsmanship and industrial know-how. It can bring national or even international media coverage to craft activities, promote their development and can be accompanied by an advantageous tax regime. Open to all production, transformation, repair and restoration trades, this distinction created in 2005 is awarded for 5 years after a rigorous selection of candidates. More specifically, the professions concerned are linked to art and culture, gastronomy and industry, which share the following elements: high performance of their business and their products, constant attention to internal training, use of technically innovative approaches and a dynamic business strategy.

To reflect this additional mission, INMA is transformed into the French Agency for Crafts and Living Heritage. In conjunction with the regional EPV associations, this recognized association of public utility offers a collective action program to promote the know-how of these companies in France and internationally. These promotional actions contribute to the economic development of these companies which can benefit from the visibility of the label.

On the other side, another relevant national player is [Ateliers d'Art de France](#), which is a private organization, contrary to INMA.

As one of the leading professional artistic craftsmanship networks, Ateliers d'Art de France federates a community of over 6,000 craftworkers, artists and craft companies throughout France. Its action is deployed via four key priorities:

- Representing and defending the artistic craftsmanship sector. Ateliers d'Art de France created the National Art and Craft Union. This collective and representative structure provides the primary interface with public authorities, hence conveying the priority claims of its professional members
- Promoting the image of artistic craftsmanship. The organization encourages both innovation and the will to extend our vision well beyond the traditional artistic craft image. To do that, Ateliers d'Art de France also organizes several cultural initiatives where its members can expose their craftworks, exchange their knowledge and practices and learn from each other.
- Contributing towards the economic development of associated professionals. This is possible through the organization of several events and sales points throughout France.
- Offering support to members. Ateliers d'Art de France offers day-to-day support for its professional members via consultancy, training, tailor-made services and information on the sector.

On its webpage, Ateliers d'Art de France also presents a section with news related to the craft sector, such as the next fairs and events for craftsmen, competitions, awards. It should be highlighted that Ateliers d'Art de France was created to promote the interior design sector: their most important fair organised by them, in fact, is dedicated to interior design, and only one of the pavilions is dedicated to crafts. This is to notice that not all the events organised and the services provided by this organisation are specific for the craft sector.

They also offer a newsletter to be always up to date about what happens in France and to have the possibility to learn and/or deepen knowledge about specific techniques or crafts. Lastly, they offer several initiatives for international networking, such as Craft Network, which is a project aimed at facilitating professional mobility throughout Europe, at encouraging the exchange of techniques, experiences and good practices and at favouring the development of commercial opportunities for European craftworkers.

The [FREMAA \(fédération des métiers d'art d'Alsace\)](#) is a non-profit association that currently represents 165 crafts professionals. It was born from the desire of crafts professionals of the Alsatian territory to come together and activate a group dynamic guaranteeing the public the quality and authenticity of the production of crafts of art in Alsace.

Since 1996, the year of its creation, Frémaa has organized numerous events (exhibitions, trade fairs, pop-up shops, training courses, publications, etc.) with a single requirement: to promote craftsmanship through increasingly qualitative actions. Moreover, this association is mobilized on a daily basis to implement quality economic, cultural and training actions in order to meet the following objectives:

- Boost, develop, promote and unite the arts and crafts sector

- Increase the notoriety of crafts professionals and strengthen their economic development
- Raise awareness among the public and in particular among young people of the crafts and the professional opportunities they offer
- Support the transmission and sustainability of know-how and workshops
- Propose and implement sustainable development projects around fine crafts in the regions
- Support and inform communities committed to a heritage promotion policy centered on fine crafts
- Participate in national and European networks to strengthen its expertise

FUNDING PROGRAMMES

CHAMBRE DES METIERS ET DE L'ARTISANAT (CHAMBER OF TRADES AND CRAFTS):

<https://www.cma-allier.fr/creer/financements-et-aides>

<https://www.cma-lyonrhone.fr/gerer/aides-financieres-aux-artisans>

http://infoartisanat.infometiers.org/doc_num.php?explnum_id=12743

The Chambers of Trades and Crafts (CMAs) are public institutions under the authority of the French Ministry of Economy and Finance, and, along with their partners, such as professional organisations and local authorities, ensure that the craft industry is recognised in its own right in the economy, at a national and European level. They also ensure that their interests are taken into account in development programmes, laws and regulations, and then make sure these policies are properly implemented. The CMAs are federated under a national institution: the Permanent Assembly of Chambers of Trades and Crafts (APCMA). However, each region of France has its own CMA, which is usually very active at a local level and plays a very important role in the transmission of knowledge through different strategies and initiatives, including the organization and promotion of fairs and open doors. The CMAs have a professional collaboration with INMA as well.

Run by people who are craftspeople themselves, the CMAs support craft businesses throughout their lifetime with the aim of promoting their development, competitiveness and longevity. The CMAs offer a full range of effective services which enable actors to focus their efforts on their know-how and production facilities. To sustain this dynamic approach, the CMAs network works closely with the Innovation Centres for Crafts, resource centres which are able to identify future trends and devise the most suitable solutions for craft businesses.

This is an useful example that demonstrates how the French government is involved in fostering craft businesses, through the direct financing of entities and initiatives offering a wide range of services and

support activities in this field. For instance, through the CMAs, the French government invests a relevant amount of resources in training craftspeople: with 5.000 trainers and approximately 600 training courses, the CMAs network helps both young and old craftsmen providing them with long-term skills. The network's 112 Training Centres currently offer over 65 qualifications developed with professional organisations, to meet the requirements of craft businesses in terms of skilled workers. These training courses are at the forefront of educational innovation and their curricula include new technologies and techniques, including digital ones. The craft qualifications are registered in the French National Directory of Professional Certification.

The CMAs also play an important role in collecting and proposing different funding opportunities to craftsmen, from the most “traditional” ones to the most innovative, such as online crowdfunding. To do that, they created a genuine database, collecting all the financial mechanisms available for craftsmen – which includes, for instance, a part dedicated to financial facilities for craftsmen with disabilities. They also offer personalized consultancy services about which is the best funding opportunity for a specific business/situation.

DIGITALIZATION AND UPSKILLING PROGRAMMES

[The Craft Project](#) is a recently created French association that has developed a way to set up a simple and pragmatic system to lend money quickly and free of charge to craftspeople. Loans of between €1,000 and €10,000 are granted at 0% interest for a period of 3 years. They are intended to enable craftsmen to invest in their development and upskilling: tools, training, etc. The loan is granted in exchange for a commitment on the artisan's honour to repay it in 36 monthly instalments by direct debit. The projects financed are relayed on The Craft Project's social networks bringing support and visibility to the craftsmen who carry them.

In 2021, The Craft Project launched the Orphan Trades Exchange. They identified crafts that are disappearing due to a lack of transmission, and set up financial support to allow a motivated student to learn the craft for 1 to 3 years. Each scholarship is sponsored by an elder professional recognized in the craft concerned. The relevance of this initiative lies precisely in combining elder craftsmen with younger craftsmen to foster the knowledge exchange, as well as the “renovation” of several aspects related to ancient practices.

Another interesting aspect about the Craft Project is that this organisation tries to exploit digital instruments and technologies to promote crafts. For instance, they are really committed to digital communication and dissemination activities to foster the craft sector, including the organisation of digital promotion events as

well. Lastly, a very innovative and interesting initiative is the launch of a podcast: this latter offers the opportunity of an intimate conversation with artisans, seeking to understand how a life as an artisan is built and lived. Its vocation is to spread the word of craftspeople and creative people to promote workshops, to encourage vocations, to change society's view of manual trades. Currently, the podcast has more than 50 episodes.

[Institut National Métiers d'Art](#). In addition to the organization of several events, conferences and expositions related to crafts, this public organization has a great importance in relation to the training course it offers to craftsmen. These courses and consultancy services are indicated not only for newcomers who would like to open a craft business, but also to elder craftsmen who would like to improve their skills. In fact, in the organization webpage, an entire section is dedicated to opportunities of continuous education for adults. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, moreover, navigating through the list of the 281 recognized crafts, there can be found some training courses specifically dedicated to each of these crafts. It worth to be highlighted that some of these trainings are aimed at developing digital competences, and that some of them are financed or co-financed by the French government; fact that, once again, highlights the importance that the French State attributes to craft professions and to the development of innovative skills in this field.



GEORGIA

INTRODUCTION

Located at the geographic meeting point between Europe and Asia, Georgia has been distinguished by the diversity of crafts traditions throughout the centuries. Every single province in Georgia has its own images, history, culture, traditions, which ensure the ethnographic mosaic of the country and its special attractiveness. Traditional crafts techniques, color combinations and ornamental patterns in ceramic, woodcarving, stonework, metalwork, leatherwork, basket weaving and textiles, which include knitting, carpet weaving, felting, block printing and other techniques, vary from region to region. Traditionally almost each house was richly decorated either with woodcarving, textile, carpentry or ceramic objects. In Georgia skilled craft makers, artisans and designers have always been appreciated and respected. Crafts usually were considered as part of the tradition and mostly family activities, which were passed from generation to another. They have been less acknowledged as a business. However, this perception started to change slowly and the awareness regarding the value of crafts as a part of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Cultural Industries is rising.

According to a recent GACC study, around 27% of craft makers are 44-55 years old, while around 26% belong to the 36-45 years group. The interest in crafts for people under 35 is relatively small. It should be noted that the share of representatives of the age groups of 56-65 and over 66 years is high in men, 26.24% and 14.18% respectively, while only 9.44% and 4.29% of women fall in these age groups.

In general, the share of aged artisans in rural areas is higher than in large cities, which is caused by the internal migration of young people. In 2012, 58% of rural craft makers were above age of 46, versus to 47.6% in urban areas.

Some good examples of crafts' acknowledgment as a business could be represented by several new companies that were established by skilled and well-recognized craft makers above 50 years, such as traditional tablecloth producer [LURJI SUPRA](#), [ORKOLI Studio](#), [PESVEBI Studio](#). They act in different regions of Georgia, and all of them play a significant role not only for a further promotion of the sector, but also in representing craft as a successful business. Their success stories could serve as an encouragement for younger craft makers.

Most of the older artisans are self-educated, work in a single sector for decades using traditional methods and almost do not challenge themselves with experimenting with new technologies or materials. The older artisans more often tend to stick to traditional forms and products produced by them over the years. Most of them are doing such traditional items that are almost on the edge of being lost (for example *AKVANI* traditional wooden cradle), while younger craft makers are more towards experimenting and trying to give modern appearance, introducing modern elements to traditional items and patterns.

Older artisans are less familiar with up-to-date technologies, including digital ones; they lack sophisticated tools, produce their work in traditional ways and weakly promote themselves. It is worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant effect on the crafts sector. The impact was equally strong on both legal entities and individual artisans. A significant loss of income was more common for older actors who usually are not familiar with online marketing tools.

DESIGN, CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF A BUSINESS

To start a business in Georgia - to register a company and to open a business bank account - does not take more than 24 hours. Crafts businesses usually act as Ltds (i.e. limited companies), but more often as Individual entrepreneurs, which can also apply for two statuses with favorable taxation regimes: the micro and the small business. The detailed description and step by step guide how to register the business could be found on [Invest in Georgia website](#).

Information & Communication Technologies are not that popular among older craft makers yet. Some of them, with the help of younger family members, managed to open social media pages, such as FB or Instagram. At the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic, attendance of online trainings was quite a challenge for them. A better integration of IT technologies into their daily work and life needs additional measures and efforts.

As a good example of empowering crafts export capabilities can be presented USAID (United States Agency for International Development) assistance in Georgian artisans' subscription to www.etsy.com, one of the largest online sales platforms.

There are also several online platforms contributing to the crafts business development, such as:

[Nido](#): popular online local store where, among other things, craft items are also displayed.

[Tbilisi Ethnofest online platform](#). It contributes to the creation of online self-educational materials for the crafts sector. It not only hosts the trainings and workshops held during the EthnoFest, but also accumulates all the digital contents created within GACC's other actions.

[Info.ge გაიცანი ქართული](#) (info.ge.meet Georgian). This social media (Facebook) group was set up during the pandemic, when lots of people lost all sources of income. The goal was to support people with some crafts skills by giving them a chance to directly promote their product to potential customers. Today the group counts 62,715 members.

[Creative Industries Platform](#). It is another Facebook group which was established with the goal of sharing current problems and challenges and jointly reflect their resolution ways; establish cooperation opportunities among various stakeholders, and distribute information regarding creative industries ongoing and upcoming programs, projects, trainings, grants opportunities and other related news.

EXISTING SUPPORT

CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS

The organizational structure of the crafts sector in Georgia is still in the process of formation. At present, the crafts sector is weakly represented in the State structures: there is no department, agency or unit (similar to the Crafts Councils in European countries) which is solely dedicated to the sector and responsible for its development.

The Ministry of Culture is the main State body defining the policy in the crafts sector. The department of the ICH (Intangible Cultural Heritage) at the [National Agency of the Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia](#) covers the broad field of intangible heritage and crafts as its integral part. It is mostly dedicated to safeguarding objectives rather than to the economic development of the sector.

Different public entities such as [Enterprise Georgia](#); [Creative Georgia](#), Departments of Culture of local Municipalities are partially incorporating crafts in their agenda.

From Non-state actors' important players are:

[Georgian Arts and Culture Center](#) (GACC). Founded in 1995, this organization actively contributes to the development of the crafts sector in Georgia. It provides studies, trainings for crafts actors, small grant schemes, contests etc. GACC also acts for the development of the institutional structure of the crafts sector in Georgia, development of local and international markets and internationalization of the sector.

[Georgian Heritage Crafts Association \(GHCA\)](#). It is a membership organization, which acts to safeguard the Georgian heritage crafts traditions and works towards a sustainable framework for the sector's development in the future. The Association aims to overcome the existing challenges through the creation of a networking platform for individuals, craftspeople, organizations and guilds.

Also, Clay Office, Textile Group, Artists Union etc. Recently other structures like the International Association for Handicrafts Popularisation and Education, which mainly focuses on the needlework,

Association of Embroiders appeared, Georgian Furniture Cluster as well as a number of non-formal rafts networks have been established.

[Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia](#). It is the founder of Social Enterprise Alliance of Georgia, in which crafts-based organisations play a significant role. Among other fields, it also provides specifically targeted support for the crafts sector.

FUNDING PROGRAMMES

The main organisations assisting craftsmen in identification of existing funding opportunities, in general, are GACC and GHCA.

There are several other agencies/donors providing different funding opportunities for a wider range of entrepreneurs, including crafts among them, such as:

[Creative Georgia](#). It is a legal entity of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth of Georgia and aims to create funding opportunities and spread information about existing funding opportunities; build the capacity of creative entrepreneurs through training programs, seminars and other activities; raise awareness about Creative Industries; establish networking platforms; support the export of creative goods and, in general, internationalization of the sector.

[Enterprise Georgia Micro and Small Business Support Program](#). The goal of the program is to provide financial support to Micro and Small Business. Through the received grants, beneficiaries are able to expand their enterprises and start new ones. Craftsmen usually are eligible.

At the same time, there is a high number of online resources providing information on available grant opportunities. In general:

[Project Georgia](#). It is an online platform that provides information on all types of ongoing projects, grants, competitions and other existing programs in Georgia.

[CSOGEORGIA](#). It is a web portal created to exchange information, improve communication, and share the resources among civil society organizations (CSOs). This virtual space will enable the representatives of public, international organizations and any interested persons to obtain information on CSOs and their activities, i.e., to get familiar without effort, by spending the minimum time and energy.

USAID Economic Security Programme, which has an artisanal section among its priorities. Its recent Call - Improving Firm Productivity, Productive Capacity and Product Quality - sets artisan-business activities such

as jewellery design, wood carving, stone carving, painting and ceramics as one of the 3 target areas of funding.

DIGITALIZATION AND UPSKILLING PROGRAMS

There are no special national programs supporting digitalization or upskilling of older craftsmen. Usually, these kinds of training targeting crafts actors are provided by crafts organizations listed above, such as GACC, GHCA and EthnoFest. They also provide other kinds of supporting services, such as consultancy and opportunities of networking and knowledge exchange, although these opportunities are usually offered through specific projects rather than on a regular basis.

On the other hand, TechParks and FabLabs offer trainings to a wider audience, which can be also accessed by craftsmen.

[Technoparks and Innovation centers](#). They provide assistance in digital technologies to a wider range of actors. A Techpark is a physical space where the technological, educational and professional resources are accumulated and it aims to foster the development of a knowledge-based economy in Georgia. Techparks, through their infrastructures, facilitate the establishment and growth of high-tech businesses that are competitive in both local and global markets. They combine incubators, training centers and laboratories, as well as offices, general-work and recreational spaces. Other than that, Techparks also provide access to training centers and showrooms. There are several Techparks opened in different regions of Georgia and many craftsmen use their high-tech equipment in their work.

As already mentioned, these kinds of services dedicated to the solely crafts actors are rather sporadic, they are provided by the NGO sector and are project-based. On the other hand, TechParks and FabLabs, having more regular support, are focusing on a wider audience and craftsmen have to enter in competition with other actors.

POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

LEGISLATION

For the beginning it is important on a legislative level to determine what stands behind “Traditional craftsmanship” or “Cultural Industry”, how it is described, safeguarded, regulated or promoted legally. So

far, the basic legislative act available in the Georgian legal body with the aim of safeguarding cultural heritage is the *“Georgian law on the Cultural Heritage”*: none of the definitions above is specified in the law. A special attention should also be paid to the regulations related to “Intangible Cultural Heritage”, which is legally determined as: *“Oral traditions and forms of expression, including a language as a carrier of tangible cultural heritage, performing arts, traditions and rules, customs, knowledge and skills related to the traditional arts and crafts, as well as instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural space related to them, which are recognized by the society, groups and individuals as a part of their cultural heritage”*. The law defines the Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection of Georgia as a State authority responsible for the identification, documentation (audio, video, written), maintenance and safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The law also establishes a list and a register of ICH objects. However, the *“Georgian law on Cultural Heritage”* is not adapted to the peculiarities of ICH and its provisions cannot properly regulate the mentioned area.

Granting status of ICH and procedures of registration are determined by the *Order #3/28 dated January 24, 2012 of the Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection of Georgia on the Approval of the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Form of Register”*.

The *“Georgian Law on Entrepreneurs”* establishes that any entrepreneurial activity must be registered through an appropriate procedure, and thus regulates crafts-based economic activities.

The Georgian Tax Code regulates the legal forms of economic activities and does not provide different rules for traditional craftsmanship. For legal entities, the legal forms can be: limited liability company – LLC; joint liability company – JLC; limited liability partnership – LLP; cooperative society. In the case of natural persons, they can be registered as: individual natural persons and taxpayer natural persons.

Another important legislative document related to the crafts sector is the Georgian Law on Copyrights and Neighbouring Rights: copyright, collective and individual trademarks, geographical indications, design registration are fields which are closely connected with crafts production.

POLICIES

At present, national policies do not have any special measures for the valorization of older craftsmen.

The draft of Georgian Law on ICH (Intangible Cultural Heritage) envisages the establishment of the title of “Living Treasure”, that in most cases will be associated with elder craftsmen, although the law is still not adopted.

Other mechanisms may be the annual contest “Craftsmen of the Year”, run by GHCA in cooperation with the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation since 2015, which acts as a means of recognizing the achievements in different aspects of the sector and raising awareness within the society. The nominations vary from year to year, for example: The Best Teacher Craftsman, The Best Young Craftsmen, The Most Interactive Workshop etc. The introduction of this special nomination for the contribution in Crafts may have a positive impact on the recognition of elder craftsmen.

LEGAL CHALLENGES

Georgia is one of the many countries facing problems in identifying its crafts sector due to the country’s legal framework failing to take it fully into account. This leads to a lack of specific regulation regarding crafts. A part of the problem is that the exact definition and scope of crafts is undefined by the Georgian legislation. The Law of Georgia on Culture mentions “folk crafts and craftsmanship” (ხალხური რეწვა და ხელობა) and “artistic souvenirs” (მხატვრული სუვენირი) amongst the fields composing the “cultural sphere”, while the crafts sector itself is not defined as such, and its characteristics or other features are not properly established as well.

Hence, as crafts can’t be identified as a separated field and be subject to any special targeted benefits, they fit the legislation valid for entrepreneurship in general. It should be mentioned that the Georgian tax code envisages a number of benefits for the small and micro entrepreneurs, which can be useful for crafts actors and thus obtain rather simplified procedures for the tax reporting. Significant challenges faced by the crafts actors are due to the non-familiarity of the regulations and reporting procedures, derived from the fact that crafts for a long period were not recognized as a stable source of income and treated rather as part of the traditions and culture rather than as an economic activity.



ITALY

INTRODUCTION

Italy has a great tradition and a huge heritage of craftsmen in a wide variety of sectors and processes. Often, they derive from ancient popular artistic expressions handed down over the centuries.

According to Confartigianato, in 2019 there were 288,302 artistic craft enterprises with a total of 801,001 employees, i.e., 22.2% of craft enterprises and 28.2% of employees in the national craft sector. The enterprises are distributed rather evenly over the various areas (metals, foodstuffs, clothing, wood, etc.), but there are specific territorial vocations, such as footwear in the Marche, artistic ceramics in Umbria, leather goods in Tuscany, artistic glass in Veneto, etc. These four regions are also considered to be the most important for artistic craftsmanship at a national level.

Again, according to Confartigianato (2020), before the pandemic, craft enterprises made limited use of new technologies (e.g., 20% didn't have a business website), but the Coronavirus situation gave a strong acceleration: for example, e-commerce in September 2020 was already up 24.9% compared to the same period 12 months earlier.

DESIGN, CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF A BUSINESS

The first digital craft projects arrived in Italy in 2011 with the aim of responding to a double need: to help artisans develop the service component of their work, thus not focusing exclusively on the production side, and to successfully combine customisation with the efficiency and economy of scale typical of mass production (mass customisation). Digital craftsmen (also known as "*makers*") therefore carry out their activities with the support of digital technologies and with the aim of generating products that can also be customised based on the end user's requests, thanks to these new technologies.

Among the most widespread experiences supporting this innovative phenomenon is the FabLab network, i.e., open digital fabrication laboratories where anyone can make their own prototype, even at low cost, thanks to the use of 3D printers. According to Censis, in 2016, there were 115 Italian FabLabs, the majority of which are located in the North of Italy and in the big cities, with a lack in the Centre-South.

There are also a number of projects created to promote the presence of craftsmen on the digital market, by creating specialised virtual showcases, highlighting crafts and encouraging the creation of professional networks. Some examples are:

- [Calzolari 2.0](#) - a website promoted by Associazione Italiana ufficiale dei calzolari (the official Italian shoemakers' association), a member of Confartigianato at national level, to promote the visibility and digital networking of craft shoemakers.

- [Wellmade](#) - a platform to discover craftsmen, learn about their work and review their products and tailor-made services.
- [Storie di artigiani italiani](#) - a project aimed at promoting and raising awareness of the craft tradition of the Valle Camonica, through digital storytelling.
- [Maker Faire Rome](#) – Maker Fairs are places where people of all ages come together to show what they are doing and to validate their prototypes. The Rome edition is the largest outside the United States, where this initiative was born.

There are also programmes to support the digital transformation of craft enterprises in the form of [incubators](#) and [digital audits](#).

[Lapam Confartigianato Imprese of Modena and Reggio Emilia](#) has promoted development in the field of digitalisation through a series of free webinars called "Digitisation in pills", available in Italian on YouTube and aimed at providing information and advice on useful tools to increase the digital potential of craft businesses:

- [SPID \(Digital Identity System\) and digital payment systems](#)
- [Managing registered email \(PEC\) and Gmail: why they are crucial for your business](#)
- [The new shop function of WhatsApp Business, Facebook and Instagram](#)
- [Google My Business and the opportunities for your business](#)

EXISTING SUPPORT

CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS

In Italy there are a number of craft associations operating at national and local level, which include artistic craftsmanship among their sectors. They all offer information, research, training and consultancy services to support the activities of their members, and have developed projects to support the digital transition.

Among them, the associations active at national level which have sectors dedicated to artistic handicrafts are:

- [CNA](#) (National Confederation of Crafts and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) - Artistic and Traditional Crafts Sector
- [Confartigianato](#) - Artistic Sector
- [Casartigiani](#) (Autonomous Confederation of Crafts Unions) - Artistic and traditional trades

Another national support structure is [Fondartigianato](#) (Interprofessional Training Fund), which manages the contributions paid by entrepreneurs for the training and the updating of their employees. The resources of the Fondo Artigianato Formazione are used to finance continuous training activities and training plans for companies, as well as to promote digital innovation.

FUNDING PROGRAMMES

Grants to support craft enterprises can be provided at national, regional or local level. Some calls for proposals are funded on a regular basis, while others may be contingent and therefore available on a one-off basis. The sources for up-to-date information are therefore numerous and varied.

A first suggestion is to regularly visit the websites and social profiles of:

- the above-mentioned trade associations;
- the Chamber of Commerce of the Province where the business is based;
- the Region where the company is based.

Sometimes it is also possible to subscribe to electronic newsletters to receive updates whenever new information is published.

A public point of reference - solely regarding national incentives - favouring the creation of new enterprises and innovative start-ups is the [National Development Agency, owned by the Ministry of the Economy](#) (Invitalia).

There are also a number of websites offered by private organisations dealing with subsidised financing, which list open calls for proposals on their pages, divided by region.

DIGITALIZATION AND UPSKILLING PROGRAMMES

With regard to supporting craft enterprises to incorporate digital elements into their daily work, see Topic 1.

There are also regional and national programmes that support the digital transformation of existing companies, as well as the creation of innovative start-ups through both funding and consultancy, which can also apply to arts and crafts. To this end, we recommend consulting the references listed in the previous section.

As described, the main characteristic of these programmes is their fragmentary nature (as they are mainly managed on a local basis).

There is also a lack of training and support programmes aimed specifically at senior craftsmen, with the exception of pathways aimed at recognising and valuing "master craftsmen" who train apprentices in their craft activities: all regions have formalised and regulated this figure by setting up "[Botteghe scuola](#)" ([Workshop schools](#)). As it emerges from Giacomelli's study (2018), being involved in the training of young apprentices can indirectly support the processes of digitisation as there is a *"need to build a relationship of exchange and mutual growth, between young apprentice and senior craftsman, based on the shared interest in finding a new form of innovative craftsmanship, which is able to capitalise on the opportunities offered by new technologies and globalisation of markets, without however losing the 'aesthetic dimension' that has always distinguished craftsmanship from simple industrial production."* (Page 184)

POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

LEGISLATION

In Italy, [Law No. 443 of 08 August 1985](#), the Framework Law for Crafts, is in force. It outlines the basic principles on the subject and defines the fundamental criteria within which regions can issue regional laws in favour of craftsmen.

There is also a regulation ([Presidential Decree No. 288 of 2001](#)) that specifically defines artistic work as *"creations, productions and works of high aesthetic value or inspired by forms, models, decorations, styles and techniques that constitute typical elements of the historical and cultural heritage (...)"* and traditional work as *"productions and service activities carried out according to techniques and methods that have been consolidated and handed down in customs and habits at local level"*. For both types of work, it's specified that they must be carried out using predominantly manual techniques, but also with the aid of instruments and equipment, with the exclusion of mass production processes and automated work phases.

As mentioned above, the regions have the possibility to legislate autonomously on craftsmanship, while respecting the parameters provided by the Framework Law. It's indeed difficult to provide a uniform and complete overview of the legislation on the subject at national level.

However, it is worth noting, by way of example, that the Emilia Romagna region introduced in 2020 the following [regulatory changes](#) aimed, among other things, at supporting the digitisation of craft enterprises (art. 12).

POLICIES

Apart from this, support to elderly craftsmen could be placed within the broader policies of active ageing, age management in businesses and lifelong learning. For example, there is the funding of measures to facilitate intergenerational training and enhance the experience of older workers. An example is Veneto's transversal law (Regional Law No. 23 of 2017) that provides funding for projects aiming to transfer skills from older workers to younger ones, including the transmission of older crafts and trades (Barbabella et al, 2020).

On the other hand, the participation of older workers (and especially those with lower education) in lifelong learning activities to improve their skills is still extremely low, as is the investment in retraining in smaller enterprises, such as craft enterprises (Anpal, 2019).

LEGAL CHALLENGES

A survey of about 200 craft enterprises with less than 10 employees, more than a third of which are run by people over 50 years old, showed that in more than half of the cases bureaucracy is considered excessive and too time-consuming. About one third of the respondents claim not to have benefitted significantly from the digitisation of the Public Administration, due to the lack of digital skills required to use these services. (Confartigianato Massa-Carrara, 2012).

According to a study published in 2020 by Confartigianato Piemonte, bureaucratic, legislative or fiscal difficulties are the first obstacles to the generational transfer of one's own business. (Studies office of Confartigianato, 2020).

PORTUGAL

INTRODUCTION

According to data from the **INE** (National Statistics Institute) of 2020, in Portugal, the percentage of citizens over 65 years old constitutes about 21.4% in the more urban areas and 30.9 in the more rural areas. The aging index shows very high values, also especially in rural areas: 334.8. This means that for every 100 young people under the age of 15, there are about 335 people over 65 living in rural areas of the country. Data like these emphasizes the need for state investment in this age group, especially in their inclusion, health, and well-being. Many of this population with more than 65 years are still working and there is a necessity of integrating them in the actual market. Training workers in digital skills is considered a very important tool for the development of microenterprises. Some older workers don't have these skills.

Portuguese handicraft is strongly linked to the cultural identity of this country. Typically, artisans produce in their own homes and participate in all stages of production. Each region has its own particularity in terms of handicrafts, which gives rise to a great variety of practices throughout the country. Among the most frequent practices we can mention woollen craftsmanship; wood craftsmanship; pottery crafts (clay and clay); and straw craftsmanship (Crafts Innovation, 2014; Barrica,2020).

The need for a structure which supports and organizes handicraft activity in Portugal has led to the emergence of some organizations for this purpose (Kind Purposes, 2020). According to the national craft register, there are 3150 recognized craft producers in the country.

The National Handicrafts Register, accessible through the **CEARTE** (Centro de Formação Profissional para o Artesanato e Património) website, shows 3173 craftsmen in Portugal. Of these, the most frequent practice in the country is textile crafts (1133 certified). This is followed by ceramic crafts (484) and wood crafts (349).

In Portugal, the population has shown a greater preference for designer decoration products over handcrafted products. The media promotes interest in simpler and more easily disposable products. The price of handcrafted products is often more expensive than industrialized ones, something that is also not very motivating for artisans (Neves et al.,2011).

The main support structures to the national handicraft are: IEFP – Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional, IP; CEARTE – Centro de Formação Profissional do Artesanato; Associação Portugal à Mão - Centro Estudos e Promoção das Artes e Ofícios Portugueses; FPAO – Federação Portuguesa de Artes e Ofícios; CRAA – Centro Regional de Apoio ao Artesanato (Açores); IVBAM – Instituto do Vinho, do Bordado e do Artesanato da Madeira, I.P. (Crafts Innovation, 2014).

The predominant craft category in Portugal, called "Textile Arts and Crafts" constitutes 27.1% of all craft activity in the country. The second most dominant group is called "other crafts and trades". The pottery

category, on the other hand, occupies third place and constitutes 15.54% of Portuguese craft activity (Crafts Innovation, 2014).

DESIGN, CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF A BUSINESS

In this topic, it is important to talk about CEARTE and some of his programs.

CEARTE is the entity responsible for: (1) Training and Professional Qualification of artisans; 2) Certifying the skills of these professionals; (3) Provision of pertinent technical, scientific and pedagogical information through the Knowledge Resource Center for Handcrafts;(4) support in structuring the sector; (5) supporting innovation and innovation and modernization of the sector. In the scope of this fifth valence, CEARTE is part of the Crafting Europe project, a transnational project between several partner organizations.

The European Crafting Europe project promotes capacity building in the craft sector and seeks to support the challenges faced by craftspeople, companies and organizations that play a role in the development of the sector in Europe.

It aims to build a common development policy for crafts in Europe, fostering the development of skills and business models for European crafts and organizations and innovative approaches that will enable them to access new market channels.

The European crafting Europe integrates the iAtelier program ARTE, n.d).

iAtelier is a program aimed at artisans and designers, supporting them through digital technologies as tools to support craft production. The program has two phases. The first took place until July 14, 2021, and the second goes from September to November 2021. The products resulting from this integration of technology into handmade production will be presented during Dutch Design Week in 2022.

Another example is the program **CEARTE AID LABS** and its subdivision **LOC (Laboratório de Orientação Criativa/Creative Orientation Lab)**, also from CEARTE (Professional Training Center for Handicraft and Heritage), that support artisans in the development of their microenterprises, guiding them in the use of technology in favour of better adapting to the demands of today's market. This is a free service aimed at artisans. through an online platform LOC's clients have access to privileged information about market trends, useful information for the expansion of their business (CEARTE, n.d).

Another example is the “**Powering Arts & Crafts Program**”, which seeks to promote new skills in local artisans and craft producers, with a view to adapting to more contemporary markets. Sessions include communication techniques and digital skills development. This is a program aimed at artisans, designers,

creatives and other producers of locally based handicrafts in the municipality of Évora. The goal is to train participants in areas of planning and management considering their business activities in order to develop as entrepreneurs (CEARTE, n.d)

EXISTING SUPPORT

CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS

IEFP – Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional, IP Since 2007, the IEFP is the public entity in charge of the handicraft sector. The IEFP is not specific for Craft, but in this sector, it is responsible for the development of the Crafts and Micro Oficinas e Microempresas Artesanais (PPART), created in 1997 This, has the objective of promoting the arts and crafts in Portugal

With PPART, IEFP has the following responsibilities: 1) implementation of the Statute of the Artisan and of the Artisanal Productive Unit of the Artisan Productive Unit; 2) revision and updating of the National Qualifications Catalogue; 3) qualification and certification of traditional craft products 4) support for the promotion of handicrafts; 5) support for the implementation of the IBERIONA- Jornadas do Artesanato Ibérico; 6) EUROARTE project - Network of European 7) Co-edition of the magazine "Mãos", a publication dedicated to reflection on the challenges on the challenges faced by the sector, as well as its promotion.

The **National System of Qualification and Certification of Traditional Handcrafted Productions - SNQCPAT** aims to promote and guarantee the quality of traditional handcrafted productions.

CEARTE – Centro de Formação Profissional do Artesanato: CEARTE was created in 1986. Its mission is to promote professional training and certification of skills to the general population, especially to artisans. It supports the innovation and modernization of the arts and crafts. It is headquartered in Coimbra and operates all over the national territory.

CRAT – Centro Regional de Artes Tradicionais : CRAT - Regional Centre for Traditional Arts - This is an organization that ceased to exist in 2010. However, we think it is relevant to mention it, because it played a crucial role in the study, promotion, modernization and dissemination of Portuguese arts and Portuguese arts and crafts, especially in the Northern region.

Associação Portugal à Mão - Centro Estudos e Promoção das Artes e Oficinas /Center for the Study and Promotion of Arts and Crafts. Associação Portugal à Mão is a non-profit association, based in Vila Nova de Gaia, which the work developed by CRAT. The general objective of this organization is the promotion of

Portuguese arts and crafts, research and dissemination Portuguese crafts are regulated by the associations and the Portuguese Federation of Arts and Crafts:

Federação Portuguesa de Artes e Ofícios (FPAO)- Portuguese Federation of Arts and Crafts, was created in 2001. It is a private non-profit institution, which regulates the associations of the Arts and Crafts sector in Portugal. It seeks the promotion of this sector and of Portuguese handicrafts, as well as the implementation of policies that ensure the defence of the socio-professional conditions of artisans. Among the activities involved in this organization are to define and delimit the Portuguese handicraft, its companies and administrative organizations; the implementation and coordination of projects; consulting services; clarification sessions on the Artisan Statute; training courses and workshops; conferences, congresses and seminars; fairs and exhibitions; organize and support activities that promote Portuguese crafts and skilled trades, both internally and externally; collaborate in the National Handicrafts Register (Crafts Innovation, 2014).

The following associations are part of the FPAO: Association of Artisans of the Northern Region; Association of Artisans of Aveiro; Association of Artisans of Serra da Estrela; Association of Arts and Crafts of Seixal; Association of Artisans and Artists of Beja; Association of Artisans of Algarve; Association of Artisans of the Island of S. Miguel; Association of Artisans Gathered; Association of Artisans of Espírito Santo. Of these, we will highlight the Associação de Artesãos de Aveiro, given that it corresponds to the city where our target audience lives and works. (FPAO, n.d; Crafts Innovation, 2014)

FUNDING PROGRAMMES

As mentioned, the main organizations or entities that artisans can turn to when looking for support, information, or opportunities are these: CEARTE; FPAO; IEFP.

These are all programmes that support craftsmen, and that can orient them to develop their business. However, we don't have information if the craftsman can search for funding in these organizations.

DIGITALIZATION AND UPSKILLING PROGRAMMES

As mentioned above, the CEARTE AID LABS that also integrates the LOC (Creative Lab Orientation) are services that support artisans in digitalization, consulting, and new business. We can also mention the Arts and Crafts Promotion Program, the National System of Qualification and Certification of Traditional Craft Productions. There is no information about age limits to access these programs, though they are not tailored and customized to older generations (CEARTE, LOC; CEARTE, Aid Labs)

Given the general need in Portugal to become increasingly digital, the Action Plan for Digital Transition in the project Portugal Digital, was created in 2020. This program aims to achieve the modernization and internationalization of companies, as well as the inclusion of people. One of the pillars of this program focuses on the training and inclusion of people (diverse target audiences) regarding digital skills, namely in the areas of technology and information and Communication and Electronics (Portugal Digital, 2021).

The organization "Digital skills for all" seeks to promote digital skills for unemployed citizens over 55 years old, with the aim of promoting entrepreneurship and equal opportunities (Portugal Digital, 2021).

The initiative Portal Sénior e-mili@, refers to a portal that allows not only the training of digital skills by the elderly but also to gather all the initiatives related to active aging in the council, either promoted by the Municipality of Santa Maria da Feira or by the Social Network entities (E-milia, 2020).

These are not exactly related to crafts but about supporting digitalization in older people.

POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

LEGISLATION

According to the Portuguese newspaper "Diário da República Eletrónico", there is a legislation, nº 285/2020 of December 11 that corresponds to the "Exceptional Support Measure for Artisans and Artisanal Production Units." This is a measure that seeks to temporarily ensure the maintenance of the craft activity. Recipients of this measure will be entitled to the financial support of up to four Social Support Indexes (IAS), corresponding to the average value of the support granted between 2017 and 2019 for participation in fairs and exhibitions under the Arts and Crafts Promotion Program (Diário da República Eletrónico, 2020).

All recognized artisans in the country are given the "Carta de artesão" (Artisan Card) and "Carta de Unidade Produtiva Artesanal" (Artisan Productive Unit Card). This is an official recognition system for craft producers in Portugal, regulated by the Institute of Employment and Professional Training and CEARTE, which evaluates applications.

For someone to be recognized as a craftsman in Portugal, they must meet certain requirements, which goes from having a vocational training certificate to a proof of activity or non-formal learning. This is defined by legislation.

The technical evaluation of the various processes, for the emission and renovation of the Artisan Charter and Artisanal Productive Unit, is performed by the Office for the Promotion of Arts and Crafts (GPAO), which is a service of CEARTE. The National System of Qualification and Certification of Traditional Handcrafted Productions/ Sistema Nacional de Qualificação e Certificação de Produções Artesanais Tradicionais (SNQCPAT), to which corresponds the technical analysis of the requests for registration of traditional productions.

POLICIES

The "Saber-Fazer" program is an example of a national strategy that promotes traditional arts and crafts and helps preserve traditional values for generations to come, as well as the qualification of the sector and craftsmen. The main features of this program are the preservation (research, monitoring), vocational training (continuity, passing knowledge to other generations), capacity-building (technical support and innovation, around better products and better selling) and promotion (valorisation through active employment measures, connection with tourism attraction, etc) of the traditional crafts production . This program applies for the period 2021-2024 (Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 89/2020).

Policies like this arise from the government's recognition of the potential of this sector.

LEGAL CHALLENGES

Some of the potential challenges for the craftspeople in Portugal can be related to the lack of clear information about the national legislation. Interviewers mentioned not knowing about the "Exceptional Support Measure for Artisans and Artisanal Production Units", others referred not having access to clear information about how to get the Artisan Card, to be recognized as an official artisan. Complaints were directed at the excessive bureaucracy and the "legal/ formal" vocabulary used. Mentioning that this isn't easy to interpret for everyone, especially for older people without any studies in law/legal.

One specific challenge that was discussed, underlined the specific cases of families/couples who are both craftsmen and the potential need for a more supportive subsidy or help in these cases.



ROMANIA

INTRODUCTION

Romania is a very rich country in terms of craft activities. Among the artisanal products created by elder craftsmen, there are:

- Religious objects, such as icons on glass or wood, candles and candlesticks, bells;
- Fabrics, such as carpets, belts, rugs and towels;
- Folk costumes;
- Wooden objects and braids, as well as wooden garden decorations and wooden churches, especially in the Maramures region;
- Clay and ceramic objects (bowls, plates, cups, pots, dolls);
- Decorative and furniture items: decorated eggs, chairs, garden and interior decorations.

Each area of Romania is usually specialized in the production of one or more of the products mentioned. For instance, the Maramures region is specialized in wooden decorations and churches, while Moldova is specialized in clay and ceramic production, as well as Transylvania. Each region makes use of specific colours, materials and decoration patterns.

Craftsmanship is considered with great importance at national level, since it helps keeping traditions alive and passing them on from generation to generation. In fact, Romania is very attached to its culture and traditions, and the objects produced by craftsmen are seen primarily as an expression of the rich Romanian cultural heritage. For this reason, artisanal activities are preserved by the State, which often promotes financial programmes and other kinds of initiatives, with the aim of fostering and spreading the Romanian richness in crafts and traditions.

DESIGN, CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF A BUSINESS

Although the use of digital instruments is not really frequent among the eldest craftsmen, there are several cases of craft activities in which ICT play an important role in relation to the launch and the maintenance of an artisanal business.

The most common purpose for which digital technologies are used is selling craft objects online. On the web there can be found several examples of craftsmen selling their creations, and everyone has their own webpage, with their own information and contacts. Although several craftsmen have created a webpage for promoting their business online, the great majority of these webpages present a very basic structure,

are incomplete or not updated, and are not user-friendly. This may denote that craftsmen do not invest sufficiently on digital instruments to promote their activities online, maybe due to a lack or to a bad management of economic resources. However, at the same time this may be a signal demonstrating the lack of digital competencies in this field.

A more particular use of digital technologies in the craft field is related to the existence of specific websites, to which any craftsman can freely adhere on a voluntary basis. These websites are aimed at collecting information related to every adhering craftsman, with the final result of getting the business known by a larger number of potential clients. As a benefit for these last, they can more easily find a greater amount of information about any craft object they are looking for.

An example of these kind of services is represented by "[Harta mestesugarilor](#)" ("Craftsmen map"), a website designed precisely as a map, which indicates the location of each craftsman, the kind of objects produced and other relevant information, such as link to their websites and contact information.

These kinds of websites and other related similar digital technologies could be very useful both during the launch phase of a craft business and during its expansion in the market, since they help craftsmen to be known more easily, quickly and on a wider scale by potential clients interested in their products. They also offer the potential to be known at a national or even international level, instead of keeping the business operative only at a local level. Other benefits generated by these digital instruments are represented by the promotion of Romanian crafts at a wider level and the stimulation of networking between the various craftsmen that adhere to these websites, who can exchange their experiences and best practices.

Another interesting aspect is the use of online channels to promote the so-called "craft tourism", i.e. the creation of specific digital gates to stimulate the interest of tourists towards craftsmanship. These digital gates, in fact, offer several information and curiosities about Romanian craft businesses and specific craftsmen. This is made possible also through the offer of both physical and online visits to craft shops, where tourists have the opportunity to get to know several artisans and how they create their craft objects. One example is represented by the digital journal "Romania insider", which –among others - presents a section with a list of articles and news about several craft shops and activities open to tourists in several parts of Romania. It also collects a series of initiatives organized by affiliated craft museums or shops, such as workshops where visitors can learn how to produce traditional objects, or even a so-called "route of traditional crafts", where visitors have the opportunity to take part in guided tours to several different craft businesses in specific areas of Romania. Actually, near the city of Bucharest, even a Village of Crafts ("[Satul Mestesugarilor](#)") has been created: it offers the possibility to visit seven old crafts and to take parts to interactive events and workshops. Some of them, in particular during the Covid-19 pandemic, have been organized online, thus exploiting even more the potential of digital instruments in the craft field.

The aim of these digital gates is combining travelling with the promotion of Romanian crafts, thus keeping traditions alive. Since older craftsmen are more attached to traditions, these websites often host several craftsmen among the eldest ones, capable of representing traditions better than the youngest. This use of ICT represents, thus, a great opportunity for elder craftsmen to be known by a wider market.

EXISTING SUPPORT

CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS

At the national level, one of the most important associations to be mentioned is **ASTRA - Asociația Transilvană pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român** (i.e. the Transilvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Culture), founded in the 1861 in order to respond to an almost complete lack of associationism phenomena in the craft sector, and to a lack of any entity providing assistance, counselling and guiding in this field. The **ASTRA museum**, located in Sibiu, currently acts as the catalyst for the activities carried on by the Association; it also represents one of the best ways to promote Romanian craft products both at national and at international level. However, in addition to the museum, ASTRA currently manages and supports different minor organizations, in addition to organizing the most important craft fairs in the Romanian territory:

Asociația Creatorilor Populari din România (Association of Popular Creators from Romania), founded in the 1990s. It operates at national level and aims at: encouraging traditional craft and artistic creation in all the villages where it still takes place; transmitting this cultural heritage to the future; protecting and supporting authentic creation within the national and international commercial-tourist network; promoting the most representative popular creators by participating in events organized in the country and abroad; defending the moral and material interests of these creators. Several craft objects are exhibited in the ASTRA museum, one of the most important Romanian craft museums, from which this association has been created. This association is also responsible for promoting the so-called “Human Living Treasures” related to Romanian traditions and ancient culture.

Târgul Creatorilor Populari din România (The Fair of Popular Creators in Romania), an yearly fair organized by the ASTRA museum, which today brings together 300 folk craftsmen, being the largest and most famous fair of its kind in Romania. It outlines the image of the whole typology of traditional crafts passed down from the elderly.

Another entity operating at the national level is **Institut National al Patrimoniului (INP)**, i.e. the National Heritage Institute, financed by the Ministry of Culture. Even if INP is mainly involved in providing technical support for the protection and renovation of historical monuments, it also carries on different activities aimed at the conservation, protection and enhancement of Romanian cultural heritage. For instance, it manages a database of public interest containing an inventory with all the forms of cultural heritage in Romania; it also provides technical and specialized assistance to cultural institutions.

Apart from these national associations, Romania hosts several other craft organizations, most of them operating mainly at the local level. In fact, usually, each district has its own craft organization. There can be mentioned the **Associations of Folk Craftsmen, divided in counties**. In this case, each county has its own organization and they can be found on the Internet writing “Asociația Meșterilor Populari din...” (i.e. Association of Folk Craftsmen of...”, followed by the name of the county. The most known ones are:

Asociația Meșterilor Populari din Bucovina (The Association of Folk Craftsmen from Bucovina). On the website of the Association can be found many creators from the Bucovina area, who present their handicrafts and can be contacted by those who want to get in touch with them.

Asociația Meșterilor Populari din Moldova (The Association of Folk Craftsmen of Moldova): it was founded out of a natural desire to preserve and capitalize on the resources of folk crafts with a predominant artistic character. Currently, this association has about 100 members from all over the country and from the Republic of Moldova.

FUNDING PROGRAMMES

Craft organizations, including those mentioned above, represent a useful instrument for craftsmen to get known by a wider audience and to broaden their professional networks. However, in the great majority of cases, these organizations and associations do not provide consultancy services or information about where and how craftsmen can get funded. Indeed, in this regard, it could be highlighted a lack of these specific services both from private and public entities. In fact, information about funding programmes specifically issued for craftsmen is very difficult to find both online and physically, since there does not exist any specific organization dealing with this issue.

Some information can be found through entities/websites that periodically publish updates about new funding opportunities for small and medium enterprises in general, to which craft businesses are equated. Some websites that can be mentioned are, for instance:

- [Ministerul Economiei, Antreprenoriatului și Turismului](#) (Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism);

- [Consiliului Național al Întreprinderilor Private Mici și Mijlocii din România](#) (National Council of Small and Medium Private Enterprises in Romania);
- [Fonduri Structurale](#) (Structural Funds). It should be mentioned that this organization not only collects all the available funding initiatives for SMEs, but it also offers consultancy, training and business development services in the field of European funding. Once again, it should be remembered that these services are not specific thought for craft businesses, but for SMEs in general;
- [Registrul Ajutoarelor de Stat din România](#) (Romanian State Aid Register).

DIGITALIZATION AND UPSKILLING PROGRAMMES

As mentioned, craft activities are considered with great importance by the Romanian State, since they play a fundamental role in the preservation of ancient traditions and cultures. Moreover, craft activities have a great importance in helping the development of rural communities – one of the priorities of the Romanian State -, where these kinds of activities are mainly carried on. For this reason, Romania has always tried to foster craft activities through the promotion of professional courses, even with the help of the European Community, with the aim of stimulating the education of residents in rural areas and their artistic skills. Several information and consultancy services have been offered with this purpose, and the majority of initiatives in this field offer networking and peer learning opportunities. However, what is evident is a lack of a common thread and of a connection and coordination between the different services/programmes offered.

Even if, as mentioned, all the initiatives in this field are organized in a very fragmented and not coordinated way, two of them, carried out with the support of the European Union, are worth to be mentioned:

- In 2020, a very important initiative was launched: the **national program to support handicraft** (Programul național pentru susținerea meșteșugurilor și artizanatului). It is a multi-annual program to encourage and stimulate the establishment and development of small and medium enterprises. The program is an integral part of European SMEs Week 2020, which is a campaign to promote entrepreneurship in Europe and to inform entrepreneurs about the help they can benefit from at European, national and local level. This event provides SMEs with a wide range of information, tips, help and ideas for the development of their activities. European SME Week 2020 encourages and helps SMEs reach their full potential.
- **The Union of Popular Craftsmen from Moldova** (Uniunea Meșterilor Populari din Moldova), in collaboration with the International Labor Organization, produced the "**Good Practice Guide for Craft Manufacturers**". It offers practical support to craftsmen to expand their product range, market

knowledge and niche choice, business promotion and the best distribution channels on the market. The guide provides practical instructions and is based on the key principles of running a business, and through the exchange of experience between artisan manufacturers, allows learning from their own experience and the transmission of the subtleties of the craft.

In addition to the fact that the Guide promotes the management of a craft business through the economic competences needed for a real entrepreneurial business, this initiative is worth to be mentioned since it represents the only project findable on Internet which highlights the importance of developing digital skills for craftsmen, and of promoting their own business using online tools and channels. In fact, the lack of interest towards the digital world clearly represents a weakness point that needs to be improved and solved as soon as possible.

Another issue is due to the fact that, currently, there are a lot of organizations – mainly at local level - that provide networking and consultancy services. However, they provide these kinds of services for SMEs in general, and not specifically for craftsmen. Since there are no specific services for the latter, this means that, often, the specific needs and particularities of their activities are not taken into consideration enough.

Lastly, in Romania there does not exist a specific entity operating at national level responsible for the offer, recognition accreditation of professional craft courses at national level, delivering an official certificate of attendance which grants the achievement of specific skills to the course participants.

During a research in this field, **Fundatia pentru Mestesugari** (Crafts Foundation) interviewed several providers of professional craft courses: from the results, it emerged that more than half of them do not offer a certificate of attendance and do not have authorization to provide them.

The research on the state of adult education in the craft field, conducted by the Crafts Foundation, highlighted that most craftsmen learned the craft informally, from local mentors, who had a relevant reputation in those communities or even nationally. This is still the most used way of training courses, although it does not allow obtaining certificates attesting the qualification in the respective crafts. The only ones who received a certificate were those who graduated from a popular art school. The rest, those who learned the craft in the family or who worked as apprentices, did not receive any certificate.

The fact that craft skills are still mostly passed down informally from craftsmen to apprentices is also one of the reasons why official craft courses are not so popular and developed in Romania.

It should also be highlighted that the demands for authorized certificates are growing, since people want to learn a craft in a system that suits more to the current development of society and knowledge. In fact, currently, if any craftsman wants to be officially recognized, they need to present a certificate attesting their craft skills.

The Crafts Foundation's study shows another essential impediment to the development of the training system in the field of crafts: the infrastructures and instruments used by institutions to provide and promote courses are extremely modest. Craftsmen do not have multimedia support materials, access to computers, or the possibility of promoting their products via the Internet. Once again, this denotes a relevant gap in the digital field.

POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

LEGISLATION

As mentioned, Romanian craft businesses are usually equated to generic small and medium enterprises, thus ignoring and refusing the recognition of their own specificities. However, since 2020 a big change has been taking place. In fact, in 2020 the Chamber of Deputies discussed the so-called **Law of Traditional Craftsmen in Romania**. The purpose of the draft law is to regulate the general framework for recognizing the status of traditional craftsmen, their rights and duties, as well as the organization and functioning of representative structures of traditional craftsmen in Romania, in order to preserve, protect, transmit, promote and enhance crafts and traditional culture.

The law includes the official definition – among others - of:

- Traditional craft: the activity of making objects for utilitarian or decorative use, by predominantly manual techniques, which are representative of traditional habits and practices at local or regional level, passed down from generation to generation; crafts traditionally can be achieved by using mechanized means of production, but in in this case the manual contribution of the traditional craftsman is the most important component in the process of making the final product;
- Traditional handicraft products: objects of utilitarian or decorative use, made through the exercise of a traditional craft, which is characterized by originality and uniqueness, through which local or regional cultures and traditions are passed on to future generations.

To resume the most salient points stressed in the law proposal:

- The status of traditional craftsman is recognized following the specific procedure regulated by this law, by decision of the **special commission** for verifying and granting the status of traditional craftsman and by issuing a certificate of traditional craftsman by the National Union of Traditional Craftsmen in Romania.

- Traditional craftsmen registered in the **National Register of Traditional Craftsmen** in Romania, for the purpose of exposing and/or commercializing their own handicraft products benefit from central places, specially arranged, during festivals, fairs and other professional events, organized at national, regional or local level.
- Traditional craftsmen registered in the National Register of Traditional Craftsmen in Romania benefit from a reduction of half of the participation fees for festivals, fairs and other professional events, where they exhibit and/or sell their traditional handicraft products.

Local councils of the administrative-territorial units in which traditional craftsmen reside may grant them some indemnities, if they are registered in the National Register of Traditional Craftsmen in Romania.

In conclusion, with the adoption of this law, there will be created the National Union of Traditional Craftsmen in Romania, the National Register of Traditional Craftsmen in Romania and the **Certificate of Traditional Craftsman**. The latter will be issued only after verifying the existence of the following characteristics:

- the specificity of the craft technological process: it results from the use of traditional production tools and techniques, in which it is essential and predominant the manual contribution of the traditional craftsman;
- the uniqueness of the handicraft product obtained as a result of the specific technological process: each craft product is unique in comparison to any other similar craft product, made by the same traditional craftsman or by another traditional craftsman, as well as in comparison to other products made through mechanized mass production processes;
- the expression of elements specific of the local, regional or national popular tradition – regarding either the specific technological process used for their creation, or their materials and design.

POLICIES

There haven't been found any specific national policies aiming at safeguarding elder craftsmen and enhancing their professional competencies.

Since the current situation in Romania, it should be fundamental for national policies to value craft activities, given also the **fundamental role they play in the development of rural communities**, which represents one of the national priorities. National policies should mainly promote craft businesses carried on by the elder craftsmen, since they are the most suited to promote and **pass on ancient traditions and cultures**.

For these reasons, the creation of national policies to valorize older craftsmen is on its way, even if they are still at the very beginning. They present a lot of space for improvement, being adapted to craftsmen's specific needs and conditions.

For instance, policies should be thought of in such a way that they could **capitalize on craftsmen's talent in an entrepreneurial system**, meant to bring them much higher incomes. These promotion activities should be thought of in the context of integration of Romania in a **world tourism circuit**.

Therefore, given the current national situation, policies should be aimed at improving craftsmen's entrepreneurial capabilities, but also at stimulating their interest in digital channels and tools. For instance, it could be of great importance the organization of **specific consultancy services and/or professional courses** – recognized at national level – organized taking into consideration the specific conditions, capabilities and needs of elder craftsmen. In fact, it should be remembered that the current national policies do not make any distinction between young and old craftsmen, but not even between craft businesses and other types of SMEs, and this represents a central aspect that could certainly be improved. Elder craftsmen also would need specific services related to ICTs since they could feel less comfortable with digital technologies, if compared to the younger ones.

LEGAL CHALLENGES

No specific challenges have been discussed and highlighted by the craftsmen interviewed. They pointed out that the national legislation about how to become a recognized craftsman and how to create a craft business is quite simple and clear. The only negative aspect that has been highlighted is the fact that the "Law of Traditional Craftsmen in Romania" has not been approved yet by the Parliament, and they are afraid that it will never be approved. In fact, for many years craftsmen have been fighting for a legal recognition of themselves and this draft law is the first attempt to answer this request. However, too much time has already passed and the approval process is now stagnating, which is not a good sign.

CONCLUSIONS

The study and the researches carried out by the partners show that in the various territories almost all Governments recognise the importance of handicrafts and support their development with public initiatives. However, what was found is that the difference is actually made by trade associations, private or spontaneous initiatives, active in offering support to the creation of enterprises in the craft sector, both through formally constituted bodies and spontaneous activities. These initiatives, both public and private, have for years recognised the importance of integrating digital and technology to boost the work of craftsmen, both in terms of production and the dissemination and sale of craft products.

From the point of view of policies and legislation it emerged that more or less in all countries the bureaucratic paths are quite long and full of different criteria and requirements. This seems to have repercussions on the craftsmen themselves, who feel lost, hindered and pressurised by the excessive bureaucratic and legal demands.

However, what seems to be missing in the various partner countries are comprehensive supports and guides for elderly craftsmen, which include practical advice for both the creation and maintenance of the craft activity and its development through the use of technology. The present guide is particularly innovative in this sense, as is not available a similar one that tries to respond to this lack in the panorama of crafts over 50.

In addition, to enable the production of this guidebook, the results that emerged during this research phase will also be used to inspire the future phases of the project. They will be the starting point to further support craftsmen over 50 years old through a Training course to boost craft businesses and an Arts and Crafts toolkit.

COMMON MESSAGES FROM INTERVIEWS

In the framework of the project, experienced older craftsmen were interviewed with the goal of highlighting their perspectives in relation to:

- Drivers to start a business

According to respondents, the main driver that can enact the idea of starting a new business are: passion for creativity, family tradition, friends and freedom of choice and expression.

- Difficulties in craft business

Craftsmen experience challenges in various stage of the business development, starting from the creation (bureaucracy, initial investment, brand creation), to the development (creation of visibility, collaborations, investment, communication of the value of the creations), until the innovation phase (when it comes to the adaptation to modern times and the lack of digital skills, commercial knowledge and time).

- Strengths and weaknesses

When comparing themselves with younger craftsmen, senior craftsmen identified both strengths (more experience, both in life and work, recognition in the area, knowledge and skills) and weaknesses (getting tired over time, lack of time, lack of adaptability to innovation and the digital environment)

- Obstacles in relation to ICT

Specific obstacles were identified in relation to ICT: older craftsmen usually have poor to medium relationship with digital technologies and use ICT mostly for promoting in social media and communication. It is recognised that craftsmen who don't use digital technologies are disadvantaged as digital and social media presence is a key for modern promotion and for selling their creations. The reasons why approaching ICT is challenging for them are: a lot of time needed, language learning and getting accustomed to innovations.

- Support services

The most effective services that could be offered in order to promote or improve the use of ICT among older craftsmen are: training and awareness programs and subcontracting services from associations and stakeholders

- Their recommendations to peers willing to start a business in the craft sector

The recommendations include: having a good artistic predisposition and passion for creativity, be persistent and never give up, invest in ICT and digital literacy, begin with high quality infrastructure and materials and take an example from other experienced craftspeople.

Main outcomes of the interviews were summarised in the following **info-graphic**:

ROADMAP FOR CREATING A CRAFT BUSINESS WHEN YOU ARE 50+



