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TRACKS4CRAFTS



CRAFTOUR policy recommendations for European crafts

Policy recommendations round table,
December 10th, 2025, Brussels, Belgium.

CRAFTOUR policy recommendations for European crafts

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The CRAFTOUR initiative.

The CRAFTOUR initiative was launched to bring together and harmonize the results of four Horizon projects funded under the HORIZON Research and Innovation Actions programme (HORIZON-CL2-2022-HERITAGE-01.04). The scope of these projects was defined by the Horizon call, which required actions to preserve and modernise traditional crafts by merging ancient techniques with new digital and cutting-edge technologies. In response, the projects aim to create innovative products, services, professions and training opportunities that connect tradition with contemporary innovation. This includes developing platforms, curricula and entrepreneurship skills, and building strong networks among researchers, craftspeople, cultural institutions, authorities and businesses. The ultimate goal is to safeguard traditional know-how, open new markets, stimulate innovation and support sustainable growth in the cultural and creative sectors.

The four projects initially involved (CRAEFT, Tracks4Crafts, Hephaestus and Colours4Crafts) were later joined by two additional initiatives, viz. Culturality (Horizon – Tourism) and MOSAIC (Erasmus+). Together, this enlarged cluster brings together 75 partners from 21 countries, representing diverse fields of knowledge such as research, education, computer science, crafts, the public sector and cultural heritage. CRAFTOUR operates through a complementary *bottom-up* approach, grounded in the realities and needs of craft businesses, and a *top-down* approach, drawing on the vision and expertise of large transversal organisations. This dual perspective is essential to ensure constant alignment with the real world of crafts. Announced in October 2024, CRAFTOUR established working groups and a shared methodology to coordinate the efforts of this expanded consortium and to address the priority objectives identified jointly by the partners.

Working definition & scope of crafts addressed by CRAFTOUR

For the purposes of this paper, “crafts” refers to independent micro and small enterprises (including self-employed) engaged in production, transformation, repair, or services where manual skill and design/technical know-how are central to value creation. We include artistic/heritage crafts and manufacturing-adjacent crafts (e.g., musical instruments, jewellery, ceramics, glass, wood, textiles, cabinet making, carpentry, stone cutting), with the exception of those related to agricultural and culinary heritage. This is a pragmatic working definition used only to compare frameworks and highlight measurement issues; it does not claim legal status.

Introduction to all OBJECTIVES

Crafts carry a multidimensional system of values that extends well beyond their tangible outputs – products or services. Their contribution and impact can be examined through interrelated value dimensions – economic, cultural, social and environmental. Each represents a crucial layer of their relevance to contemporary society and sustainable development. Drawing inspiration from the International Charter of Artistic Craftsmanship (2009), CRAFTOUR has updated the economic, cultural and social value dimensions and further strengthened the environmental dimension. This work



benefits from the complementary expertise of the project partners, whose combined perspectives bring a new, innovative and added value to the approach.

1) Economic value. Craftsmanship is first and foremost a business – a key economic and productive resource. It consists of a widespread network of small companies, workshops and SMEs that are deeply rooted in their local territories, representing a significant share of the value created by the manufacturing sector. Craft enterprises must balance creativity, tradition and innovation with economic viability, ensuring both cultural significance and sustainability.

2) Cultural value. Craftsmanship represents a unique form of cultural heritage and a living expression of society throughout the ages. Crafts are repositories of material and immaterial knowledge, rooted in their local territory. They reflect cultural diversity, encompassing a wide range of styles, techniques, and traditions across regions and communities. In parallel, they are also bearers of “universal” cultural values, with their emphasis on design, the project and history, and contaminations between other, very different cultural sectors are frequent. As living heritage, craftsmanship plays a crucial role in safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage. It provides the specialised skills necessary for restoring/maintaining and reconstituting cathedrals, historic buildings, manuscripts, and other forms of tangible cultural treasures. Beyond preservation, craftsmanship fosters creativity, design excellence, and cultural continuity, bridging past, present and future.

3) Social value. Craftsmanship holds significant social value because it strengthens and sustains communities. Local communities act as custodians of embedded knowledge and tradition, giving them a central role in expressing collective values. This is realised through shared craft activities, such as workshops, studios and guilds, that create strong communities of practice where individuals exchange knowledge and skills, cultivating trust, solidarity and a sense of belonging. These environments foster intergenerational relationships and networks, ensuring the continuity of tradition while encouraging innovation. Craft production also supports local autonomy and resilience by favouring local materials and markets, generating stable, localised employment, and nurturing community pride.

Beyond these benefits, crafts play an important role in revitalising urban centres by reactivating spaces, creating meaningful activities for citizens, and helping to counteract the gentrification pressures facing many touristic cities. In doing so, craftsmanship contributes to building – or rebuilding – a shared sense of citizenship, while also serving as a catalyst for individual well-being and personal growth.

4) Ecological value. Craftsmanship's ecological value is expressed through its close relationship with natural, local resources, materials and ecosystems. Traditional craft practices are often based on principles of resource efficiency, repair, reuse and longevity, anticipating many of today's sustainability goals. By working with natural or locally sourced materials and favouring small-scale, low-impact production methods, craftspeople contribute to reducing waste and preserving

biodiversity. Additionally, the craft approach promotes a culture of care and durability, countering mass production and overconsumption.

Sustainability is not a separate value, but rather a thread that flows across all value dimensions of craftsmanship, economic, cultural, social and environmental. By prioritising the locally rooted production models, crafts promote economic sustainability through resilience and adaptability. Their preservation of skills, materials, and knowledge ensures cultural continuity, while their community-based nature strengthens social cohesion and inclusion. Providing shared values, meaning(s) and a sense of belonging. At the same time, the craft approach naturally supports environmental sustainability, privileging resource efficiency, repair and long product life cycles. In this sense, craftsmanship represents a holistic model of sustainable development, one that harmonises human creativity, cultural identity, social responsibility and ecological balance.

OBJECTIVE 1: Understanding, valorising and documenting European crafts

O1: Evidence and analysis

The European crafts sector: definitions, data and national frameworks, why measurement is hard but necessary?

The European crafts sector lacks a common framework, a central body and a dedicated funding scheme. In the absence of a harmonised definition and a shared statistical perimeter, EU systems such as NACE, CPA and ISCO cannot isolate crafts as a sector, while cultural definitions like UNESCO's are not statistical. Each Member State applies its own classifications, legal criteria and governance systems, which prevents meaningful consolidation and leaves the sector largely invisible at EU level. There is also no centralised mechanism to collect, analyse and disseminate comprehensive data across Europe, so measurement, monitoring and support rely on heterogeneous national or regional frameworks whose incompatible perimeters generate fragmented evidence and policy blind spots.

Reliable and comparable data are indispensable to understanding and properly valuing the sector's economic, social and cultural contribution. Without common indicators, it is difficult to plan training pipelines, preserve endangered skills, support local production or assess spillovers into design, architecture, luxury, music, tourism and the circular economy. Field evidence underscores the urgency: many traditional craft professions are endangered due to ageing practitioners and weak intergenerational transfer, even as scarcity of skilled artisans creates new opportunities for training, sustainable design and circular practices. In the absence of harmonised and reliable data, funding, training and innovation, policies risk mistargeting and strategic planning remains guesswork.

In addition to the absence of a shared definitional and statistical framework, the recognition of craft should emerge from a participatory process, which at present remains largely theoretical. The 2003

UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage indeed explicitly recognises that communities play an essential role in the production, safeguarding, maintenance, and recreation of ICH, including craftsmanship. Articles 11 and 15 require States Parties to ensure the widest possible participation of the communities, groups and individuals who create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management. The Operational Directives further identify as a key criterion the *“participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their free, prior and informed consent”*.¹ Despite this well-established recognition, participation is often carried out only in a formal, surface-level and rarely develops into a genuine bottom-up approach through which the community guides and feeds decision-making, definitions and policy governance. Craftsmanship is inherently human-borne and community-based; safeguarding it requires meaningful community involvement across shaping, defining, implementation and decision-making, as communities hold the exclusive knowledge and ongoing practice necessary for its vitality and transmission. True community guidance requires real decision rights. It is most effective when recognition systems distribute authority, participation confers actual decision power, and communities define the terms of participation while benefiting directly from the outcomes. *“Participation is necessary but not sufficient; its impact depends on who speaks for whom, under what procedures, and with what decision rights”*.²

The fragmented framework and low involvement rate of the relevant communities weaken visibility, undervalues contributions, and prevents crafts from fulfilling their potential as a driver of employment, community building, cultural diversity and regional development. Addressing the information gaps is a prerequisite for coherent EU-level action across the internal market, employment and skills, competitiveness and innovation, and for making the crafts sector visible in evidence, not only in narrative.

Employment data and statistical gaps

As the definition of “crafts” varies significantly across national sources and statistical frameworks, there is no harmonized source producing overall statistics nor a single official EU-wide figure for employment in crafts.. Depending on how the term is defined, total estimates differ substantially.

According to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP³), handicraft workers represent about 0.3% of total EU employment, corresponding to around 520,000 people employed in 2022. These workers are primarily active in the manufacturing sector and are skilled in the design, creation, repair, maintenance and decoration of precision instruments, musical instruments, jewellery, pottery, porcelain ware and other artisanal goods.

¹ UNESCO. *Operational Directives for the Implementation of human-borne the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. 2025. page 7. https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/ICH-Operational_Directives-10.GA_EN.pdf.

² Zabulis X, Partarakis N, Zidianakis E, Kaplanidi D. A Critical Review of the Function of Intangible Cultural Heritage as a Driver for Social Resilience and Cohesion. *Encyclopedia*. 2025; 5(4):189. <https://doi.org/10.3390/encyclopedia5040189>.

³ CEDEFOP. Handicraft and printing workers, skills, opportunities and challenges. 2023. <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/data-insights/handicraft-and-printing-workers-skills-opportunities-and-challenges-2023-update>.

The principal European statistical frameworks, NACE (Nomenclature of Economic Activities) and CPA (Classification of Products by Activity), do not recognise crafts as a distinct category. Only a few exceptions, such as handmade lace and tapestries, are identified. In many categories the distinction between handmade and industrial production is absent.

Similarly, ISCO-08 (International Standard Classification of Occupations) includes categories relevant to crafts, such as musical instrument artisans, jewellers, potters, glass artisans and wood or textile artisans, but these are dispersed across different occupational groups and are never aggregated into a single “crafts sector.”

The ESSnet-Culture final report (2012)⁴ recognised the cultural and economic importance of crafts, particularly for preserving traditions, supporting creativity, local economies and tourism, but concluded that no reliable EU-level data exists, as measurement relies on fragmented national sources lacking comparability.

Subsequent Eurostat publications, such as the Guide to Culture Statistics (2018)⁵, Culture Statistics (2019)⁶ and Cultural Employment Statistics (2023, updated 2024)⁷ confirm this gap. Crafts are only indirectly visible through cultural employment, where high rates of self-employment reflect the independent nature of craft work.

More details on the above mentioned cases is provided in Annex 1.

Conceptual and legal frameworks - International, European and national approaches

At the international level, UNESCO defines craft or artisanal products as: “Products that are produced by artisans, either completely by hand or with the help of hand-tools or even mechanical means, as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product.”⁸ According to UNESCO, the distinctiveness of crafts combines utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, cultural and symbolic values. These are **cultural/heritage definitions, not statistical classifications**, and they cannot be mapped directly to NACE/ISCO aggregates⁹.

⁴ ESSnet-Culture. *Final Report*. 2012. Pages 335–336.

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/341465/3199631/essnet-culture.pdf>.

⁵ Eurostat. *Guide to Culture Statistics*. 2018.

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/9433072/KS-GQ-18-011-EN-N.pdf>.

⁶ Eurostat. *Culture Statistics*. 2019. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/10177894/KS-01-19-712-EN-N.pdf>.

⁷ Eurostat. *Culture statistics, cultural employment*. 2024.

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Culture_statistics_-_cultural_employment.

⁸ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. <https://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/craft-or-artisanal-products>.

⁹ UNESCO. *Crafts definitions summary*. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Xi661GQFzfbfnf7cRRF1RcaEU49XiXT/edit>. - UNESCO. *Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), Traditional Craftsmanship*. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/traditional-craftsmanship-00057>.

At the EU level, there is no unified definition of craft enterprises. In its Recommendation of 3 April 1996 on the definition of SMEs (96/280/EC), the European Commission stated that craft enterprises “will continue to be defined at the national level, due to their specific characteristics.”¹⁰ As a consequence, each Member State applies its own classification and regulatory system, preventing the consolidation of comparable data and obstructing the creation of a coherent European crafts market.¹¹

In the absence of a common EU framework, Member States interpret and regulate crafts differently. The following examples show how national registry based models ease within country measurement but diverge in perimeter and unit of account and how regionalized or voluntary models improve local relevance but hinder EU level consolidation.

Legal basis and governance :

France and Italy adopt multilayered systems that combine a national centralized framework with regional ones. France anchors crafts in national law with the *Répertoire des métiers*¹² which is implemented through the CMA (*Chambres des Métiers*) network; Italy uses Law 443/1985 and DPR 288/2001 at state level, which are regionally implemented through schemes such as *Maestro Artigiano* for skills recognition and *Bottega Scuola* for vocational education. Germany relies on the *Handwerksordnung* with Annex A, B1, B2 and day to day implementation by 53 HWK (*Handwerkskammer*, craft chamber). Spain delegates to autonomous communities that set their own laws and registries. Belgium provides a federal, voluntary “Artisan” recognition. Greece frames crafts through programmatic instruments in regional development and state aid rather than a single national law.

Definition of crafts businesses :

France recognises crafts as independent activities in production, transformation, repair or services with a cap of **10 workers** and a ‘*droit de suite*’ that allows growth beyond the cap. Italy defines craft enterprises by size thresholds **up to 32 employees**, extendable to 40 with apprentices, and by lists of artisanal processes across 13 sectors. Germany defines crafts by activity lists in the *Handwerksordnung* with “licence required crafts” in Annex A, “licence exempt” in B1 and “craft like trades” in B2. Belgium’s “Artisan” status is on voluntary subscription basis and applies to small entities under criteria set by SPF Économie¹³, typically **under 20 workers**. Spain’s definitions vary by region and purpose, although they converge on the principle that “*Craftsmanship is an economic activity based on the creation or transformation of goods through manual processes in which the*

¹⁰ European Commission. *Commission Recommendation of 3 April 1996 concerning the definition of small and medium-sized enterprises*. 1996. Page 4.

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2e3b13c5-c62c-4261-a6c8-57d83549aec5/language-en>.

¹¹ INSEE. *Artisanat Définitions*. 2019.

<https://www.insee.fr/fr/metadonnees/definition/c1137#:~:text=L'artisanat%20regroupe%20les%20personnes,figurant%20sur%20une%20liste%20%C3%A9tablie>.

¹² Republic of France. *Répertoire des métiers, Official classification*. 2025.

<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000031941949>.

¹³ SPF Économie. *Calculs et représentations. Observatoire des PME*. 2025.

<https://economie.fgov.be/fr/themes/entreprises/pme-et-independants-en/les-travailleurs-independants/les-artistes>.

personal involvement and technical or traditional knowledge of the crafts person are decisive, resulting in individualized, non-industrial products". Greece focuses on folk art and small scale artistic manufacturing rather than a single enterprise definition.

Registration and recognition instruments :

France requires registration in the *Répertoire des métiers*. Italy keeps provincial craft registers and commissions. Germany maintains crafts registers for A and B1 and a directory for B2 through the chambers. Belgium operates a time limited federal recognition that grants access to a public register and a label but is optional. Spain runs voluntary regional registers with different criteria and no national roll up. Greece relies on lists and programmes rather than a unified register.

Counting practices and data signals:

Germany illustrates the core comparability problem: The Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Destatis) reports that in 2023, the crafts sector included around 568,000 enterprises employing roughly 5.4 million people.¹⁴ Destatis arrives at this number by counting the firms registered in the A and B1 directories, whereas the ZDH reports more than one million crafts enterprises by also including firms listed under the B2 directory.¹⁵ France mixes sources with different perimeters: the legal RM base and CMA observatories, the ISM and MAAF *Baromètre de l'artisanat* (continuous series) and research such as ISFF's "Les Éclaireurs" 2024¹⁶ on *métiers d'art* and Atometrics 2025¹⁷ on the wider craft economy. Italy has a national backbone but data fragments across regional instruments and registers. Belgium's voluntary recognition covers only a small subset of artisans, so it is weak as a standalone statistical base. Spain lacks national consolidation, though market mappings like KPMG 2022¹⁸ segment the field. Greece produces programmatic signals rather than enterprise counts via the SME Observatory.

Policy orientation and spillovers:

France, Italy and Germany are primarily production and training oriented, with formal apprenticeship pipelines documented in the ISM/MAAF Baromètre¹⁹ and chamber statistics. Spain and Greece lean more toward cultural heritage and territorial identity in parts of the system, as reflected in regional laws and programmatic tools. Belgium blends visibility and recognition with limited statistical use. Across all countries, current tools understate cross-sector spillovers into architecture, design, luxury, music, tourism and circular economy activities, a gap highlighted in studies such as "Les Éclaireurs" 2024 for France and KPMG 2022 for Spain.

¹⁴ Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis or Federal Statistical Office of Germany). *Economic Sectors and Enterprises - Crafts*. 2020. https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Economic-Sectors-Enterprises/Crafts/_node.html.

¹⁵ Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks (ZDH) (Central Association of German Crafts). *Kennzahlen des Handwerks*. 2025. <https://www.zdh.de/daten-und-fakten/kennzahlen-des-handwerks/>.

¹⁶ ISFF. *Les Éclaireurs*. 2024. https://www.artisanat.fr/system/files/medias/file/2024/01/20230825_CP_barometre_ISM_MAAF_apprentissage.pdf

¹⁷ Atometrics. *Comment les CMA peuvent utiliser la data pour soutenir la création d'entreprise artisanale*. 2025. <https://atometrics.com/comment-les-cma-peuvent-utiliser-la-data-pour-soutenir-la-creation-dentreprise-artisanale>.

¹⁸ KPMG. *Comment les CMA peuvent utiliser la data pour soutenir la création d'entreprise artisanale*. 2022. https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmgsites/es/pdf/2022/09/Informe_Artesania_Alta_Gama.pdf.

¹⁹ Institut Supérieur des Métiers. <https://infometiers.org/bcraftarometre-de-lartisanat-ism-maaf>.

Spillovers and related sectors:

A further blind spot is the impact of crafts on related ecosystems such as architecture, design, interior design, luxury goods, live and recorded music, film and performing arts, tourism and cultural heritage, gastronomy, and place-based regeneration. Current statistics do not capture these value chain linkages or multipliers, since handmade processes are embedded inside broad NACE codes and rarely connected to satellite accounts or supply-use tables. As a result, spillover effects on economic impact, sustainable development, internal market functioning, quality jobs, productivity, innovation capacity, territorial attractiveness, cultural identity and EU competitiveness in global markets are underestimated.

More details on the above mentioned cases is provided in Annex 2.

O1: Policy implications and recommendations

The following recommendations are designed in response to these problems: 1) adopting a harmonised, multilingual classification; 2) creating a digital infrastructure for linked data; 3) developing a data-driven policy tool for targeted action; and 4) ensuring enhanced visibility and equity for underrepresented regions and communities.

These measures will collectively make comparability feasible, strengthen the internal market for crafts, improve evidence for employment, sustainability and skills policies, and support EU competitiveness and innovation by focusing existing resources where they can deliver the highest and most durable impact.

1. Building common foundations for evidence and comparability on craft data

To address this, we recommend the following courses of action:

- Adopt a harmonised European classification model, and establish a harmonised European statistical framework that recognises crafts as a distinct sector within cultural and economic statistics, enabling consistent measurement of employment, enterprises, skills development, export potential and the direct and indirect contributions of crafts to the overall economy.
- Establish coordinated data collection and regular monitoring at national and EU levels, using shared data gathering methodologies based on the classification model that will ensure that results are comparable over time and across countries.
- Recognise the cross-sectoral value of craftsmanship and integrate it into policies for innovation, education and skills, green transition, regional development and tourism.
- Recognise the essential role of local communities as custodians of the knowledge and know-how involved. Policies should be adaptable to local contexts rather than driven by uniform external standards, and national or international legislation must explicitly require community participation and approval in policy design.
- Expand this work with more comprehensive data and country-specific research.

Recommendation: Establish a harmonised European craft classification and statistical framework with coordinated data collection and cross-sectoral policy integration, grounded in community participation and local contexts, to enable comparable evidence, recognise the wider value of craftsmanship, and support expansion through more comprehensive, country-specific research.

2. Develop an Ontology on European Craft (CRAFTOUR Model)

Partners of CRAFTOUR recommend the implementation of an ontology that will establish a harmonised, multilingual, interoperable model based on existing frameworks like CIDOC CRM and using existing thesauruses (Getty, Unesco, ...) to map craft practices, techniques, products, tools and materials, across Europe, highlighting their territorial identities, shared traditions and learning opportunities.

Breaking down data silos:

The system should integrate dispersed information creating a shared digital infrastructure that supports cross sector analysis, policy design and open access to knowledge. By gathering data from existing classification databases from museums, chambers of commerce, crafts associations, unions, academic databases and other archives, with newly populated contents from workshops and crafts stakeholders, the ontology will enable cross-border integration, collaboration and accessibility of craft knowledge.

Bottom-up and participatory design:

The ontology should be continuously populated by local entities such as chambers of commerce, crafts associations, crafts businesses, combining local interpretations with existing multilingual vocabularies, structured in interlocked layers that run from broad families to granular subcategories reflecting territorial specificities and contexts.

Example: Layer 1: (The widest classification) Textile Crafts based on materials. Any craft related to the use of fibers such as wool, linen, silk, hemp, mixed materials.... Layer 2: Techniques such as carding, spinning, weaving, knitting, felting, dyeing ... Layer 3: Specific product. Tapestry, carpet, fabric, embroideries, ... Layer 4: Territorial Specificity and links to a local context, when relevant. Aubusson, Tapestry, Kelsch, Jacquard, Vyshyvanka, ...

Dynamic and future-proof:

The model will include contemporary forms of craftsmanship that merge traditional techniques with digital technologies, new materials and sustainable processes, and will evolve as the sector evolves. It would also allow the creation of transversal parallels, identifying shared practices between regions and countries to foster exchange and mutual recognition.

Cross-sectoral relevance:

The framework will link crafts to innovation, education, sustainable development and the cultural and creative industries, as well as to sectors such as architecture, interior design, music, agriculture, fashion etc. reflecting their multidimensional role in Europe's economy and identity.

Such a model should remain independent and not interfere with national legal or fiscal systems, serving rather as a participatory mapping tool that supports the understanding, valorisation, transmission and safeguard of crafts. The CRAFTOUR ontology should align with the guidelines and goals of the [ECHOES](#)²⁰ collaborative cloud platform for tangible and intangible heritage professionals to ensure its future sustainability.

More details on the CRAFTOUR Model are provided in Annex 3.

Recommendation: Develop a harmonised, multilingual and interoperable European craft ontology, aligned with existing heritage frameworks, built through bottom-up community participation, integrating dispersed data into a shared digital infrastructure, adaptable to contemporary and local specificities, and connected to cross-sectoral fields, to map, valorise and sustain Europe's craft knowledge while ensuring long-term compatibility with platforms like ECHOES.

3. Establish a European Observatory of Arts and Crafts

To guarantee the long-term sustainability, consistency, comparability and the adequate use of crafts data (gathered and collected in the Recommendation No. 2, while assured with the Recommendation No.1), the establishment of a permanent European body, henceforth referred to as the Observatory of Arts and Crafts, is essential. Only through the establishment of this dedicated EU-level observatory can strategic impact be achieved. Its mission would go beyond data management; it would transform knowledge into evidence-based policy, targeted funding strategies, educational programs and coordinated support actions that reinforce the cultural, economic and social value of craftsmanship.

Mission and scope of the European Observatory of Arts and Crafts

Maintain: Regularly update the pan-European craft classification model to ensure its accuracy, relevance and alignment with evolving sectoral realities.

Monitor: Conduct continuous and comprehensive monitoring to identify sectoral needs, risks and opportunities across all dimensions, practices, skills transmission, materials, territorial ecosystems and social engagement.

Produce insights: Generate regular, multilingual and open-access data on the economic, social, environmental and cultural impacts of crafts, including employment, innovation, sustainability and comparative market analysis to assess societal engagement and emerging market trends.

Recommendation: The observatory should advocate for the engagement of policymakers, researchers and stakeholders to translate these insights into concrete actions in areas such as education, legal frameworks for safeguarding, mobility and targeted communication strategies to

²⁰ ECHOES Project Website: <https://www.echoes-ecch.eu/>.

raise public awareness and participation in the craft sector. Approval and design of such policies must include community participation.

Governance and implementation of the European Observatory of Arts and Crafts

The governance model must be bottom-up, ensuring that data interpretation relies on local, contextual expertise feeding into European coordination.

Key actions include:

- Participatory development: Fund and facilitate engagement with craftspeople, crafts organisations (local and national) and research and cultural bodies.
- Diversity and inclusiveness: Ensure regional diversity and address linguistic barriers using multilingual controlled thesauri (e.g., Getty Art and Architecture Thesaurus, UNESCO Thesaurus) and digital translation tools, while maintaining methodological consistency.
- Infrastructure investment: Invest in accessible digital infrastructure to guarantee visibility, equity and cohesion across Europe's craft ecosystem.

Coordination and support action of the European Observatory of Arts and Crafts

Coordinate actions and provide guidance for an optimized support to crafts through existing EU funding (e.g., Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Horizon Europe, Interreg, Single Market Programme) toward maximising impact in the crafts sector. This means including crafts in the texts of open calls and programme frameworks tackling goals such as economic development, education, innovation, social inclusion, impact on environment, digital transformation, cultural belonging and citizenship.

The Coordination and Support Action should prioritise long-term sustainability by focusing on education and training (including apprenticeships, mobility and reskilling), innovation and digitalisation, communication and public awareness and youth engagement.

Recommendation: Establish a permanent European Observatory of Arts and Crafts to ensure the long-term sustainability, comparability and effective use of craft data by transforming knowledge into evidence-based policy, coordinating bottom-up governance and digital infrastructure, supporting cross-sector funding and education, and reinforcing the cultural, social, environmental and economic value of craftsmanship across Europe.

OBJECTIVE 2: Safeguarding and promoting the authenticity of European crafts

O2: Evidence and analysis

Across Europe, traditional crafts are experiencing a moment of profound transition. Once sustained by strong local ecosystems of materials, skills and communities, they now face structural fragilities that threaten their long-term authenticity and viability. Authenticity, as understood here, is not simply a matter of origin or tradition, it encompasses the lived, changing processes of making, transmitting and valuing knowledge that connects craft to place, identity and belonging. Therefore, in the context of this recommendation, authenticity should not be understood as a static or frozen depiction of crafts, but rather as a characteristic that embraces their status as living, evolving heritage, serving as a bridge that connects tradition, innovation, place and community.

The status of "authenticity" in traditional crafts and the shift to "authenticity work"

The UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) fundamentally guides the current international discourse on crafts and on safeguarding traditional crafts, and it is also the only common, shared understanding and agreement among the vast majority of European countries when it comes to traditional crafts. This framework strategically positions traditional craftsmanship not as a standalone phenomenon, but as one of five domains of ICH, alongside oral traditions, performing arts and other crucial knowledge systems. This positioning signals a foundational shift in focus: from the conservation of the object to the emphasis on the practice of making and the related skills and knowledge. Consequently, the Convention on purpose moves away from the static, preservation-focused concept of "authenticity," choosing instead to rely heavily on the principles of safeguarding and identity. For a craft practice to be categorised as ICH, it must be recognised by a community or group as part of their cultural heritage, while being constantly recreated and transmitted by them. This emphasis on living heritage necessitates that the element provides practitioners with "a sense of identity and continuity."

The most revolutionary aspect of this approach is the necessary mandate for community-based safeguarding. The 2003 Convention²¹ requires the widest possible participation of the communities, groups and in some cases individuals at all stages from identification, definition, documentation, nomination and continuous safeguarding efforts, thereby shifting the authority to define and value heritage from external experts and institutions to the practitioners themselves. In this way, the Convention puts the artisans in the centre stage. Additionally, the 2003 Convention²² acknowledges the importance of "cultural spaces intended for the expression or performance" of ICH. In the case of traditional craftsmanship, such cultural spaces include the marketplaces, workshops or rural settings connecting the intangible heritage practices to the environments, materials and value systems that sustain them. This holistic view reinforces the idea that heritage is dynamic and contextual, rather than a fixed tradition.

²¹ UNESCO. *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. 2003.

<https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

²² Ibid.

While the earlier 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity took a holistic view that bridged tangible and intangible heritage and recognised that authenticity is a relative concept, the later 2004 Yamato Declaration provided a definitive rejection of the “authenticity” as a term to be used for living heritage, stating that *“the term ‘authenticity’ as applied to tangible cultural heritage is not relevant when identifying and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.”*²³ This established that the idea of a single, original or fixed “authentic” state is fundamentally incompatible with the fluid and evolving nature of ICH and therefore crafts as well.

At the same time, the notion of “authenticity” carries significant cultural, symbolic and legal weight outside of the immediate realm of the framework of the ICH Convention. It is utilised by communities and groups to assert cultural claims and define identity, and it is also used as an important indicator in market protection mechanisms and in systems like Geographical Indications (GI) for craft products - labels indicating that a craft item originates from a specific place and has been made using local skills and traditions. Additionally, the concept of “authenticity” may feature in national legislations. Belgian law, for example, defines an artisan as an enterprise whose activities present “essentially manual aspects, an authentic character,” and develop a certain *know-how* based on quality, tradition, creation, or innovation, explicitly clarifying that “authentic character” means that the craft product always reflects the artisan’s own character²⁴. This use of the term authenticity by both legal systems and communities carries its own weight in the contemporary landscape marked by rapid digital acceleration, complex global market pressures and new environmental vulnerabilities, all of which present new kinds of safeguarding challenges.

It follows that nowadays, the search for authenticity remains a central pursuit for many artisans and stakeholders in the field of traditional craftsmanship. In a world marked by skepticism toward mass production, this quest is crucial for craft, as it provides a strategic asset for sustainability and value. Therefore, to fully grasp the impact of genuineness on craft, more attention needs to be paid on how authenticity is understood and practiced by the artisans in their everyday work. This ongoing practice is what can be termed “authenticity work”.

Ferri C. and Lusiani M. (2025)²⁵ describe that the very essence of authenticity work in craft is the act of “weaving coherence” across time and place. This conceptual model moves beyond the restrictive, static view rejected by the Yamato Declaration and embraces the dynamism of ICH by defining two modes of coherence. Coherence in time ensures that craft-making is a creative act that connects the past (traditional techniques) with the future (innovation and sustainability) through modes like threading (integrating the maker's experiences) and patchworking (blending materials and techniques)²⁶. Simultaneously, coherence in place ensures the craft remains rooted in its physical and social context, the specific geographic regions, local materials and community relationships through modes like embroidering (cultivating relationships with the local territory) and knitting (collaborating

²³ UNESCO. *The Yamato Declaration on Integrated Approaches for Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage*. 2004, p.4. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000137634>.

²⁴ SPF Économie. *Mentionner « artisanal » et ses dérivés dans l'appellation des produits: guidelines pour les entreprises et les artisans*. 2024. <https://economie.fgov.be/fr/themes/entreprises/guidance/autres-secteurs/mentionner-artisanal-et-ses>.

²⁵ Ferri C. and Lusiani M. *Craft authenticity work as weaving coherence in time and place*. 2025.

²⁶ Ibid.

with local artisans and suppliers).²⁷ By focusing on this situated, producer-oriented perspective, authenticity work becomes a generative resource. It supports the development of sustainable business models that are not only economically viable but are also deeply grounded in cultural continuity, local embeddedness, ethical production and the active preservation of living heritage.

Therefore, while the term "authenticity" may be problematic as a fixed historical trait, the concept of "authenticity work as weaving coherence" is essential for understanding how artisans actively manage the relationship between tradition and innovation to ensure their long-term viability in the contemporary world.

The changing landscape of authenticity in crafts

Europe has taken important steps to protect its craft heritage through new regulatory and policy frameworks. The recent introduction of Geographical Indications (GIs) for craft and industrial products offers a single European system to recognise products tied to regional identity and reputation. This marks an essential milestone for non-agricultural heritage and responds to long-standing calls for recognition of crafts as part of Europe's cultural and economic fabric.

However, the new framework alone is not sufficient to safeguard the specificity and value of local craftsmanship in its broader sense. While GIs effectively protect the what of production, its name, product and geographical link, they risk overlooking the how and why that give crafts their deeper meaning: the ways knowledge is transmitted, materials are sourced and cultural values are shared. Authenticity, understood in this context as ties to a specific place, its craftspeople, their skills and traditions, is not a static attribute but a living process shaped by communities, environments, practices and stories. Without complementary mechanisms to support these cultural dimensions, legal protection risks becoming a label without substance.

The implementation of GIs has also revealed an uneven geography of access. Well-networked producers in export-oriented sectors or urban areas are more likely to benefit, while rural, ageing or digitally disconnected artisans often remain unaware of these opportunities. Bridging this gap requires translation of legal frameworks into culturally and linguistically accessible forms, along with capacity-building for those most distant from institutional centres.

Transmission as a foundation of authenticity

Authentic crafts endure only when they are transmitted. Yet the spaces where such learning takes place, such as family workshops, community guilds and local ateliers, remain largely invisible in policy and education systems. These non-formal and informal learning places are often excluded from institutional support despite being the backbone of intergenerational knowledge transfer. They represent far more than training grounds: they are sites of belonging, pride and identity formation.

In many regions, the decline of these non-formal and informal learning environments has created a rupture between older masters and younger generations. As fewer young people engage in

²⁷ Ibid.

apprenticeship, embodied knowledge risks being lost within a single lifetime. Women artisans and informal practitioners are particularly affected, as their contributions often fall outside formal registers. Recognising and supporting these spaces as part of Europe's cultural infrastructure is essential to maintaining crafts as living practices rather than a historical record.

More details on the transmission of crafts is provided in the OBJECTIVE 3 - Empowering transmission of skills and know-how through formal and non-formal education.

Materials, ecologies and evolving practices

Authenticity is also tied to the material and ecological conditions of making. Many craft traditions rely on specific natural resources, for example, clay, wool, marble or plant dyes, that link production to local environments. Today, these material ecologies are rapidly changing. Globalised supply chains, technologies, resource depletion and climate change are altering what is available and how it is used. In some cases, artisans have adapted to new materials while preserving traditional methods; in others, scarcity has forced complete transformation of techniques. Documenting and supporting these transitions is vital to ensuring that locally specific crafts remain dynamic rather than frozen in time.

Overall, a broader notion of contextual authenticity is needed, one that values adaptation, transparency and sustainability alongside continuity. When materials evolve, the craft's cultural integrity depends not on immutability but on a shared understanding of why and how change occurs.

The role of consumers and public awareness

At the other end of the chain, the viability of locally specific crafts and their authenticity also depends on informed demand. European consumers increasingly express interest in sustainable and ethical products, yet few possess the knowledge to distinguish genuine craftsmanship from industrial imitation. Marketplaces and tourism often blur these boundaries, presenting mass-produced goods as "traditional" or "handmade." As a result, the economic and cultural value of genuine craft practices is diluted.

Empowering consumers to recognise the authenticity of locally specific crafts can transform them into active participants in heritage safeguarding. Awareness campaigns, storytelling, participatory experiences and transparent communication of provenance can all foster deeper appreciation. Authenticity must become visible not only through certification, but through education and encounter — by connecting people with the stories, skills and communities behind the objects they purchase or use.

From protection to empowerment

Ultimately, safeguarding authenticity requires a shift from *protection* to *empowerment*. Protection focuses on preserving artefacts and names; empowerment ensures the survival of the living systems that create them. The future of Europe's crafts depends on policies that view authenticity as a dynamic ecosystem encompassing artisans, learners, materials and audiences.

This perspective aligns with broader European objectives: promoting regional resilience, social inclusion, sustainable production and cultural diversity. By supporting the infrastructures that sustain authenticity — learning places, material ecologies, and consumer awareness — Europe can transform its craft heritage into a driver of innovation, belonging and green transition.

O2: Policy implications and recommendations

Safeguarding authenticity demands an integrated approach that combines legal protection, cultural transmission and public engagement. The following recommendations outline practical steps to strengthen Europe's craft ecosystems and ensure their long-term vitality.

1. Activate authenticity through living ecosystems

Authenticity should be understood as a dynamic system linking people, materials and places. EU and national authorities should support measures that document and sustain the cultural infrastructures — workshops, guilds, training sites and local resource chains — that underpin authentic crafts. Funding programs under Creative Europe, Horizon Europe, ERASMUS and regional development instruments should prioritise projects that connect economic value with cultural continuity and environmental sustainability.

Recommendation: Prioritise support and funding for the documentation and enhancement of core craft infrastructures and local material supply chains. Funding schemes should prioritise initiatives that clearly connect economic value with cultural continuity and environmental sustainability.

2. Strengthen learning places as cultural infrastructure

Informal and community-based workshops, such as family workshops, community guilds and local ateliers, must be recognised as the foundational sites for intergenerational knowledge transfer. Policy should treat these non-formal and informal learning environments as critical cultural infrastructure. This recognition is essential to support crafts as living practices rather than a historical record, as these spaces are vital sites of belonging, pride and identity formation. To ensure the survival of the living systems that create authentic crafts, the EU should encourage Member States to create mechanisms to identify and assist these spaces through dedicated funding, tax relief, or inclusion in rural and regional development schemes. Such programmatic support should ensure their eligibility for investment and restoration, thus reinforcing their role in the ongoing "authenticity work" of "weaving coherence" across time and place.

Recommendation: Provide support for the informal and community-based workshop spaces through dedicated funding, tax incentives and inclusion in regional development programs to ensure the intergenerational transfer of craft knowledge, maintain living authenticity, and strengthen local identity and pride.

3. Broaden access and inclusion

Barriers to participation in authenticity frameworks remain high for rural, ageing and informal artisans. Promoting equity in access will make the protection mechanisms, like Geographical Indications (GIs), of craft authenticity fairer and more effective.

Recommendation: Simplify procedures, provide analogue-friendly information and appoint local liaison officers to ensure all craft bearers, not just well-connected artisans, can benefit from existing EU tools.

4. Develop a complementary safeguarding layer

Recommendation: Develop a voluntary, optional and not mandatory, cultural safeguarding layer, beyond certification, that could allow artisans to record endangered techniques, learning sites, material histories and community practices. Artisans can choose whether or not to document based on their own interest, rather than being required by law or regulation. Link this documentation to national or European heritage registers and by doing so enrich the cultural dimension of craft recognition while reinforcing its economic legitimacy.

5. Foster public awareness and consumer education

Public awareness and consumer understanding of authentic craftsmanship remain limited, yet they are essential for strengthening demand and sustaining local economies. A European campaign on *Authentic Crafts of Europe* could build consumer understanding through storytelling, digital content and experiential learning. Cooperation with tourism boards, museums and schools can translate abstract authenticity into lived experience. Empowered consumers will reinforce market demand for genuine craftsmanship, supporting both sustainability and social cohesion.

Recommendation: Develop and fund a European Public Communication Strategy, potentially branded “Authentic Crafts of Europe” in order to strengthen public awareness and consumer education. This strategy should embed regional narratives within key EU policy agendas and promote craft heritage through compelling storytelling, digital content and experiential learning in cooperation with tourism boards, museums and schools.

6. Connect authenticity to wider European agendas

Authenticity is central to the New European Bauhaus vision of beauty, sustainability and inclusion. It also contributes to the Green Deal, the Rural Pact and cultural and creative industries’ competitiveness. Cross-sectoral programmes linking crafts with tourism, design, ecology and education should be encouraged to embed authenticity across multiple policy domains.

Recommendation: Embed authenticity across EU policy domains by supporting cross-sectoral programmes that link crafts with tourism, design, ecology and education.

OBJECTIVE 3: Empowering transmission of skills and know-how through formal and non-formal education

O3: Evidence and analysis

Safeguarding traditional craft knowledge and know-how requires embedding it in learning processes where traditional know-how is integrated into contemporary social, cultural, economic, educational and technological contexts. Yet this is precisely where the difficulty lies. Across Europe, crafts are undervalued both in education and in society. In most European educational systems, children are increasingly isolated from handicrafts and making activities.²⁸ They often lack early exposure to craft practices, leading to a long-term detachment from the material and cultural value of handmade goods and a decline in tacit and embodied knowledge. This produces generations that no longer understand or appreciate the cultural, environmental and economic significance of craftsmanship. Youngsters lose the opportunity to develop an appreciation for the skills, techniques and materials that underpin craft. They grow up to become consumers more likely to choose mass-produced goods over handmade products, which are often regarded as expensive or exclusive. Over time, it marginalises the craft sector, undermines its sustainability and obstructs the transmission of knowledge to future generations.

In some European countries, this issue was already partly recognised and addressed. In France, “De l'Or dans les Mains” has developed an introductory arts and crafts program for primary and secondary schools that has already reached more than 50,000 pupils. The program includes educational kits, studio visits and training for teachers. Evaluations show a significant improvement in fine motor skills and creativity among participating students, as well as a 45% increase in reported interest in craft careers. In Sweden and Finland, the Slöjd Program has integrated the teaching of crafts (wood, textile and metalwork) into the national curriculum of compulsory education since 1994. Cross-sectional studies show that pupils who have followed this program develop better problem-solving skills and more creative thinking in other subjects. This aligns with the Resource Kit for Teachers “Teaching and Learning with Living Heritage” developed by the UNESCO (2021), which also acknowledges the importance of the integration of Intangible Cultural Heritage into early education. Following the UNESCO global report on cultural policies “Culture : the missing SDG” (p. 130-1), it is increasingly recognised that integrating arts and culture into core learning fosters the training of competencies such as creativity, empathy, critical thinking and intercultural understanding: “Culturally responsive pedagogies, multilingual resources and recognition of diverse knowledge systems are key to making education relevant and accessible to all learners.”

Children who grow up without meaningful engagement with craft are less likely to develop the embodied and tacit knowledge, creative problem-solving and material understanding that craft

²⁸ Cominelli F. and Vecchio C. *Report on the state of the art of traditional crafts knowledge transmission (TCK), including examples across and beyond Europe*, Tracks4Crafts, Deliverable 2.1, 2024.

practice fosters.²⁹ European educational systems, oriented toward abstraction and efficiency, struggle to recognize this slow temporality and sensorimotor intelligence. The urgency of this issue becomes apparent when considering the position of traditional craft knowledge in the dominant instruments and classification systems used to map, assess and certify knowledge, skills and competences. Frameworks such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) leave little space for traditional craft knowledge. In practice, crafts are either categorised as technical or manual skills – automatically associated with low educational attainment – or placed under the cultural and creative sector, often via the label of “artistic crafts”. In the latter case, they are typically subordinated to the arts and frequently stripped of their creative and innovative potential. A similar pattern emerges across most European education systems. In technical and vocational education, crafts are typically reduced to low-skilled manual work; in higher education they serve, at best, a supportive role to the arts or product development. In certain countries, crafts are actually most visible in part-time art education, where they are often framed as hobbies or amateur pursuits. In none of these contexts is traditional craft knowledge confronted with, or integrated into, advanced technological expertise, theoretical frameworks or demanding cognitive skills.³⁰

Craft knowledge in Europe is transmitted through a rich blend of formal education and non-formal education, vocational training, apprenticeships, self-teaching, intergenerational transmission (family heritage), and community-based learning. However, existing educational systems primarily recognise formal qualifications, leaving many skilled artisans, especially those who trained through informal or traditional means, without validation of their expertise. The lack of a unified certification framework undermines the visibility and legitimacy of these diverse learning pathways. Valuable knowledge risks being lost, and young people may be discouraged from entering craft-based careers. This is unfortunate because potentially non-formal education in crafts plays a vital role in enhancing the sector’s attractiveness as a modern, creative and fulfilling career path. By offering practical, flexible and often community-based learning opportunities, it equips individuals with hands-on skills and entrepreneurial tools that respond directly to contemporary social and economic demands. This form of education often even fosters innovation by bridging traditional knowledge with contemporary practices, enabling artisans to adapt to new markets, technologies and audiences. It also supports employment by creating accessible pathways for upskilling, reskilling and career transitions – including for adults and marginalized groups. Deeply rooted in regional histories and collective memory, crafts are sustained and revitalized through these forms of learning, which keep intangible heritage alive and relevant. It enables intergenerational knowledge transfer through mentorship, immersive experiences and local engagement, ensuring that traditional techniques, stories and identities are not lost but continuously reinterpreted. However, these forms of learning are insufficiently recognized and valued, precisely because of their informal nature and a lack of certification mechanisms. By recognizing and investing in such educational pathways, societies could

²⁹ See e.g. Sennett R. *The Craftsman* (Yale University Press, 2008); Ingold, *Making*; Yliveronen V., Seitamaa-Hakkarainen S.P., ‘Learning craft skills: exploring preschoolers’ craft-making process’, *Techné Series: Research in Sloyd Education and Craft Science A*, 23 (2016), 2: 1-15; Kimmel m., and Groth c., ‘An “in vivo” analysis of crafts practices and creativity – Why affordances provide a productive lens’, *Frontiers in Psychology*, Section Cognition, Volume 14 - 2023 . <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1127684>.

³⁰ De Groot J., De Munck B., and Jacobs M. *Report on Skills Profiles*, Tracks4Crafts, Deliverable 5.2, 2025.

better safeguard cultural diversity, strengthen social cohesion, and build resilient and sustainable economies and communities that value both tradition and innovation.

This does not contradict the integration of crafts with new technologies, rather to the contrary. While craft enterprises increasingly face the dual challenge of preserving intangible heritage while adapting to market and technological change, crafts are increasingly incorporated into shared workshops and maker spaces, where artisans encounter innovations such as 3D printing, laser cutting and digital tools like Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and Computer-Aided Manufacturing (CAM). These spaces foster mutual learning and experimentation with cross-over techniques, combining traditional methods with modern technologies to design and produce new products. They reveal the importance of hybrid literacies, in a mutually reinforcing combination and merging of crafts, material knowledge and digital techniques. In new transmission models, crafts can feed into training in material experimentation, digital fabrication and bio-based or low-impact technologies. Alternatively, such spaces and hybrid training models can help develop the reflexive capacity of artisan-trainers to explicate their implicit knowledge. Methods such as explicitation interviews allow artisans to put into words their technical gestures, intuitive decisions and sensory adjustments. This capacity does not replace bodily learning, but complements it by making conscious and transmissible knowledge otherwise buried in experience. All this is potentially valuable in the context of **Europe's Digital Decade**, the 2030 targets of which provide a framework for integrating digital technologies (AI, computer-aided manufacturing, 3D printing) into traditional craft practices, thereby creating bridges between traditional know-how and technological innovation. The main challenge here again lies in the lack of support for such practices, and the failure to recognize the knowledge and skills developed within them. This is all the more important as innovation in craft is not limited to techniques, but also to materials (e.g., sustainable composites, traditional material reinterpretations), which strengthens the argument for broader certification and funding schemes.

Rooted in practice, mentorship and community engagement, non-formal education potentially ensures that traditional skills remain alive, relevant and adaptable. Equally important is the opportunity it provides for craftspeople themselves to become teachers as well as learners. By participating in training on topics such as innovation, digital tools and new business models, artisans can strengthen their pedagogical skills and prepare to mentor the next generation. This creates a dynamic, circular process of teaching and learning, where master artisans evolve alongside apprentices. Teaching thus becomes more than the transfer of techniques: it becomes a collaborative space for co-creation, mutual growth and adaptation to contemporary markets. Training opportunities moreover allow craftspeople to diversify their income, enhance their visibility and contribute more actively to local economies. In this way, valorising non-formal education is not only about preserving the past, but also about shaping a future in which craftsmanship is economically viable, socially inclusive and culturally vibrant. Yet without adequate recognition, financial support and structured learning frameworks, this powerful form of education risks being undervalued – leaving both cultural knowledge and economic opportunity untapped.³¹

³¹ For an overview and synthesis of existing policy frameworks, see Ābele L., Cērpā L.K., Annex Laķe A., Mantrovs V., and Tjarve B., *Report on legal and policy frameworks of crafts in Europe approaches at the state level*, Tracks4Crafts, Deliverable 2.2, 2024.

O3: Policy implications and recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to address the following key issues:

- the lack of recognition of the benefits crafts can bring to the economy, innovation and social and ecological sustainability;
- the lack of recognition and support for (reciprocal) intergenerational transmission of knowledge and know how, both in formal education and beyond;
- reduced visibility and status of crafts as viable educational and career options;
- limited pathways for experienced artisans to access teaching roles or funding;
- the lack of formal recognition for craft knowledge acquired outside institutional settings;
- weak infrastructures for transmitting craft practices across generations.

An effective strategy must be grounded in the recognition and appreciation of tacit and embodied knowledge, as well as in the existing systems through which such knowledge is transmitted and sustained – ranging from the intergenerational transfer from master to apprentice, to informal practices embedded in heritage communities, up to hybrid formats emerging in new settings such as shared workshops, maker spaces and fab labs. Certification plays an important role in this process, yet it is not sufficient on its own. What must precede it is the recognition and support of existing practices and a broader awareness of their value. Moreover, the ultimate goal is not merely to preserve traditions, but rather to safeguard them by linking support measures and certification to broader societal objectives, particularly those of an ecological nature. This also implies engagement with digital techniques, which can help scale up access to sustainable production methods, and support biodiversity, innovation and sustainability goals. Above all, a comprehensive approach should acknowledge and value the dual contribution of artisans: both their technical expertise and their positive ecological impact.

The list of best practices relevant for the proposed recommendations are provided in Annex 4.

1. Strengthen intergenerational and reciprocal transmission of crafts

Crafts are embedded in a long tradition of intergenerational transmission of knowledge and know-how. This tradition is being continued and/or revitalized in various places, which can help address many of the existing challenges – among other reasons, because it helps bridge the gap between formal and informal education systems. These programmes could benefit from dedicated European funding and recognition mechanisms which could have mutual benefits: seniors (or young experienced crafters) acquiring digital or entrepreneurial skills from younger generations (or older technical experts), while young people learn traditional techniques. This reciprocity enriches transmission and combats the isolation of elderly artisans while attracting new generations to these professions.

Recommendation: Promote and support the intergenerational transmission of traditional craft knowledge. This can be achieved either by integrating crafts into existing programmes such as Erasmus+, or by developing and funding dedicated initiatives that focus specifically on crafts. In both cases, intergenerational mentorship should be encouraged and valued – enabling senior master

craftspeople to pass on their expertise to younger apprentices, while also recognising that knowledge exchange can flow both ways, with older generations learning from younger ones as well.

This policy choice would strengthen European policy on cultural diversity without rigidifying local and regional cultures and identities, but rather by emphasizing the dynamic nature of craft and the intergenerational interaction associated with it.

2. Revalorise craft education through early integration, non-formal recognition and cultural framing

Across Europe, craft is undervalued in both education and society. Children often lack early exposure to (traditional) making practices, leading to long-term detachment from the material and cultural value of crafts. Meanwhile, non-formal pathways like community workshops and apprenticeships are crucial to skill transmission but lack recognition within existing educational systems. A truly effective strategy must bridge formal and informal systems, start early and honour the emotional, environmental, economic and cultural significance of making. It should also reflect the diverse ways craft knowledge is acquired and passed on, and highlight craft's contributions to inclusion, sustainability and lifelong learning.

Recommendation: The European Commission should promote a holistic craft education strategy that: (1) integrates crafts into early formal education (preschool education, primary schools, extracurricular programs); (2) includes comprehensive teacher training components, partnerships with local artisans and NGO's, and supporting digital resources and (3) frames crafts as culturally and socially meaningful practices, as well as relevant economic activities and career paths.

Beyond the safeguarding and revitalization of traditional craft knowledge, this would correspond to European policy objectives such as offering inclusive learning opportunities and fostering lifelong learning.

3. Recognise and certify non-formal craft education across the EU

Craft knowledge is often transmitted outside traditional institutions. Public workshops, live demonstrations, participatory sessions and other experiential learning formats can function as a vector for transmission and constitute effective pedagogical formats for transmitting craft skills to diverse audiences, including children, adults in career transition or curious citizens. The lack of recognition for these formats and the knowledge and knowhow involved reduces the visibility, attractiveness and viability of craft careers. These innovative pedagogical approaches moreover transform artisans into cultural mediators, developing their transmission skills beyond traditional master-apprentice learning. A European certification framework – aligned with the EU Micro-Credentials Initiative – would enhance mobility, employment access and prestige for artisans trained via alternative paths. This comes with the provision that local heritage communities are often the primary custodians of the knowledge and knowhow involved. These communities are best positioned to define and recognize their own craft traditions, and so they are in any case key actors when it comes to validating and certifying the specific knowledge and knowhow.

Recommendation: Establish an EU-wide craft certification system that formally validates knowledge and know-how acquired through non-formal and informal education – including workshops, master-apprentice relationships, community-based learning and maker spaces. Make sure that this is based on a recognition of the importance of cultural mediation and experiential learning as complements to formal and non-formal training, and that slow learning, sensorimotor intelligence and reflexivity are valued. Make sure also that this is grounded in local consultation and consent. While national oversight can provide valuable resources such as funding and legal protection, it must not override local knowledge or autonomy. Apply the general rule that policies should be adaptable to local contexts rather than driven by uniform external standards.

Beyond incentivising and empowering craft practitioners as both practitioners and educators and mentors this would be aligned with the further development of a European Micro-Credential framework, intended to foster lifelong learning, increase flexibility, transparency and trust on the labour market and social inclusivity at the intersection of learning and the economy.

4. Valorise ‘Making Places’ as pillars of innovation and transmission

Hybrid spaces like shared studios, fablabs and makerspaces blend manual and high-tech knowledge, promote inclusive and experiential learning, and often act as bridges between traditional artisans and new technologies – including digital techniques. However, many lack stable funding, policy recognition or access to national/international networks.

Recommendation: Recognize fablabs, maker spaces and community craft hubs as formal and essential actors in Europe’s craft and innovation ecosystem. Provide targeted EU support for their infrastructure, staff training and integration into regional and sectoral policy frameworks, and foster the reach of those spaces to the craft community.

This would help to tackle the reduced visibility and status of crafts as viable educational and career options and the problem of weak infrastructure to support the transmission of craft practices across generations. Makerspaces and fablabs are ideal venues for hybrid educational practices, combining demonstration, experimentation and co-creation and can be ideal for training artisans in cultural mediation and reflexivity.

OBJECTIVE 4: Reinforcing viable business models in the European craft sector

O4: Evidence and analysis

Opening

We seemed to agree that before engaging in a meaningful reflection on business models in the craft sector, it is essential to affirm clearly to policymakers and institutional stakeholders that craft is a

business. This is not a metaphor or provocation. It is a practical and economic fact. Often, craft is seen primarily as cultural heritage, a pastime or a personal creative pursuit. As a result, it is left out of conversations and strategies on economic development, entrepreneurship, innovation and labour. Recognising craft as an economic activity does not undermine its cultural value. On the contrary, it strengthens the case for its support by placing it in the broader context of viable livelihoods, economic contribution and innovation.

It seems necessary to stress that craft contributes directly to the economy. It generates goods and services, creates employment, sustains supply chains, builds relationships with clients and communities, and anchors value within specific territories. It does this through various models that are not always aligned with conventional expectations but are no less effective or significant.

With varying intensity across Europe, craft businesses are usually small and micro enterprises. The artisan produces goods or services, often through commercial exchange. This activity requires economic autonomy: purchasing materials, handling tools and equipment, designing production processes and maintaining direct relationships with clients and suppliers. Even when working alone, the artisan must manage time, workload and planning. As a consequence, craft also involves risk. The artisan invests in their tools, faces market volatility and depends on customer satisfaction.

Craft significantly contributes to local economies by generating employment and supporting local production, distribution and knowledge exchange networks. An ecosystemic approach to craft emphasises various types of proximity. Geographic anchoring strengthens the bond between artisans and their communities. Functional collaboration with other stakeholders promotes agility and responsiveness. Social proximity fosters trust and informal exchanges that sustain the practice. When present, institutional and technological proximity can enhance visibility, innovation and resilience. Environmental proximity is equally important, as many artisans depend on short supply chains and low-impact methods that align with sustainability goals.

Craft within Europe's economy

Across Europe, the craft sector represents a vital yet underestimated component of the economy. While its cultural significance is widely acknowledged, its role as a business ecosystem remains insufficiently recognised. Artisans are entrepreneurs: they invest in tools, manage resources, assume financial risk and cultivate relationships with clients and suppliers. Yet, because policy frameworks still tend to treat craft primarily as heritage or leisure, it often falls outside the scope of economic development, innovation and labour strategies. Recognising craft as a legitimate economic activity strengthens, rather than undermines, its cultural value by demonstrating its contribution to livelihoods, innovation, and local resilience.

Craft as an economic and cultural system



TRACKS4CRAFTS



HYPHAESTUS



MOSAIC



Craft businesses are simultaneously economic and cultural systems. They generate employment, sustain local supply chains, and embody sustainable production models through short circuits, care for materials, and low environmental impact. This dual nature—productive and expressive—makes craft uniquely relevant to the twin green and digital transitions. Its emphasis on skill, repair, and durability anticipates new models of responsible production and consumption. However, this hybridity also contributes to its institutional invisibility: neither fully industrial nor purely artistic, craft enterprises often lack dedicated support structures and are excluded from both cultural and economic funding streams.

Diversity of business models:

The craft economy encompasses an extraordinary variety of organisational forms, ranging from independent artist-makers producing unique pieces to master workshops preserving heritage techniques, collaborations with design studios and luxury brands, and manufacturers with artistic productions that blur the boundaries between craft and industry. Others combine social engagement and production, embedding craft in educational or community contexts. Increasingly, many organisations also work through hybrid and networked structures, blending production with learning, collaboration, or community-based activities rather than relying solely on traditional maker–consumer markets. These different models demonstrate the sector’s adaptability, creativity, and capacity to generate value in multiple ways — from artistic innovation to regional regeneration. Yet this very diversity complicates policymaking: a uniform approach cannot account for the range of motivations, scales and organisational realities that define craft entrepreneurship across Europe. Effective policy must therefore acknowledge plurality and flexibility, supporting both individual artisans and collective or hybrid structures, and recognising that each model contributes differently to cultural and economic sustainability.

Structural barriers to visibility:

Existing economic classification systems, such as NACE codes, frequently subsume craft under industrial or commercial headings, erasing its specificity and making it difficult to measure or support. As a result, statistical data on the sector are fragmented and outdated, limiting evidence-based policy design. This invisibility is compounded by the prevalence of informal or hybrid practices — such as artisans operating without full company registration, or retired professionals still engaged in production — that remain outside official counts but nonetheless contribute significantly to local economies.

Educational gaps:

While artisans possess advanced technical and creative competencies, few have access to training in management, pricing, communication or digital marketing. Conversely, mainstream entrepreneurship programs seldom address the particularities of craft production. This mutual absence prevents artisans from developing viable long-term business models and reinforces the perception of craft as economically marginal.

Material ecosystems and supply chains:

The sustainability of craft enterprises also depends on the health of their material ecosystems. Many crafts rely on locally sourced materials — wool, clay, marble, wood, natural dyes — whose availability has been reduced by globalised supply chains, industrial concentration and the disappearance of small processing facilities. This erosion weakens entire regional economies and threatens the continuity of traditional knowledge. Revitalising these material systems is therefore crucial, not only to sustain production but to preserve the environmental and territorial balance that underpins authentic craftsmanship.

Innovation, technology, and finance:

Innovation in craft differs from dominant start-up models: it advances through incremental improvement, experimentation and the adaptive use of materials, tools and processes. Alongside this, craft increasingly engages with open and generative innovation, integrating digital fabrication, AI-assisted tools and circular design to extend rather than replace manual skill. Craft innovation is also social and cultural, emerging through communities of practice, peer learning and new collaborative infrastructures. It further involves institutional experimentation, as intermediaries and regional actors develop new governance models and cross-sector partnerships. Taken together, these technological, social and institutional dynamics align with Europe's vision for sustainable, human-centred development — yet they remain undervalued in policy frameworks that privilege high-tech, disruptive innovation.

Financial access represents another structural limitation. Traditional credit systems and investment schemes are oriented toward high-growth, short-term returns, which are ill-suited to the slower and risk-averse nature of craft production. Many artisans require microfinance, cooperative funds or community-based models that reflect their scale, ethics and time horizons. Without these tailored instruments, promising enterprises remain under-capitalised and vulnerable to market fluctuations.

Identity, recognition, and self-perception:

Finally, the challenge of recognition extends beyond institutions to the craftspeople themselves. Many artisans do not identify as entrepreneurs or innovators, which limits their engagement with support programs and weakens their collective bargaining power. Strengthening self-awareness and professional identity is essential to building confidence, enabling peer collaboration and fostering a shared sense of belonging to a wider European craft economy.

A broader vision of value:

Craft demonstrates that economic viability and cultural meaning are not mutually exclusive. Its forms of production are based on care, quality and durability — values that complement the EU's broader objectives for sustainability, inclusion and territorial cohesion. By reframing craft as both a cultural and economic asset, Europe can champion alternative business models that prioritise quality over

quantity, repair over replacement and cooperation over competition. In this sense, craft enterprises act as laboratories for the green transition, showing that small-scale, high-skill and community-anchored production can lead to resilient and innovative economies.

O4: Policy implications and recommendations

Building sustainable business models for craft requires shifting from preservation to participation: from viewing artisans as cultural custodians to recognising them as active entrepreneurs within Europe's future economy. The following policy directions are proposed:

1. Recognise and operationalise craft as an economic sector

Recommendation: Promote the recognition of crafts as a distinct economic domain by supporting the development of a coherent European framework and possibly updated statistical classifications (e.g., NACE, ATECO) through dedicated funding calls and research initiatives. Such efforts would not only enhance visibility in national and EU monitoring systems but also facilitate artisans' access to regional and national funding schemes, innovation programmes and cross-sectoral partnerships – thereby generating positive spillovers for employment, skills transmission and local development.

2. Revitalise material ecosystems and local supply chains

Recommendation: Promote regional strategies that reconnect artisans with sources of raw materials, processing facilities and logistics hubs. Encourage circular models that reuse and repurpose materials, aligning craft production with the EU Green Deal and rural development goals.

3. Tailor financial instruments to craft realities

Recommendation: Develop microcredit, cooperative funds and community-based finance schemes suited to small-scale, slow-growth enterprises. Encourage partnerships with ethical investors and public banks to provide stable, low-interest support.

4. Broaden innovation and inclusion criteria

Recommendation: Revise EU and national innovation policies to include craft-based, low-tech and process-driven forms of innovation. Recognise digital-craft hybridity, repair and sustainable design as key innovation areas eligible for R&D and creative funding.

5. Encourage fair and transparent collaborations

Recommendation: Develop guidelines and model contracts for partnerships between artisans and luxury brands, cultural institutions, or tourism operators. Ensure fair remuneration, credit and visibility for craftspeople while safeguarding authenticity and authorship.

6. Empower self-organisation and networks

Recommendation: Support cooperative structures, professional associations and clusters that enable shared visibility, advocacy and collective services (marketing, logistics, digital presence). These networks can amplify small enterprises' reach and resilience.

7. Inspire new generations and future business models

Recommendation: Promote initiatives that attract young people to craft through education, mentorship, and creative entrepreneurship programmes. Support the emergence of new business models such as cooperatives, collectives and shared production spaces that reflect contemporary economies based on collaboration, sustainability and cultural value creation.

ANNEXE 1

CEDEFOP Data

According to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)³², handicraft workers represent about 0.3% of total EU employment, corresponding to around 520,000 people employed in 2022. These workers are primarily active in the manufacturing sector and are skilled in the design, creation, repair, maintenance, and decoration of precision instruments, musical instruments, jewellery, pottery, porcelain ware, and other craft goods.

The CEDEFOP report highlights major structural changes in the sector due to digital transformation and sustainability requirements, which oblige artisans and craft professionals to update their skills, adopt new materials, and integrate new technologies.

Key facts and trends:

- Employment decline: handicraft employment dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic and remained below 2020 levels by 2022.
- Sector concentration: approximately three-quarters of handicraft workers are employed in manufacturing.
- Future outlook: employment in handicrafts is projected to fall by about 13% by 2035, although many vacancies will arise as older workers retire.
- Evolving skills: the sector increasingly relies on digital tools such as 3D design and online marketing, sustainable materials, and circular-economy principles.

Statistical classifications and limits

The principal European statistical frameworks, NACE (Nomenclature of Economic Activities) and CPA (Classification of Products by Activity), do not recognise crafts as a distinct category. Only a few exceptions, such as handmade lace and tapestries, are identified. In many categories the distinction between handmade and industrial production is absent.

Similarly, ISCO-08 (International Standard Classification of Occupations) includes categories relevant to crafts, such as musical instrument artisans, jewellers, potters, glass artisans, and wood or textile artisans, but these are dispersed across different occupational groups and are never aggregated into a single “crafts sector.”

³² CEDEFOP. *Handicraft and printing workers, skills, opportunities and challenges*. 2023.

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/data-insights/handicraft-and-printing-workers-skills-opportunities-and-challenges-2023-update>.

The ESSnet-Culture final report (2012)³³ recognised the cultural and economic importance of crafts, particularly for preserving traditions, supporting creativity, local economies, and tourism, but concluded that no reliable EU-level data exists, as measurement relies on fragmented national sources lacking comparability.

Subsequent Eurostat publications, such as the Guide to Culture Statistics (2018)³⁴, Culture Statistics (2019)³⁵, and Cultural Employment Statistics (2023, updated 2024)³⁶, confirm this gap. Crafts are only indirectly visible through cultural employment, where high rates of self-employment reflect the independent nature of craft work.

No harmonized source is available for producing overall statistics on Art crafts from European sources, nor from International networks. This absence of consolidated, comparable data has serious policy implications. Without harmonised indicators, the crafts sector cannot be accurately valued or effectively supported through EU programmes in culture, heritage, education, innovation, or SME development.

ANNEX 2

National Systems and Examples

Country profiles below are compared on a common grid:

- **Legal basis** (law/decree; recognition/registry type)
- **Statistical unit & coverage** (enterprise, establishment, self-employed; inclusions/exclusions)
- **Governance** (national authority; chamber/agency; regional role)
- **Data highlights** (latest year; headline figures)
- **Limits/notes** (classification discrepancies; comparability issues)

France

Legal basis & registry. Multi-layered system combining national law and the **Répertoire des métiers (RM)**³⁷. INSEE defines crafts as independent activities in production, transformation, repair, or services with an employment cap of **10 workers** (with **droit de suite** allowing growth beyond the cap). The **Law of 5 July 1996** requires registration in the RM.

³³ ESSnet-Culture. Final Report 2012.2012. Pages 335–336.

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/341465/3199631/essnet-culture.pdf>

³⁴ Eurostat. *Guide to Culture Statistics*. 2018.

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/9433072/KS-GQ-18-011-EN-N.pdf>

³⁵ Eurostat. *Culture Statistics*. 2019. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/10177894/KS-01-19-712-EN-N.pdf>.

³⁶ Eurostat. *Culture statistics, cultural employment*. 2024.

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Culture_statistics_-_cultural_employment.

³⁷ Republic of France. *Répertoire des métiers, Official classification*. 2025.

<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000031941949>.

Governance. Hybrid: national law and INSEE definitions provide a centralised framework; **Chambres de Métiers et de l'Artisanat (CMA)**³⁸ implement locally (registers, business creation support, training/apprenticeship).

Data highlights. Regional CMAs operate observatories (e.g., **Observatoire de l'artisanat – CMA Hauts-de-France**³⁹) and run training programmes (e.g., **Artisanat & Attractivité – CMA Île-de-France, 2024**⁴⁰). At national level, **CMA France**⁴¹ coordinates policy and partnerships (e.g., with **France Travail**). Selected studies point to scale: **Atometrics (2025)**⁴² estimates **1.7 million businesses** and **€300bn** turnover; **ISFF “Les Éclaireurs” (2024)**⁴³ estimates **€68 bn** turnover, **500,000 jobs** (incl. 280,000 salaried, classified into 281 professions across 16 fields) and **€9bn** exports, using a wider perimeter than métiers d'art stricto sensu, defined as savoir-faire d'exception, gathering both fine crafts and luxury and historical know-how manufacturing". The **ISM/MAAF Baromètre**⁴⁴ continuously tracks employment but uses yet another categorical perimeter.

Limits/notes. Figures are **not directly comparable** due to different scopes and methods (RM legal perimeter vs métiers d'art research perimeter vs administrative observatories).

Italy

Legal basis. **Law 443/1985**⁴⁵ (Framework Law for Crafts) sets enterprise thresholds (up to **32 employees**, extendable to **40** with apprentices), and creates the Provincial Register of Craft Enterprises, Craft Commissions, and the National Council of Crafts.

Presidential Decree DPR No. 288 of 25 May 2001 classifies 158 artisanal processes into 13 sectors., including tailoring, leather and upholstery, jewellery, ceramics, textiles, musical instruments, photography, and food-related crafts.⁴⁶

³⁸ INSEE. *Artisanat Définitions*. 2019.

<https://www.insee.fr/fr/metadonnees/definition/c1137#:~:text=L'artisanat%20regroupe%20les%20personnes,figurant%20sur%20une%20liste%20%C3%A9tablie.>

³⁹ CMA Hauts-de-France. *Observatoire de l'artisanat*. <https://www.cma-hautsdefrance.fr/observatoire-artisanat>

⁴⁰ CMA Île-de-France. Training programmes, Artisanat & Attractivité. 2024.

<https://www.cma-idf.fr/magazines/artisanat-attractivite-8-mai-2024.>

⁴¹ CMA France <https://www.artisanat.fr/nous-connaitre/le-reseau-des-cma.>

⁴² Atometrics' study. *Comment les CMA peuvent utiliser la data pour soutenir la création d'entreprise artisanale*. 2025.

<https://atometrics.com/comment-les-cma-peuvent-utiliser-la-data-pour-soutenir-la-creation-dentreprise-artisanale.>

⁴³ ISFF. *Les Éclaireurs*. 2024

https://www.artisanat.fr/system/files/medias/file/2024/01/20230825_CP_barometre_ISM_MAAF_apprentissage.pdf

⁴⁴ Institut Supérieur des Métiers, <https://infometiers.org/barometre-de-lartisanat-ism-maaf.>

⁴⁵ Governo Italiano Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri. Legge-quadro per l'artigianato, Gazzetta Ufficiale, n. 199. 1985.

<https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:1985-08-08:443.>

⁴⁶ Governo Italiano Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri. DECRETO DEL PRESIDENTE DELLA REPUBBLICA, n. 288. 2001.

<https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:presidente.repubblica:decreto:2001-05-25:288.>

The **Made in Italy Law 206/2023**⁴⁷ strengthens recognition of cultural/creative enterprises, creates a national registry for ICCs, earmarks funding (2024–2033), and introduces **geographical indications** for artisanal/industrial products.⁴⁸

Governance & regional implementation. Regions adapt national principles to their local contexts through measures such as the “**Maestro Artigiano**” qualification, certifying professional excellence and teaching ability, and the **Bottega Scuola** apprenticeship system. As an example, Tuscany Regional Law No. 53 of 22 October 2008 emphasises creativity, tradition, small-scale, and high-quality production.⁴⁹

Associations. There are two major national associations representing artisans and small businesses in Italy, **Confartigianato Imprese**⁵⁰ and **CNA**⁵¹, both structured in a **federated system**, with **local associations** providing direct services to enterprises, **regional federations** engaging with regional governments, and a **national confederation in Rome** coordinating the network and representing members at the national and EU levels.

Limits/notes. National legal uniformity coexists with **regional variation** in recognition/training instruments; data fragmentation persists.

Belgium

Legal basis & recognition. **Law of 19 March 2014** (effective 2016) formalises **Artisan** recognition. The **SPF Économie**⁵² defines artisans as engagé in authentic manual production, transformation, repair, restoration. Recognition (valid **6 years**) is granted by the **Commission des Artisans**, requires **BCE** registration, **less than 20 workers**, and compliance with the definition. Recognised artisans access the federal register and **Certified Craft** label.⁵³

Data highlights. The registration is not mandatory. As of 2024, only 2,500 artisans were registered, 27 percent in the food sector, with others in personal care, animal services, and car repair, which highlights that many craftspeople did not opt for this recognition.

Limits/notes. Voluntary nature and **narrow recognition** explains the **low uptake** and the relative weakness to measure the sector in a comprehensive way.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana. *Serie Generale n. 23G00228/SG*. 2023. <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2023/12/27/23G00228/sg>.

⁴⁹ Regione Toscana. *Tuscany Regional Law No. 53*. 2008. <https://www.consiglio.regione.toscana.it/upload/crt/leggi/2008/lr2008n53.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Confartigianato Imprese Website: <https://www.confartigianato.it/>.

⁵¹ CNA Website: <https://www.cna.it/>.

⁵² SPF Économie. *Mentionner « artisanal » et ses dérivés dans l'appellation des produits: guidelines pour les entreprises et les artisans*. 2024. <https://economie.fgov.be/fr/themes/entreprises/guidance/autres-secteurs/mentionner-artisanal-et-ses>.

⁵³ Région Wallonne. *Le statut d'artisan en Wallonie*. <https://www.1890.be/solution/info-artisanat>.

Spain

Legal basis & governance. No national framework; **autonomous communities** define, regulate, and promote crafts via their own legislation and representative bodies, maintaining **separate registries** and recognition criteria. Systems vary: some emphasise **heritage preservation** (e.g., Andalusia), others **innovation/competitiveness** (e.g., Catalonia).

Market mapping. KPMG (2022)⁵⁴ identifies four market segments common across regions: **artistic/creative crafts**; **consumer-goods crafts (food and non-food)**; **service-oriented crafts**; **traditional/popular crafts** (market typology, not a legal taxonomy).

Limits/notes. The sector is highly **fragmented with** no national consolidation and consequent comparability issues.

Germany

Legal basis and classification. In Germany, the crafts sector is defined by the [Handwerksordnung](#)⁵⁵ (HwO), which groups activities into three lists: **Annex A** (licence-required crafts), **Annex B1** (licence-exempt crafts), and **Annex B2** (“craft-like trades”). Day-to-day implementation and registration are handled by the country’s **53 Chambers of Skilled Crafts**⁵⁶ (**Handwerkskammern, HWK**).

Data highlights. Destatis reports figures for **enterprises in Annex A and B1 only** — for 2023 this is **about 568,000 firms** employing **around 5.4 million people**.⁵⁷ By contrast, the umbrella body ZDH often speaks of “**over one million businesses**,” because it counts **all entries** in the crafts registers **plus** the directory of **craft-like trades**—that is, **Annex A + B1 + B2**.⁵⁸

How to read the difference. Destatis and ZDH are **not counting the same thing**: Destatis counts **enterprises** within **A+B1**, while ZDH totals **register/directory entries** across **A+B1+B2**. The discrepancy is therefore **structural**, not a mistake.

Greece

Governance & scope. Crafts linked to **folk art** and artistic small-scale manufacturing (furniture, jewellery, ceramics, textiles, glass, stone, marble). No single national law; definitions embedded in

⁵⁴ KPMG Asesores S.L. *La artesanía en España: sello de identidad de la alta gama*. 2022.

https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmgsites/es/pdf/2022/09/Informe_Artesania_Alta_Gama.pdf.

⁵⁵ Handwerksordnung Website: https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/hwo/anlage_b.ht.

⁵⁶ 53 Chambers of Skilled Crafts (HWK) Website:

<https://www.zdh.de/ueber-uns/organisationen-des-handwerks/handwerkskammern>.

⁵⁷ Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis or Federal Statistical Office of Germany). *Economic Sectors and Enterprises - Crafts*. 2020. https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Economic-Sectors-Enterprises/Crafts/_node.html.

⁵⁸ Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks (ZDH) (Central Association of German Crafts). *Kennzahlen des Handwerks*. 2025. <https://www.zdh.de/daten-und-fakten/kennzahlen-des-handwerks/>.

regional development and **state-aid** programmes overseen by the **Ministry of Development**. Programmatic definitions cover furniture/paper products and a wide range of handicrafts.⁵⁹

Orientation. Emphasis on **cultural preservation** and **regional identity** over economic thresholds. There is **no workforce cap**.

ANNEXE 3

Development of the “CRAFTOUR Model”

Conceptual Framework

A key requirement for the model to achieve its intended goal is **interoperability**, the ability of diverse systems, platforms, and organisations to **exchange**, **interpret**, and **meaningfully use** information. In the context of the craft domain, interoperability is not merely a technical consideration; it is a **foundational principle** that enables the **preservation**, **dissemination**, and **evolution** of craft knowledge. Craft-related information is often **fragmented** across a wide range of institutions and communities, including museums, archives, artisan workshops, universities, and cultural heritage organisations. Each of these entities may use different **standards**, **terminologies**, and **data formats**, which can make it difficult to share or combine information in a coherent way.

Without interoperability, valuable craft data remains **siloed** and **inaccessible** to those who could benefit from it - be it scholars, educators, policymakers, or craftspeople. Such isolation not only limits the potential of this data to contribute to contemporary discourse and practice but also places it at risk of being **forgotten** or **lost** over time.

Implementing **standardised data models** and shared **ontologies** is essential for bridging these divides. By aligning with existing frameworks and open standards, we enable the seamless integration of craft-related datasets across different systems and institutions. This technical compatibility creates opportunities for richer, cross-disciplinary collaboration and supports the development of tools and platforms that can **query**, **visualise**, and **analyse** craft knowledge in novel ways.

Furthermore, interoperability enhances public access and engagement. When craft data is **interconnected** and **discoverable**, it becomes easier to create digital exhibitions, educational resources, and interactive archives that invite broader audiences to explore and appreciate craft traditions. These inclusive practices help to ensure that craft heritage remains a living, evolving domain - one that is connected not only to its past but also to its future.

⁵⁹ General Secretariat of Industry (Greece). Υποέργο 3: Μελέτη για τη χαρτογράφηση του τομέα της χειροτεχνίας & καλλιτεχνικής βιοτεχνίας (Study for mapping craft & artisanal SMEs). 2025.
https://www.ggb.gr/el/sme_observatory/map_handcraft_smes

Moreover, interoperability allows our model to both contribute to and benefit from **external datasets**. We can integrate data from museums, libraries, or international cultural heritage repositories to **enrich CRAFTOUR dataset**, adding depth, context, and nuance. Conversely, others can incorporate our data into **broader initiatives**, increasing its **visibility** and **impact**. This reciprocal flow of information ultimately strengthens the resilience, sustainability, and relevance of the craft knowledge ecosystem.

To achieve this, the ontology will be based on **CIDOC CRM (Conceptual Reference Model)**, a theoretical and practical standard for **integrating cultural heritage information**. CIDOC CRM is:

- An **ISO standard** (ISO 2117:2023)
- A **semantic framework** for describing explicit and implicit concepts in cultural documentation
- A tool for integrating data **across institutions** (museums, libraries, archives)
- Composed of a **base ontology** and modular **extensions** to support specialised needs, such as geoinformatics or bibliographic records

CIDOC CRM allows **schema-agnostic** and **software-independent** data integration, supports both **high-level queries** and **granular data documentation**, and has been co-developed with relevant research communities for **harmonised data compatibility**.

Methodology and Participation

A **hybrid bottom-up and top-down** approach is essential:

- **Bottom-up:** Data collection directly from craftspeople or local representatives (e.g., chambers of commerce, unions, associations). While this participatory method ensures both qualitative richness and quantitative accuracy—mirroring successful models like the UK Heritage Crafts RED LIST—it is also the most complex and demanding part of the process. Creating engagement from the bottom up requires trust-building, clear communication, and long-term commitment. Therefore, the development of an intuitive public interface and a well-designed, inclusive methodology is essential to encourage broad participation.

To support this, policymakers have a critical role to play. Engagement should be actively fostered through incentives, funding, awareness campaigns, and capacity-building efforts aimed at local actors. A central observatory could coordinate these initiatives, monitor progress, and ensure that data collection reaches even the most remote and underrepresented regions of Europe. This coordinated structure would help guarantee that the full diversity and vitality of European craft heritage is documented and preserved.

- **Top-down:** Standardization and semantic structuring based on **formal ontologies** like CIDOC CRM.

Features of the model:

- Supports **anonymized data** with **traceability**
- Allows new entries when **techniques or practices** are not yet in the knowledge base
- Includes **place classification** to enable comparison of similar crafts across different regions
- Accommodates **multilingualism** and the **diverse cultural contexts** of Europe by employing, among others, the Getty Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) and the UNESCO Thesaurus to represent specific elements of craft practices.

Alignment with ECHOES

The CRAFTOUR ontology should align with the **guidelines and goals** of the **ECHOES project**⁶⁰ (A European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage, which is funded with €25 million over five years (2024-2029) to create a collaborative cloud platform for **tangible and intangible heritage professionals**.

Identified Concepts to be represented in the CRAFTOUR model

- **Personal data**
- **Official number of people involved in the activity**
- **Is it a family business ?** For how many generations?
- **Geolocation**
- **Sector** (e.g., Wood crafts)
- **Profession**
- **Product**
- **Material**
- **Tool**
- **Technique**
- **Start date of activity**
- **Learning path** (where they learned - Location + formal / non formal)
- **Training activity (as teacher)**
- **Affiliation to organization / entity**

⁶⁰ ECHOES Project Website: <https://www.echoes-ecch.eu/>.

Starting from the identified **domain concepts**, we developed a **preliminary version** of the **CRAFTOUR ontology**, using the CIDOC CRM as the reference vocabulary. CIDOC CRM, an established standard for cultural heritage documentation, serves not only as the foundation for CRAFTOUR but is also the core ontology adopted by the ECHOES model, reinforcing semantic alignment across related projects. This preliminary version is intended for **illustrative purposes**, aimed at demonstrating a possible **direction** for the ontology’s development and application within the craft domain, particularly through the reuse of an **ISO standard ontology** to highlight the potential for **semantic interoperability**.

Table 1 presents the **mapping of CRAFTOUR concepts** to their corresponding CIDOC CRM classes, demonstrating how the ontology builds upon and complements the existing structure. The green rows in Table 1 indicate the **CRAFTOUR custom classes** that have been added to extend the CRM. These additions were carefully designed to capture **domain-specific** aspects of craft practices and intangible knowledge that are not fully covered by the standard CIDOC CRM framework. By mapping these custom classes to the appropriate CIDOC CRM entities, we ensure that the model maintains **semantic interoperability** while enhancing its ability to represent craft-related phenomena with greater depth and precision.

Figure 1 offers a graphical representation of the CRAFTOUR ontology, visually illustrating the **relationships** between the core concepts and their CRM counterparts. This diagram helps convey the logic of the model and how domain-specific elements are integrated into a broader semantic framework.

To validate the model, we applied it in a **case study** focused on the woodcraft sector, specifically the **Luthier craft**, a traditional discipline centred on the making and repairing of stringed musical instruments. This application is illustrated in Figure 2, showcasing how the ontology can be used to structure and interpret real-world craft knowledge in a coherent and meaningful way.

It is important to note that this validation is intended solely to **demonstrate that the proposed direction is applicable to this domain**. It serves as a preliminary example, not as a definitive implementation, to illustrate the potential of the CRAFTOUR ontology in representing complex craft practices.

CRAFTOUR Concept	Mapping
Production	equivalent to E12 Production
Location	equivalent to E53 Place
People involved	equivalent to E39 Actor
Sector	subclass of E55 Type
Profession	subclass of E55 Type

Product type	equivalent to E99 Product Type
Product	equivalent to E24 Physical Human-Made Thing
Material	equivalent to E57 Material
Tool	subclass of E19 Physical Object
Technique	subclass of E55 Type
Start Date	equivalent to E52 Timespan
Training Activity	subclass of E7 Activity
Organisation	equivalent to E74 Group
Schema	equivalent to E29 Design or Procedure

Table 1. Mapping between the identified concepts in the CRAFTOUR ontology and the corresponding CIDOC CRM classes.



Figure 1. Graphical representation of the CRAFTOUR ontology model, illustrating the mapping of identified concepts to CIDOC CRM classes.

Case study - Wood Sector

1. LUTHIER (Musical instrument maker – e.g., violins, guitars)

Personal data: Maria Rossi - date of birth	Tools: Gouges, planes, scrapers, bending iron, calipers...
Geolocation: Cremona, Italy	Techniques: Hand-carving, tap-tuning, wood bending, varnishing
Sector: Wood crafts	Start date of activity: 2005
Profession: Luthier	Learning path :
Products: Violins, violas, cellos	Training activities: Apprenticeship at International School of Violin Making, Cremona
Materials: Maple, spruce, ebony, varnish (natural resins)	Associated organization / entity: Italian Violinmakers Guild

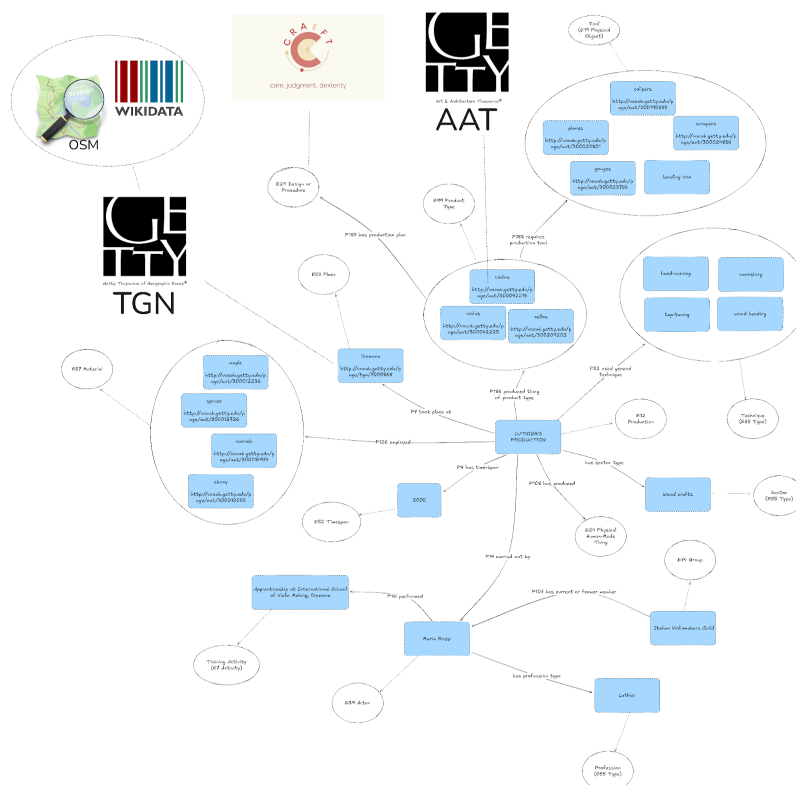


Figure 2. Case study application of the CRAFTOUR ontology in the Wood sector, focusing on the Luthier craft.

Figure 3 presents a possible **software architecture** designed to implement a **bottom-up** approach for collecting data and populating the CRAFTOUR ontology. This architecture emphasises the active involvement of craft practitioners, local organisations, and regional stakeholders in the data collection process, ensuring that the information captured is both contextually rich and grounded in lived experience. The proposed system supports decentralised data input through user-friendly interfaces, enabling contributors to document techniques, tools, materials, and practices specific to their territories. These inputs are then semantically structured and integrated into the CRAFTOUR ontology, leveraging automated validation and mapping services to ensure consistency and interoperability. By facilitating grassroots participation, this approach aims to create a **dynamic**, **scalable**, and **inclusive** knowledge base that accurately reflects the diversity of craft traditions across regions.

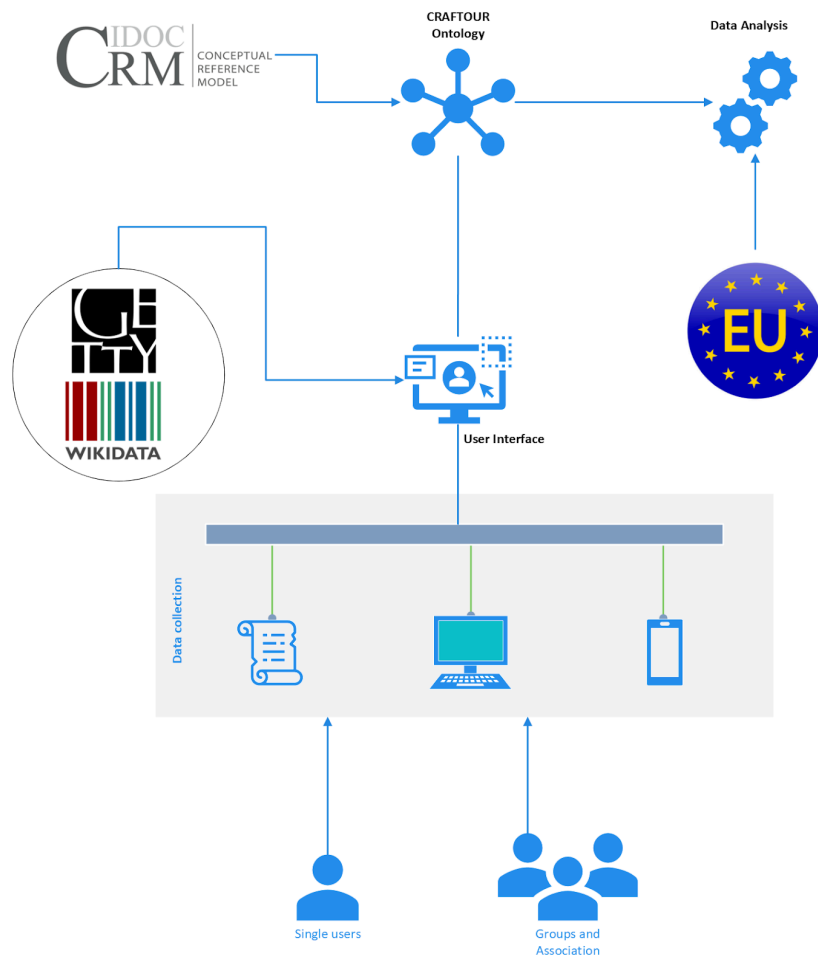


Figure 3. A possible software architecture that implements a bottom-up approach to collect data and populate the CRAFTOUR ontology..

Some other examples of crafts :



WOOD CRAFTS

Fields	PUPARO TRADITIONAL CRAFTS	MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS	BUILDING CRAFTS	INTERIOR DESIGN FINE CRAFTS
Personal data	Salvatore Rizzo	Maria Rossi	Jean Dupont	Eleni Papadopoulou
Geolocation	Palermo / Catania / Siracusa	Cremona, Italy	Brittany, France	Thessaloniki, Greece
Sector	Metal crafts / Wood crafts / Textile	Wood crafts	Wood crafts	Wood crafts
Profession	Puparo (maker/performer of Pupi Siciliani)	Luthier	Carpenter	Wood Carver
Products	Pupi Siciliani / Teatro dei Pupi	Violins, violas, cellos	Timber-frame houses, staircases, windows	Iconostases, mirror frames, decorative panels
Materials	Papier-mâché, wood, alpaca, brass, copper, bronze, textiles	Maple, spruce, ebony, natural varnish	Oak, pine, Douglas fir, wood glue, metal joints	Walnut, linden, gold leaf, beeswax
Tools	Carving chisels, coping saw, repoussé hammer, chisels, hand drill, paintbrushes.	Gouges, planes, scrapers, bending iron, calipers	Saw, hammer, chisel, circular saw, level, square	Carving knives, chisels, mallets, compasses
Techniques	Papier maché Wood carving Metal engraving	Hand-carving, tap-tuning, bending, varnishing	Joinery, mortise and tenon, framing, sanding	High-relief carving, gilding, polishing
Start date of activity	1990	2005	1998	2010
Learning path	Non-formal (Palermo)	Scuola Internazionale di Liuteria Cremona	CAP Charpentier	Apprenticeship + courses in Athens
Training activities	As teacher	Teaching at Scuola di Liuteria		Workshop instructor
Affiliation / Organization	none	Italian Violinmakers Guild	Chambre des Métiers, Brittany	Hellenic Folk Art Association

TEXTILE CRAFTS

Field	INTERIOR DESIGN FASHION	INTERIOR DESIGN FASHION	INTERIOR DESIGN FASHION	INTERIOR DESIGN FASHION
Personal data	Anna Lindström	Marco García	Inês Carvalho	Léa Moreau
Geolocation	Dalarna, Sweden	Galicia, Spain	Madeira, Portugal	Provence, France
Sector	Textile crafts	Textile crafts	Textile crafts	Textile crafts
Profession	Spinner	Weaver	Embroiderer	Natural dyer
Products	Handspun yarn (wool, flax)	Rugs, traditional shawls, wall hangings	Tablecloths, linen garments, decorative textiles	Dyed yarns and fabrics for clothing and art
Materials	Sheep wool, flax, plant-based mordants	Wool, linen, cotton	Linen, cotton, silk thread	Indigo, madder root, oak galls, alum
Tools	Drop spindle, spinning wheel, carders	Floor loom, warping board, shuttles	Embroidery hoop, needle, tracing paper	Dye vats, mordanting pots, pH meters
Techniques	Carding, hand-spinning, plying, natural washing	Warp and weft weaving, twill, dobby patterns	Madeira embroidery (Richelieu, shadow work), satin stitch	Natural dyeing, tie-dye, eco-printing, shibori
Start date of activity	2012	2000	2008	1995
Learning path	Non formal education	Non formal education	Non formal education	Non formal education
Training activities	Community weaving guild, museum workshops	Traditional apprenticeship + EU Erasmus Craft Program	Madeira Embroidery Institute certified training	Botanical dyeing school, permaculture courses

Associated organization / entity	Swedish Textile Heritage Society	Asociación Artesanía Galega	Bordado da Madeira Certification Office	French Natural Textile Alliance
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These illustrative tables, although entirely fictional, demonstrate how complex and multidimensional the classification of crafts can be. Each craftsperson's profile involves numerous variables—materials, tools, techniques, training paths, products, geographical contexts, and professional affiliations—showing that craft knowledge is not linear but layered, intersecting, and highly contextual. Building on this, additional examples help illustrate the different types of complexity involved in classifying craft knowledge.

First, many craft elements **play multiple roles depending on context**: a material like gold leaf, for instance, may be the final product of one craft and the essential input of another. This fluidity shows that straightforward, single-category classification systems are insufficient.

Second, **numerous practices are inherently cross-sectoral**. Crafts such as sgraffito combine architectural techniques, decorative arts, restoration methods, and region-specific heritage traditions. This overlap demonstrates that craft activities rarely sit neatly within a single sector and must instead be mapped across several interconnected domains.

Finally, **craft knowledge exhibits deep structural complexity**, with intertwined layers of materials, tools, techniques, cultural context, and transmission pathways. These overlapping dimensions make it clear that only a structured, ontology-based approach can accurately capture relationships across practices, regions, and professions.

This complexity highlights the necessity for a rigorous, standardised, and carefully structured approach to data collection. Without a strict and harmonised framework, information becomes fragmented, incomparable, or difficult to interpret, ultimately limiting the ability to understand, support, and safeguard the craft sector effectively.

ANNEXE 4

Good practises

The following good practices offer potential models for strengthening and restructuring the transmission of craft skills and know-how.

The **“Maîtres d’Art – Élèves”** program is a French initiative created by the Ministry of Culture to preserve exceptional artisanal skills by passing them on to the next generation. Established in 1994, it pairs a lifelong-appointed “Master of Art” with an experienced student for a two-year mentorship, during which the whole know-how is transmitted (mainly in the master’s workshop).



“De l’or dans les mains” develops educational programs within schools, in collaboration with teachers, to give students hands-on experience with manual crafts connected to their academic curriculum.

“CAMPUS Vesailles” in France guides young people toward craft and heritage careers by offering hands-on discovery workshops, mentoring by professionals and exposure to real working environments. It organizes vocational exploration programs, school partnerships and public events to help students identify their interests, develop practical skills and make informed career choices in the crafts sector.

