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Supporting digital, green and creative transformation in regions

A practical guideline



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List of abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CCSI	Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries
DGC	Digital, Green and Creative
EU	European Union
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SME	Small- and Medium-sized Enterprise
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

1 Introduction

The Capacity2Transform project addressed the pressing challenges faced by companies across central Europe, namely the dual pressure of digitalisation and the transition to environmentally sustainable practices, both of which are essential for future competitiveness and resilience. Companies – especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – face multiple, overlapping transitions: digital, green, social, and cultural. Navigating these transitions requires more than technical expertise. It demands cross-sector collaboration, creativity, and the ability to rethink existing business models. The green and digital transitions, in particular, call for new skills, new partnerships, and new mindsets.

This is where the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI) play a powerful role. CCSI bring fresh perspectives, creative ways of working, and practical problem-solving approaches that open up new ways to tackle complex regional challenges, e.g. that help find new and effective solutions. Despite this, they remain underrecognised as drivers of innovation and sustainable transformation.

At the same time, a lack of skills and limited cooperation between people and organisations across sectors slow down innovation and the shift to more sustainable practices. Europe's transitions increasingly depend on strengthening Digital, Green, and Entrepreneurial (DGE) competences – not only among companies, but across entire regional ecosystems. **What is needed today is the ability to collaborate across sectors, mobilise diverse competences, and create the conditions for long-term, place-based change.**

The project main objective was twofold: 1) to empower SMEs in the tourism and CCSI sector to deliver innovative digital, creative, and sustainable solutions, and 2) to position CCSI as catalysts for broader economic transformation across the European Union (EU). Capacity2Transform addressed these issues by helping SMEs and CCSI embrace digital, green, and creative approaches, build sustainable business models, and foster collaborations that open new opportunities for innovation and growth. Unlocking the potential of the cultural and creative sector requires enabling businesses to accept it as a key partner for innovation and ideally bring it into their core business rather than using it as an add-on.

European companies face pressure to adapt to digital change while shifting towards more sustainable practices. These transitions are essential for future competitiveness and resilience but cannot be managed by businesses alone. They require the ability to mobilise diverse competences, collaborate across sectors and rethink how innovation happens at local level.

This is where the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI) make a difference. With their fresh perspectives, creative working methods, and hands-on problem-solving approaches, CCSI help unlock new solutions to complex economic and societal challenges.

This book presents an innovative and practical methodology to support Digital, Green and Creative (DGC) transformation. It shows how regions and organisations can strengthen their innovation ecosystems and core business models by combining digital, green, and creative competences. Through concrete examples, it explains how DGC transformation works in practice, based on three key principles: Upskilling, peer exchange, and co-creation.

The guideline takes readers step by step through the DGC approach and outlines what business support organisations, CCSI, and public authorities can do to create the right conditions for change in their region: From understanding their local ecosystem and engaging stakeholders to building lasting capacities.