

# POLICY ANALYSIS AND THE NEEDS OF THE CREATIVE ECOSYSTEMS



ECOCRIN

SUSTAINABLE AND  
INNOVATIVE CREATIVE  
ECOSYSTEMS

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## NEEDS OF CREATIVE ECOSYSTEMS IN FINLAND?

### INTRODUCTION

The ECOCRIN project at the University of Turku explores how national level policy could support 'unleashing' the potential of creative sectors for innovation, growth and internationalisation. We ask how different actors and local networks within and outside creative sectors, contribute to building innovative and sustainable creative ecosystems, and how to design and model a cross-sectoral and ecological approach to innovation and cultural policy, that supports innovative creative ecosystems while respecting planetary boundaries. Rather than using one key concept, we use several variations to describe the diversity of the cultural and creative sector and its actors.

The results presented here are based on our extensive **ecosystem mapping** and **qualitative data collection**, including **Heritage Futures Workshops** in **Kuhmo, Pori and Turku-Paimio**. In addition, the research material includes **an analysis of selected policy documents** from the last five years in both innovation and cultural policy areas. (Stenholm & Hytönen 2024; Hytönen et al. 2024.)

The policy analysis focused on 61 national and 28 regional/local policy documents. A more detailed analysis of around **ten key cultural and innovation policy documents**, included the *Growth Agreement on Scalable Creative Content* (2024), *Government Resolution on Entrepreneurship* (2024), *Entrepreneurship Strategy* (2022), *The Cultural Policy Report* (2024), *Government Resolution for the Cultural Heritage Strategy 2023–2030* (2023) and *Creative Business Finland programme* (2023). (Pukkinen & Latvala-Harvilahti 2024.)

### ECOSYSTEMS

Our research shows that cultural and creative actors form the core of ecosystem, while other stakeholders generate and maintain a favourable environment for them. Well-known **companies, festivals and events** generate **creative content, bring market-orientation, fame and legitimacy** for the entire creative ecosystem. **Pioneers serve as important role models** and shape the visibility of and attitudes towards the cultural and creative sector. One of the strengths within the creative ecosystem is that cultural and creative individuals and companies have multiple roles and work in different forms of business. (Stenholm & Hytönen 2024.) At the same time, **the creative ecosystem faces challenges due to its reliance on public funding** which is amplified by the division between cultural sectors and creative industries concerning their habits of seeking for support. According to Statistics Finland's Labour Force Survey (2023) one of four cultural professionals are self-employed.

### CURRENT NEEDS IN CREATIVE ECOSYSTEMS

Based on the analysis of ECOCRIN research material, **different empirical case areas** have **unique resources** in the business, cultural and creative sectors. Regional and local networks in the creative industries have the potential to foster innovation, but **require long-term and targeted support structures** from national policies. A strong **dialogue between the public, private and third sector across the field of culture and creative industries and beyond** is needed. However, ecosystems do not currently reach out to other business areas. There is therefore **a need for local and national network intermediaries** to act **between culture and the creative sectors and beyond**. The role of intermediaries is to mediate between the cultural and business sectors so that they can understand and support each other. Furthermore, although largely acknowledged in policies, concrete steps are required **to measure collaboration beyond the creative sector**. (Hytönen et al. 2024; Stenholm & Hytönen 2024; Pukkinen & Latvala-Harvilahti 2024.)

Based on our research, to realise the full potential of cultural and creative industries to foster innovation in the society, requires **broadening the way in which enterprises, entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are supported through national policy actions**. Enterprises, entrepreneurs and self-employed actors in culture and creative industries and beyond, need **support for creative and innovative entrepreneurship** in addition to business counselling. It is necessary to lower the threshold for cultural and creative actors **to experiment with entrepreneurship**, and there must be more opportunities for diverse grassroots initiatives (Hytönen, Pukkinen & Latvala-Harvilahti 2024; Pukkinen & Latvala-Harvilahti 2024). A long-term perspective, the ability to understand the **surprisingness of futures and resilience in front of them** (Miller 2018), is essential for the development of creative ecosystems and entrepreneurship today. Our findings reflect the importance and concern for **the independence of cultural creativity** as a support for vitality, while **acknowledging of ecological problems**. To achieve an innovative future of creative ecosystems, it is necessary to develop **futures consciousness and futures skills** that respect **creativity and planetary boundaries**. This needs to be the concern of individuals, companies in cultural and creative sectors, consumers of culture, policy makers and society accordingly (See Hytönen et al. 2024; Pukkinen & Latvala-Harvilahti 2024.)

## CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS IN POLICIES

In line with European Union policies and funding, **creative sectors** have featured strongly in cultural policies in Finland and **have started to have a stronger foothold in innovation policies** (Pukkinen & Latvala-Harvilahti 2024). However, current policies do not yet meet the needs of cultural and creative ecosystems. As our analysis shows, value creation is at the core of national innovation and cultural policy, but **the focus of value differs**. In innovation policy, the focus has been on the instrumental value of the creative sector. The policy has targeted primarily creative and other enterprises with the aim of promoting growth and internationalisation. In national cultural policy, creative sectors have been viewed in terms of their intrinsic value and economic impact, but also as a transformative force in advancing sustainable development in society and contributing to the social well-being. The focus is placed more on the individual cultural actors. In all regional policies, the internationalisation of the creative sector is highlighted. The role of various grassroot actors in building networks and in bringing value to the whole ecosystem and society is not recognised enough in policy documents (Hytönen et al. (2024). (Pukkinen & Latvala-Harvilahti 2024.)

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF KEY PRIORITIES IN INNOVATION AND CULTURAL POLICY

- 1. We recommend to strengthen concrete actions to promote cooperation in a supportive network in cultural and creative industries and beyond, and to recognize and share good practices between individual cultural actors and entrepreneurs.** This can be done, for example, by strengthening the network intermediaries from private, public and third sectors, who can enhance collaboration between cultural sectors and creative industries.
- 2. We recommend to strengthen support for entrepreneurial activities of individual cultural actors and for emerging enterprises in networks of cultural and creative industries and beyond.** This can be done, for example, by providing more possibilities for continuing education and training to upgrade entrepreneurial skills and its' sub-skills of cultural and creative actors, and with broadened business counselling for individual cultural and creative actors.
- 3. We recommend to strengthen resilience of individual cultural actors and cultural and creative entrepreneurs.** This can be done, for example, by strengthening futures consciousness and futures skills of cultural and creative actors to face both simultaneously inevitable and unexpected futures, and to maintain and strengthen respect for independent creativity as well as planetary boundaries.

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## FURTHER INFORMATION

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