

# White Paper on european craftsmanship

*A Strategy for the 21st Century*

2026 - 2035

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Federación de Organizaciones Artesanas de  
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White Paper on European Craftsmanship.  
A Strategy for the 21st Century.  
2026-2035

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# Introduction



The present White Paper on European Craftsmanship is the result of the conclusions and reflections of the International Congress on Craftsmanship of Castilla y León, held in León – Spain, on June 4 and 5, 2025, where the commitment and purpose of initiating a strategic reference document was acquired, aimed at promoting the recognition, regulation, and development of craftsmanship within the framework of the European Union.

In a context of social, economic, and environmental transformation, European craftsmanship represents a vital sector due to its capacity to generate local employment, preserve intangible heritage, provide cross-border cultural identity, foster sustainability, and promote culturally significant production models. The pandemic has highlighted the relevance of artistic and craft trades as fundamental



public goods for social cohesion and the preservation of cultural identity.

In times of crisis, these activities not only provide a channel of expression and creativity but also act as emotional pillars that help mitigate social disaffection and foster a sense of community. The creation of authorial and cultural products, as a reflection of traditions and craft techniques, has proven to be a means of connecting people in times of isolation, strengthening social bonds and offering collective comfort. However, in the current context, when the immediate crisis has diminished, it is essential not to underestimate the importance of these trades in daily life. Ignoring or relegating the relevance of craftsmanship and art in times of normality entails a significant risk. These trades should not be considered solely as activities of consumption or commerce, but as an integral part of our collective identity. The lack of support and appreciation in non-critical times endangers cultural sustainability and the ability of individuals to build community through creation. It is imperative to recognise the value of these trades as tools of social strengthening, creativity, and resilience, and to ensure their preservation and promotion over time for the collective benefit of society.

Despite their importance, the European craft sector lacks a common legislation that consistently articulates its definition, promotion, and protection across all Member States. The diversity of national approaches, the disparity of legal frameworks, and the fragmentation of representative

structures hinder progress towards homogeneous and coordinated public policies at the European level.

Through a comparative analysis of the current situation, the collection of good practices, and the formulation of concrete recommendations, this White Paper aims primarily to lay the foundations for future European legislation on craftsmanship. It constitutes a first step towards the institutional recognition of craftsmanship as a strategic sector, aligned with the values of the European Union: cultural diversity, territorial cohesion, social innovation, and ecological transition.

The methodology used for the preparation of this work combines document review, analysis of public policies and European instruments, and consultation with representative networks and entities. The result is intended to be a practical and forward-looking tool, useful for public administration officials with competences in craftsmanship, sectoral associations, researchers, and craft professionals throughout Europe.

Craftsmanship is also a fundamental pillar in the conservation of Europe's intangible cultural heritage. Traditional and artistic trades, transmitted from generation to generation, represent an intangible wealth that shapes local identities, cultural expressions, and unique knowledge that form part of Europe's DNA. Protecting and revitalising these trades is a strategic action to preserve the cultural diversity of the Union and to create a common European

identity, with its territorial and contextual particularities, from artistic and traditional trades.

The International Congress on Craftsmanship of Castilla y León (León – Spain, June 2025) underlined the urgency of establishing a coherent legal framework that provides the sector with legitimacy, visibility, and stability, both in the Member States and in the European Union. It also emphasised the need to professionalize trade, provide tools for communication and distribution, and foster collaboration between complementary profiles. It called for craftsmanship that is connected, organised, and capable of confronting the “fast” model with identity and quality.

In this context, craftsmanship appears as a generator of quality employment, non-relocatable, with the ability to retain population in territories affected by depopulation. It also represents a viable professional option for new generations trained in art and design schools, universities, and vocational training centres, and is defined as a space with strong female presence and potential for equal leadership.

The Congress also placed technology as a fundamental ally in the development of craft activity. Digital tools, 3D printing, and even artificial intelligence can complement traditional know-how without replacing the human dimension of the process. The key lies in the intelligent and responsible combination of innovation and trade.



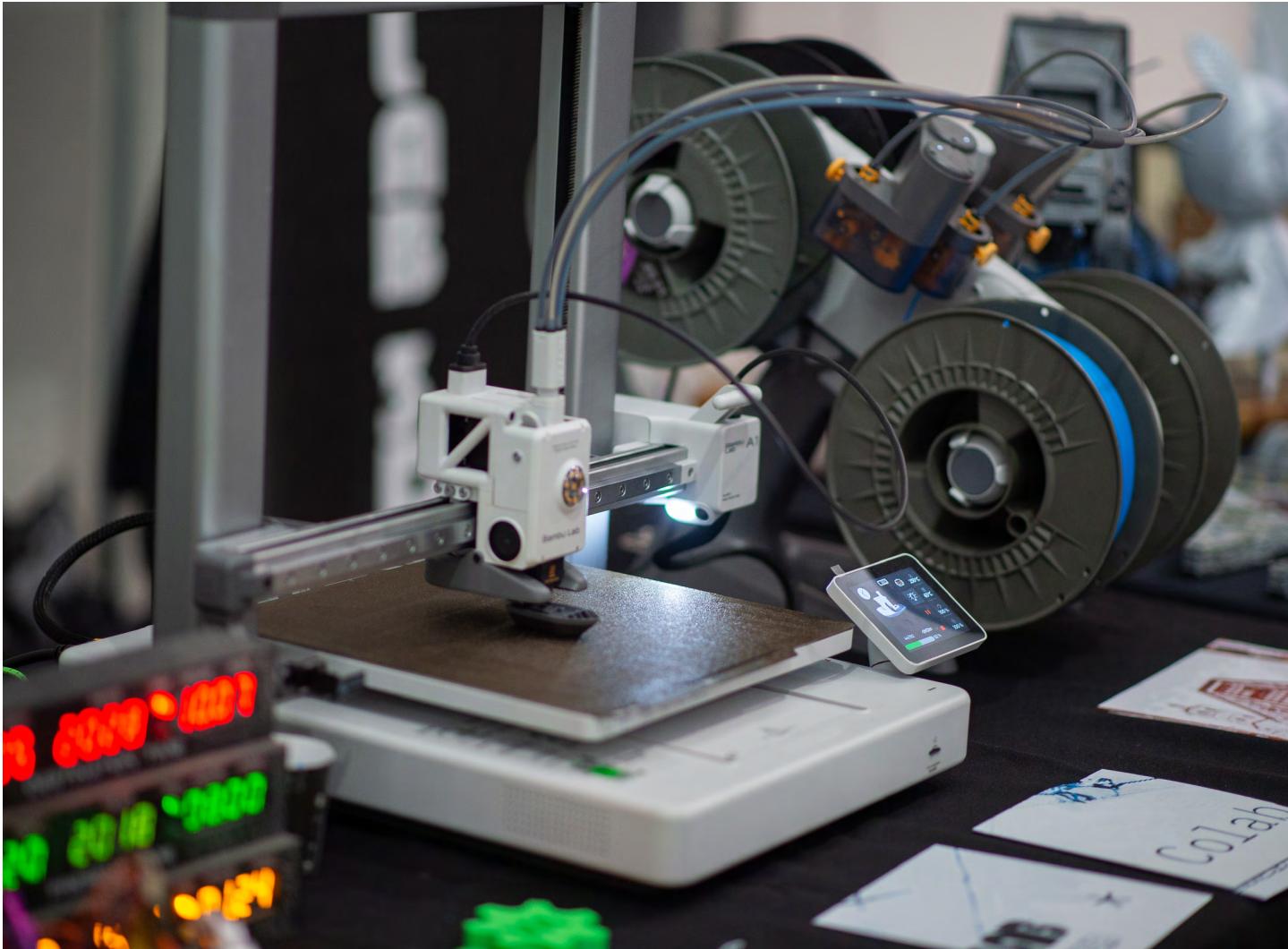
Likewise, during the sessions, the creation of European platforms for analysis and data collection was advocated, enabling the planning of effective policies based on real information. A thorough understanding of the socioeconomic reality of artistic and traditional trades would allow an accurate assessment of the sector's importance in today's Europe.

Another important issue still pending resolution, which became evident, lies in the professional recognition of work experience and the validation of knowledge and skills obtained informally through accreditation systems designed from the field.

Another priority axis is the promotion of generational renewal that guarantees the future of the sector. It is essential to dignify working conditions and social value by creating role models, presenting the artisan as a contemporary creator and custodian of community knowledge, updating languages, providing mentoring, and eliminating barriers to entrepreneurship.

From this perspective, the Congress proposed the concept of craft sovereignty as the sector's ability to define its own rules, decide with what and how to produce, and actively participate in the processes that affect its future. To achieve this objective, a strong representative structure with its own voice is key.

In conclusion, craftsmanship emerges as a tool for territorial, social, and cultural cohesion; an economic activity of great importance with values and its own narrative that deserves and must be protected, strengthened, and projected with a European perspective.



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# Synthesis and Strategic Keys of the White Paper on European Craftsmanship



Strategic Axis	Objective	Examples of Proposals	Actors / Programs
Recognition	Provide legal and statistical visibility to the craft trade in Europe	European Artisan Statute, inclusion in ESCO/NACE	European Commission, Eurostat, National Governments
Financing	Ensure fair access to funds adapted to the craft scale	Creative Europe line, microcredits, InvestEU	DG GROW, EIF, European programs
Training and generational renewal	Guarantee the transmission of knowledge and youth mobility	Sectoral Erasmus+, craft training networks	DG EAC, educational centers, sectoral networks
Visibility and culture	Position craftsmanship at the center of the European narrative	European Biennial, European Craft Day	Creative Europe, Parliaments, Cities
Data and evaluation	Measure the impact of craftsmanship for effective policies	European surveys, craft observatories	Eurostat, Interreg, Horizon Europe



## Part I

# The General Framework of Craftsmanship in Europe



# European Craftsmanship: A Panoramic Vision

As cited in the introduction of this document, craftsmanship constitutes a fundamental pillar of Europe's cultural, economic, and social heritage. Over the centuries, craft trades have shaped local identities, preserved ancestral techniques, and generated employment and territorial cohesion. Today, the European craft sector, although heterogeneous and partly rendered invisible by traditional statistics, continues to play a strategic role in multiple areas: from the circular economy to sustainable tourism and rural settlement, from material innovation to dual and multidisciplinary training.

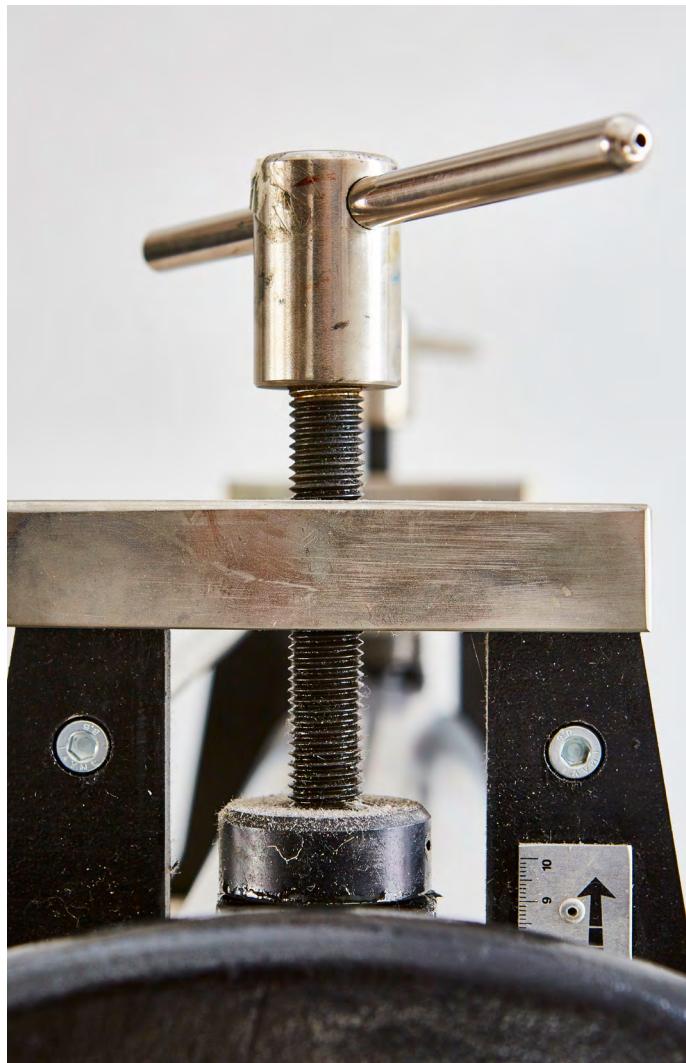
In Europe, millions of people are engaged in trades ranging from ceramics, carpentry, textiles, or jewellery, to new expressions of contemporary craftsmanship that combine tradition with design, technology, and sustainability. This diversity is also reflected in national regulatory frameworks and definitions, which vary significantly among Member States, making a unified vision difficult, but enriching the European craft ecosystem.

Recognition of the value of craftsmanship has grown within EU policies. Initiatives such as the New European Bauhaus, Erasmus+ programs, Horizon Europe, as well as structural and recovery funds, have opened new opportunities for

the craft sector, especially regarding the green and digital transition, training in technical skills, and the revitalisation of rural areas. However, the sector also faces major challenges:

- The aging of the craft population and the shortage of generational renewal in traditional trades.
- The lack of institutional recognition.
- Difficulties in accessing financing, digitalisation, and specialised training.
- The absence of a harmonised definition at the European level and of a common system for classification and measurement of the sector, which aggravates these difficulties and limits the capacity to design effective policies.
- The lack of heritage education, an integral and conscious vision of craftsmanship as cultural and economic manufacturing.

This Part I aims to contribute to a shared vision of craftsmanship in Europe. Through comparative analysis of legal frameworks, historical evolution, official definitions, classifications of activities, and socioeconomic profiles, it seeks to provide a solid foundation for the recognition, strengthening, and promotion of craft trades, whether artistic or traditional, as a strategic sector for a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient European future — production, work, and economic projection with a human face.



## Brief Western Historical Overview

Historically, the distinctions between art and craftsmanship did not exist as we understand them today. Both shared a common conceptual and etymological origin, rooted in the Latin term *ars* and the Greek *téchne*, which referred to the set of human skills applied to creation, without establishing hierarchies between the manual, the intellectual, or the utilitarian. Until the Renaissance, both a sculptor and a shoemaker were considered practitioners of the same technical knowledge: the mastery of making. It was only with the emergence of the Renaissance ideal of the “artistic genius” and later, with Enlightenment academicism, that a vertical categorisation between art and craftsmanship was consolidated, relegating the latter to the realm of the “minor arts” or even to the category of domestic service.

Movements such as Arts and Crafts sought to counter this devaluation by reclaiming the human dimension of craftsmanship in the face of the dehumanisation of industrial production. Later, the Bauhaus proposed a model of integration between technology and craft, oriented not towards mass production but towards design in the service of human life. Walter Benjamin recognised in craft production the aura of the object: its uniqueness and its intimate link with the human gesture. At the same time, he warned

that the use of technology, if employed responsibly and without succumbing to the logic of overproduction, could become a tool to expand the creative field, democratise access to means of production, and enrich the expressive possibilities of the artisan or creator.

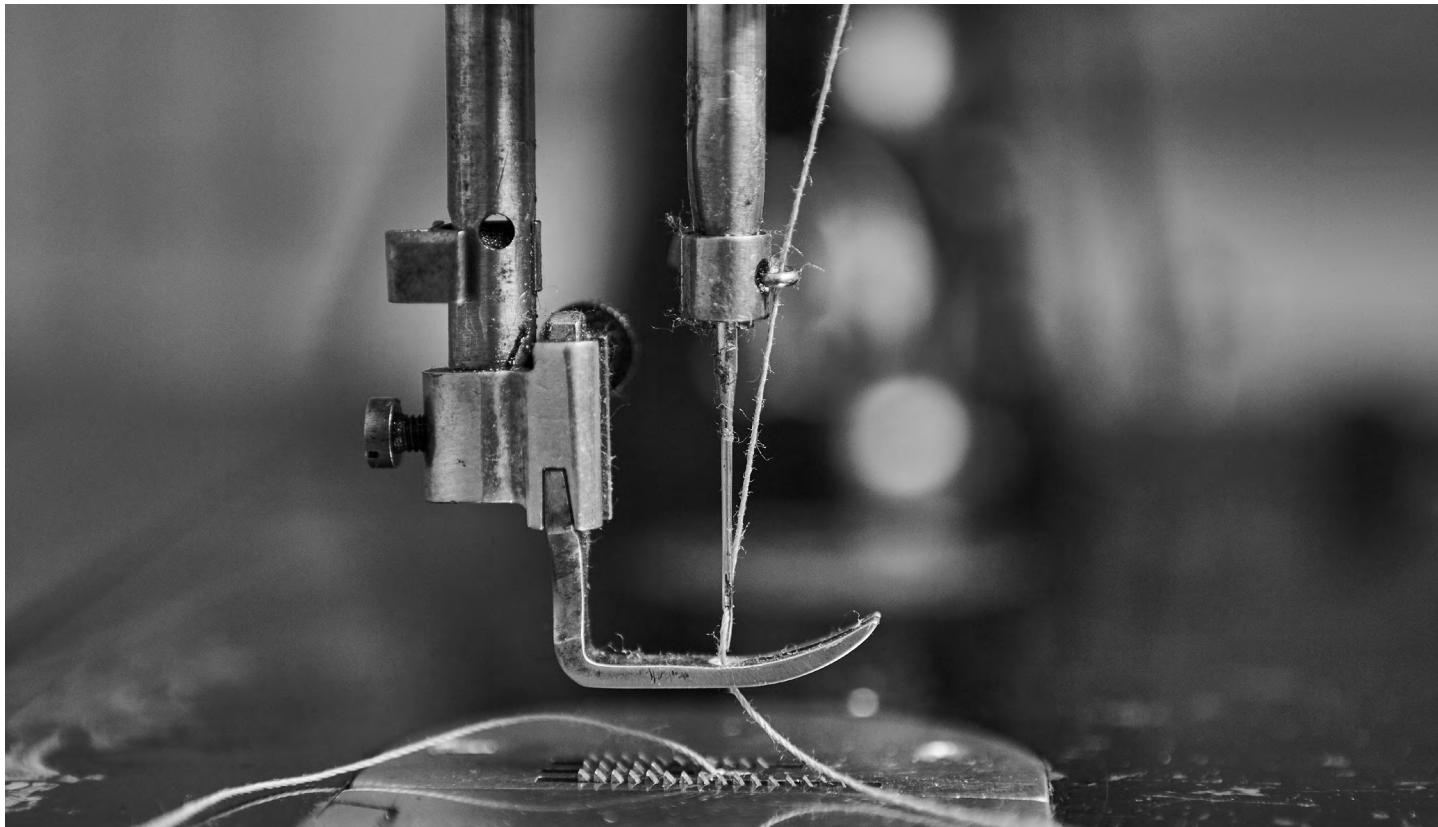
In this scenario, it is essential not to compartmentalise interests or artificially fragment the knowledge that shapes artistic and traditional trades forming the craft ecosystem. Contemporary craftsmanship navigates a mixed reality, full of nuances and gray areas, where ancestral trades, re-signified techniques, new material proposals, innovative discursive approaches, and adaptations to the current context coexist. This hybridisation should not be seen as a threat, but as an expression of the sector’s vitality, which adapts wisely to contemporary challenges without becoming a mass-production factory, yet without renouncing tools that allow it to sustain its creative and economic activity.

However, the debate over the boundaries between art, craft, and industrial object remains complex, with tensions between nostalgic visions that deny emerging trades and others that conceal, under the artisanal discourse, dynamics of cultural, decorative, or commercial appropriation. In this context, it becomes urgent to establish common, horizontal, and inclusive parameters that recognize historical achievements, correct exclusions, and make it possible to move toward an updated framework that values the diversity of craft practices as cultural and economic expressions with full legitimacy in the face of

the advance of a “fast” industry that trivializes making and dilutes the bonds with territory, memory, and knowledge.

Unlike the Western model, which for centuries subordinated craft to academic art, in Asia many forms of collective, functional, or ritual aesthetic expression

continue to be valued as art with a capital A, especially when they involve technical mastery, generational transmission, and symbolic meaning, and they introduce the neocraft context whenever it is coherent with the technical evolution and the context of the trade.



## Official Definitions of Craftsmanship by Country

The definition of “craftsmanship” varies considerably among European countries, reflecting the cultural and structural diversity of the sector in the EU. In some cases, it is included in specific laws; in others, it is linked to criteria for access to official registers or public aid. This heterogeneity complicates the development of harmonised statistics and the design of common policies but offers a rich panorama of how craft activity is understood and valued in Europe.

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Below is a comparative table that presents the main characteristics of the official definition of craft in different Member States of the European Union.

This table summarizes the key elements of each country: definition, existence of an official register, managing entity, training requirements, and recognise modalities.



Country	Definition (summary)	Official Register	Managing Entity	Training Requirement	Recognise Modalities
France	Productive, service, or repair activity included in official list. Mandatory registration.	Répertoire des Métiers	Chambre de Métiers et de l'Artisanat	Yes (professional title or experience)	Production, transformation, services
Italy	Professionally exercised activity with own work. Mandatory regional registration.	Albo delle Imprese Artigiane	Regions / Craft Chambers	Yes (personal work and regional requirements)	Production, services, family-based
Germany	Manual activity included in the Handwerksordnung list. Training required.	Handwerksrolle	Handwerkskammern	Yes (Meistertitel or homologation)	Annex A trades (manual)
Portugal	Manual activity with cultural, utilitarian, or decorative value. Requires official card.	Carta de Artesão / UPA	IEFP	Yes (IEFP evaluation)	Manual cultural/ decorative production
Spain	Varies by Autonomous Community. Manual activity with cultural value.	Regional registers	Regional governments / chambers	Depends on the Autonomous Community	Traditional, creative, service, food-related
Austria	Activity registered as a trade in the Gewerbeordnung. Technical/manual production.	Gewerbeordnung (trades)	Wirtschaftskammer Österreich	Yes (technical training for trades)	Technical and manual trades
Greece	Traditional manual activities linked to intangible cultural heritage.	Local / cultural registers	Ministry of Culture / regions	Not uniform	Traditional trades linked to heritage
Poland	Manual economic activity based on technical qualification. Small-scale production.	Not centralized	Cultural ministries / associations	Yes (professional qualification)	Traditional productive handicrafts
Sweden	No legal definition. Hantverk covers manual and artistic activities.	None	Associations / local bodies	No	Handcraft and applied arts

As observed, all European countries share a common vision of craftsmanship as a manual, non-industrial activity, based on technical knowledge and with a strong cultural dimension. However, there are notable differences in the activities considered as craft, in institutional recognition systems, in training requirements, and in the craft modalities officially recognised.

Understanding these differences is essential for advancing towards better harmonisation of public policies, facilitating mutual recognition of qualifications, and designing European strategies to support the craft sector.



# Classifications and Craft Activities (CNAE, NACE, etc.)

One of the main difficulties in measuring and comparing the craft sector in Europe is the absence of a specific statistical category that captures it in a unified way. In statistical classifications such as NACE Rev.2 or CNAE, craft activities are dispersed among multiple sectoral codes, which prevents a clear and differentiated visualisation of the sector.

The statistical classifications currently used include:

**NACE Rev.2 (EU):** Does not include a specific category for craftsmanship. Craft activities appear under codes such as: C13–C32 (Manufacturing industries), S95 (Repair of personal and household goods), R90 (Creative and artistic activities).

**CNAE (Spain):** Reflects the structure of NACE. Some CNAEs that encompass craft activities are: C23.41 (Manufacture of ceramic articles), C32.12 (Jewellery), S95.23 (Shoe repair), R90.03 (Artistic creation).

**PRODCOM:** Classifies industrial products, some of them produced by craft enterprises, but does not distinguish the production method (craft vs. industrial).

Since statistical classifications do not adequately capture the sector, many countries have established their own registers or repertoires of craft enterprises or trades. One of the key criteria to determine which enterprises can be considered craft-based is the number of employees. Where limits exist, they are set below 20 employees, although exceptions are always included.

The following table shows the employee limits established in different European legislations. This information has been verified with sectoral studies and national plans such as the CRAFTS CODE Craftsmanship Plan (2022), and documents from the European Commission and SME observatories. The table shows that the limits vary considerably between countries, with some setting limits of 10 employees and others of 50. The table also shows that the limits vary considerably between sectors, with some setting limits of 10 employees and others of 50.

Country	Employee Limit to be Considered Craft	Legal or Administrative Source
France	10 employees (extendable up to 50 under conditions)	Decree No. 98-247 (1998, updated 2019)
Italy	18 employees (9 in services); up to 32 if including apprentices	Law 443/1985 and regional regulations
Germany	No explicit numerical limit	Handwerksordnung (HwO)
Portugal	No specific number, but requires non-industrial production	Decree-Law 41/2001 and Portaria 1193/2003
Spain	Varies by Autonomous Community (5–10 employees)	Plan de Artesanía CRAFTS CODE (2022)
Austria	Up to 10 employees for traditional trades	Gewerbeordnung
Poland	No specific legal threshold	SME Observatory, 2003
Sweden	No legal limit applies	Cultural and guild sources

The lack of common statistical criteria and the diversity of legal thresholds for the number of workers make it difficult to build a harmonised database of the craft sector in Europe.

This dispersion justifies the need for a concept of craftsmanship aligned with today's post-industrial and digital reality, and thus, a new and common European repertoire of craft activities, as well as a recognised statistical category that allows analysis, comparison, and the design of specific policies. Socioeconomic Profile of the European Craft Sector.

According to the CRAFTS CODE Crafts Plan (2022), this shortcoming also makes it difficult to accurately measure the economic and employment impact of crafts, especially in countries where the crafts segment is not disaggregated within the creative economy, such as Spain.



## Socioeconomic Profile of the European Craft Sector

The craft sector constitutes a significant part of the European economic and social fabric, although it has historically been underrepresented in national and EU statistical systems. This partial invisibility is largely due to the lack of a specific statistical category for artistic and traditional trades and the dispersion of their activities across multiple NACE or CNAE codes.

Despite this, sectoral studies and national plans make it possible to outline a reasonably clear profile of the sector in terms of employment, type of enterprise, geographical distribution, gender, and structural challenges. According to data collected by the European Commission and the European SME Observatory report (2003, 2009), reinforced by the Plan de Artesanía CRAFTS CODE (2022):

- The European craft sector is mainly composed of micro-enterprises, with fewer than 10 employees and, in most cases, a single worker or self-employed artisan.
- In many countries, craft enterprises represent between 5% and 15% of all active companies, with relevance in sectors such as wood, textiles, leather, ceramics, jewellery, artisanal food, or personal services.
- In Spain, in 2014 there were an estimated 38,577 craft enterprises and 104,000 direct jobs, although this figure has declined in the last decade due to the economic crisis, the aging of the sector, and the lack of generational renewal.
- The average size of craft enterprises is small. This entails advantages such as flexibility or customisation, but also challenges such as reduced access to financing, lower export capacity, and low participation in SME support programs.
- Female participation is relevant in certain sub-sectors, although women tend to be concentrated in self-employed micro-enterprises. The sector shows significant aging, which is one of the greatest risks identified.
- Much of craft activity is concentrated in rural areas and small towns, where it represents a key tool for population retention, cultural transmission, and sustainable territorial development.
- The structural changes affecting the European economy impact the craft sector at multiple levels: digitalisation, responsible consumption, the entry of new professional profiles, and productive re-localisation.

The European craft sector is strategic due to its ability to generate local employment, protect intangible heritage, promote sustainable production models, and revitalise

rural territories. However, its potential remains underutilised due to the lack of statistical visibility, regulatory recognition, and institutional coordination.



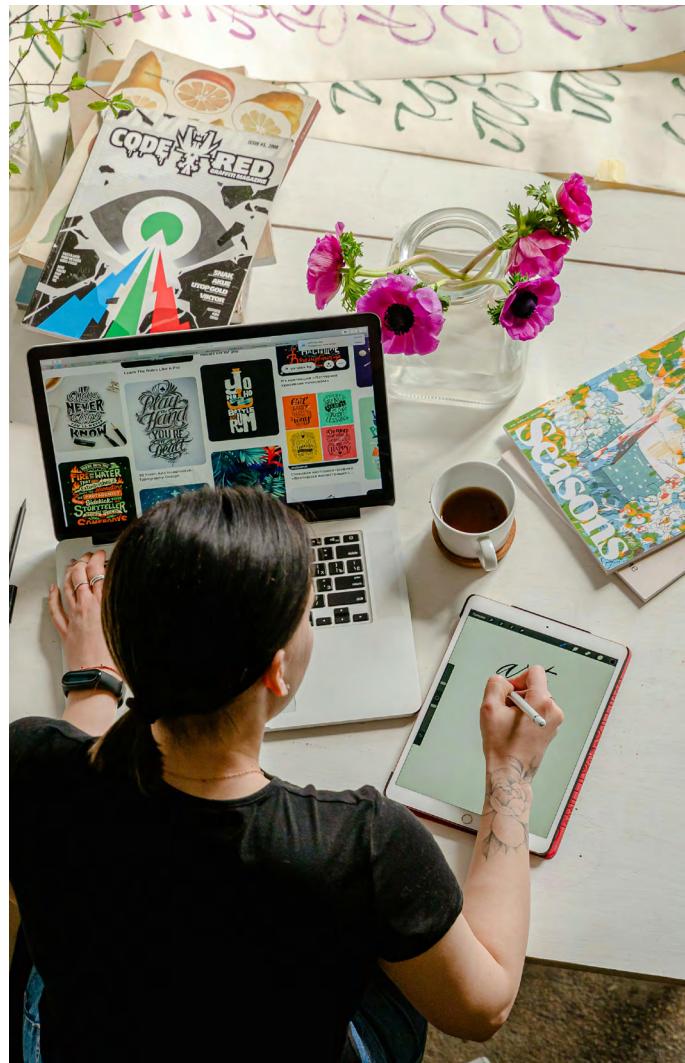
## Annex: Extension of the Craft Profile Including Related Sectors

In addition to what was mentioned above/earlier, another major issue in understanding the true scope of the sector lies in the lack of consensus on the identification of activities considered part of the craft sector. If we broaden the concept of the craft sector to include activities such as heritage restoration, graphic, fashion, product, and advertising design, the profile of the sector changes substantially.

These activities should be understood as craft due to their non-industrial production, strong creative component, personalisation, cultural or aesthetic connection, and their inclusion among artistic and traditional trades. All these activities are also carried out in micro-enterprises, by self-employed workers or in small business structures.

Expanding the sector perimeter would allow doubling or even tripling current figures in terms of enterprises and jobs.

For example, in Spain, between 90,000 and 120,000 enterprises and between 250,000 and 300,000 jobs could be estimated if these sectors are included, with a higher proportion of young people, women,



and profiles with higher education. This figure is three times higher than the number of jobs assigned to the sector in surveys conducted by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

Moreover, the sector's presence would be intensified in value chains such as tourism, the fashion industry, cultural services, heritage education, product innovation, and digitalisation.

This sectoral reconfiguration would strengthen the claim for the strategic role of the craft sector within the European creative economy, as well as its integration into public policies linked to culture, sustainability, youth employment, and innovation.

In this broader approach, fashion and haute couture designers or audiovisual arts professionals should also be considered. These activities, although often classified within cultural or fashion industries, present features directly connected to craft tradition due to their personalised or small-series production, high technical qualification, and strong link to aesthetic and cultural heritage.

Haute couture represents an exponent of European craftsmanship know-how, with international recognition, and makes substantial contributions to national economies, especially in countries such as France, Italy, and Spain.

Including these profiles not only increases the quantitative dimensions of the craft sector but also enriches its diversity and capacity for innovation, positioning it at the intersection of heritage, contemporary creativity, and productive excellence.





## Part II

# Cross-Cutting Analysis of European Craftsmanship



# Introduction

The second part of the White Paper on European Craftsmanship outlines a strategic roadmap for strengthening the craft sector within the European framework. Through chapters dedicated to regulation, resilience, digitalisation, markets, and sustainability, it presents a comprehensive analysis of current challenges and of the opportunities offered by the new economic, social, and technological context.

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This part of the document is conceived as a working guide for policymakers, professional organisation managers, educational institutions, and economic actors interested in enhancing the value of craftsmanship as a driver of territorial development, cultural identity, innovation, and the green transition.

The five chapters of this Part II aim to present a coherent and complementary approach. Taken together, they show how European craftsmanship can become a strategic economic model within the green and digital transitions, providing solid responses to structural and situational challenges.

It is important to highlight the value of craftsmanship as a resilient, innovative, sustainable, and rooted sector, which makes it a natural reference point for a more human and circular economic model.

Craftsmanship not only preserves an immense intangible heritage, but also fosters local employment, promotes social cohesion, cultural innovation, and the creation of sustainable economic circuits. Its incorporation into the EU's green, digital, and cultural agendas is an urgent necessity.

In this line, the following documented good practices can be mentioned:

- ITO Project (Spain): Certification of craft products through blockchain technology.
- Decree 16/2021 of Castilla y León: Advanced model of recognition of the craft sector.
- European Crafts Alliance (2023): Study on resilience, digitalisation, and craft consumption.

# Regulatory Divergence and Absence of a Harmonised Definition of Craftsmanship

As noted throughout this document, one of the main obstacles to the integrated development of the craft sector in Europe is the absence of a common and harmonised definition of what is meant by “craftsmanship.”

Each Member State —and in some cases, each region— establishes its own criteria as to which activities are considered craft, what requirements must be met by those who practice them, and how they are administratively recognised.

This generates regulatory fragmentation that directly affects the mobility of professionals, the visibility of the sector, the design of coherent public policies, and the statistical comparability between countries.

Added to this are:

- The lack of a specific code in the National Classification of Economic Activities (CNAE) or

its European equivalent (NACE) to identify craftsmanship as a differentiated sector.

- The absence of European consensus on which economic activities should be considered craft, which prevents the construction of a shared and updated repertoire.

This triple structural weakness —definition, codification and repertoire — greatly hinders the political, economic, and fiscal recognition of the sector, and urgently requires the promotion of harmonisation efforts at the European level.



# The Spanish Case: Regulatory Diversity Within a Single Country

Spain constitutes a paradigmatic example of this lack of conceptual unity. Although responsibility for craftsmanship has been transferred to the Autonomous Communities and Cities since the 1980s, and all of them agree in emphasising the cultural, heritage, and economic value of craft trades, there are significant divergences in the legal definition of “craftsmanship” between territories.

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These differences affect key aspects such as:

- The degree of integration of contemporary technologies into the definition of the craft process.
- The consideration (or not) of craftsmanship as an economic activity versus an ethnographic, anthropological, or heritage-based vision.
- The inclusion of modalities such as service-based craftsmanship or author design.

An example of recent regulatory evolution is Decree 16/2021 of Castilla y León, which redefines craftsmanship by eliminating the manual concept as the basis of the activity and opening the sector to the incorporation of digital tools in production phases. It also merges the categories of

craftsperson and workshop, recognising the professional and business value of the sector, and finally, it employs a system of classifying activities by market-oriented economic sub-sectors, breaking with the model of organisation by raw materials combined with products (ceramics, textiles, or furniture).

Despite this specific example, the overall Spanish regulatory framework presents notable weaknesses:

- Lack of homogeneity among Autonomous Communities.
- Voluntary registration of craftspersons and craft enterprises.
- Outdated repertoires of trades, focused on traditional modalities.
- Lack of minimum training requirements or mandatory professional certification.
- Limited inter-territorial coordination and absence of a common data system.
- Absence of state policies for craft enterprises in the fields of Industry, Social Security, Finance, or Culture.

# Towards a Common European Framework: Proposals for Harmonisation

Therefore, to move towards a more coherent, efficient, and competitive system, the European craft sector needs to promote a common agenda for regulatory harmonisation, which should include:



- A consensual European definition of craftsmanship, combining technical, socio-human, economic, and cultural criteria.
- The recognition of a specific CNAE/NACE code for the craft sector, as artistic and traditional trades, which allows statistical identification and the orientation of sectoral public policies.
- The development of a European repertoire of craft activities, with common criteria and flexible updating.
- A framework for professional recognition, which allows mobility between countries and recognises competencies acquired through formal and non-formal pathways.

It is also essential to establish:

- Networks of observation and comparative analysis between countries and regions.
- Protocols for legislative cooperation in the field of craftsmanship at the European level.
- Support mechanisms for Member States for regulatory adaptation and progressive harmonisation.

This task will not only strengthen the sector's position in economic and political terms but will also reinforce its shared identity as living heritage and as a driver of territorial and cultural cohesion in Europe.

# Proposal for Sectoral Reclassification

It is important to insist on the need for a redefinition of professional categories, based on a consensual approach that reflects the diversity of trades and accommodates new emerging professional roles, without the rigid boundaries imposed by classic organisations by materials and their subjective and cultural “nobility.” To begin outlining such a proposal, FOACAL presents the following craft reformulation:

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## ***Ethnographic or Heritage Craft/Art Trades***

Description: This category encompasses craft trades that play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting ancestral techniques and traditions, passed down through generations. These practices are closely linked to the cultural identity and intangible heritage of communities, representing symbols, customs, and traditional uses specific to a territory or population. The products created in this sector are not only representations of cultural heritage but also witnesses of a collective history that must be protected.

The crafts in this category are particularly vulnerable, due to the lack of generational renewal and the difficulty of integrating heritage value into

contemporary socio-economic dynamics. This reality underscores the urgent need to implement specialised support measures, as demonstrated by the model of Japan’s Living National Treasure programme, in which artisans, considered guardians of their cultural heritage, receive considerable institutional support. This programme grants creators a special status, including a reduced or exempt tax system, which allows them to continue practising their crafts without the economic obstacles they normally face. Such initiatives reflect the importance of ensuring the continued support and protection of these crafts, which are fundamental to the cultural preservation of nations.

Examples: Traditional ceramics, carpet and tapestry weaving, manufacture of traditional musical instruments, pottery, and basketry. These crafts are deeply rooted in local customs and in the cultural history of a region or social group.

## ***Utilitarian or Domestic Craft/Art Trades***

Description: This category includes trades that produce functional, everyday objects. These products have a practical purpose and are created with a high level of craft skill, but with an emphasis on utility. Although traditionally associated with domestic life, there is much pleasure in appreciating the everyday, and today many of these products are also valued for their aesthetic value.

Examples: Furniture, kitchen utensils, cutlery, household textiles (tablecloths, towels, sheets), leather goods such as belts and shoes, personal items such as baskets and backpacks.

### ***Natural Cosmetics, Perfumery, and Agriculture Craft/Art Trades***

Description: This sector may include those engaged in the artisanal production of products using agricultural or natural materials and ingredients with a direct or aesthetic use, where the connection with nature is very strong.

Examples: Producers of products derived from beekeeping, artisans working with plant fibres, those engaged in the harvesting and artisanal processing of products such as special oils, and products related to traditional medicine for personal care or natural cosmetics.

### ***Decorative, Textile, and Accessories Craft/Art Trades***

Description: This category includes trades that produce mainly decorative items or those serving as aesthetic accessories. These products are intended both for home decoration and for fashion and personal style. In addition to functionality, emphasis is placed on design, detail, and originality.



Examples: Handmade jewellery, fashion accessories (scarves, hats, bags), decorative home items (paintings, sculptures, decorative ceramics), personal design objects (lights, lamps, pictures), pattern design and tailoring. This category also includes gift items or souvenirs, which have a strong aesthetic and cultural component.



### ***Conservation and Restoration Craft/Art Trades***

Description: This group includes trades dedicated to the preservation and restoration of objects, art, and old buildings. Craftspeople in this sector must not only possess technical skills, but also a deep historical and cultural knowledge to ensure that restoration techniques are appropriate and faithful to the original object. This trade is fundamental for maintaining the historical and cultural memory of a country or community.

Examples: Art restorers (paintings, sculptures), conservators of old books and documents, restorers of furniture and antiques, repairers of old musical instruments, and restoration of architectural structures (churches, historic buildings).

### ***Construction Craft/Art Trades***

Description: Craft construction not only refers to modern architecture but also to traditional building techniques that involve the use of natural materials, sustainable methods, or the restoration of historic structures. In many cases, these trades are based on knowledge and respect for traditional methods passed down through centuries.

Examples: Masons specialized in traditional techniques (such as the use of stone or handcrafted brick), carpenters working on the restoration of wooden structures,

thatched-roof builders (in some countries), and experts in ancient construction techniques using adobe or clay. These trades may also include the restoration of historic buildings and the preservation of heritage structures.

### ***Creative or Artistic Craft/Art Trades***

Description: This sector refers to trades in which creativity and plastic or visual expression are the main elements. Instead of producing only functional objects, these trades seek to create pieces that go beyond utility to become narratives or experiences, with the goal of conveying emotions, ideas, or aesthetics.

Examples: Painters, sculptors, creative ceramists, imaginative textile designers, and other trades that combine creativity with craft materials to create visually striking or conceptual pieces. This sector also includes conceptual craft, where creativity is fundamental, and the pieces may carry a strong symbolic load.

### ***Graphic and Visual Craft/Art Trades***

Description: This sector includes all craft trades related to the creation of visual products, combining graphic design, illustration, artisanal printing, and other manual or digital processes to produce graphic works, illustrations, posters, stationery, and other visual products. Unlike mass

production, graphic craftsmanship focuses on creating limited or small print runs, in which every detail is carefully considered and manual and/or traditional techniques are used in most of the processes, as a distinctive feature.

Examples: Illustration with traditional techniques (pencil, ink, watercolour, acrylic, etc.) and/or digital; artisanal engraving and screen printing; tampography, woodcut, lithography, letterpress, artisanal stationery.

### ***Scenography and Audiovisual Craft/Art Trades***

Description: This sector includes all craft trades involved in the production of audiovisual content in areas such as film, theatre, video games, animation, and other visual productions that do not fall within the standardised, mass-production industry. It is a sector in which creativity and manual or semi-craft work predominate, seeking to preserve specialized techniques and a personalized approach to visual content production.

Examples: Concept illustrators for cinema, set and character designers, creators of artwork for animations, set designers, prop makers, special effects artisans, animatronics creators, stop-motion or traditional animation creators.



### ***Digital and Technological Craft/Art Trades***

Description: Although it may seem like a sector far removed from traditional craft, with the evolution of technologies, digital craft has also become a key area. The creation of handcrafted digital products such as digital illustrations, personalized graphic design, and the production of objects using technologies such as 3D printing or the digital design of textiles can be considered a new type of creative craft. Moreover, in the field of video games, many independent developers work with a craft-based approach in creating interactive worlds, characters, and unique visual

experiences. Although technology plays a fundamental role, many of these developers prefer to maintain a manual and personalized production.

Examples: Graphic designers who create digital art in an artisanal way, 3D product designers, developers of textile products through digital technologies, digital and/or video game illustrators, creators of special effects for independent initiatives, and independent video game developers.

Each of these terms may present different nuances, and a single craftsperson may encompass several of them in

their professional proposal as a creator. Nevertheless, all are aimed at organizing the contemporary craft sector in a horizontal, more modern and flexible way, adapting to the complexity of the sector and facilitating its response to the diversity of emerging techniques and markets. By integrating key elements such as creativity, heritage preservation, and domestic utility, the vitality and adaptability of craft trades is highlighted, allowing them to meet the demands of a globalised and digital world.



As for the nobility of a material, this should be determined by its ability to solve problems efficiently and ethically, as well as by its cultural value and creative potential, rather than being based solely on its history of exclusivity or luxury.

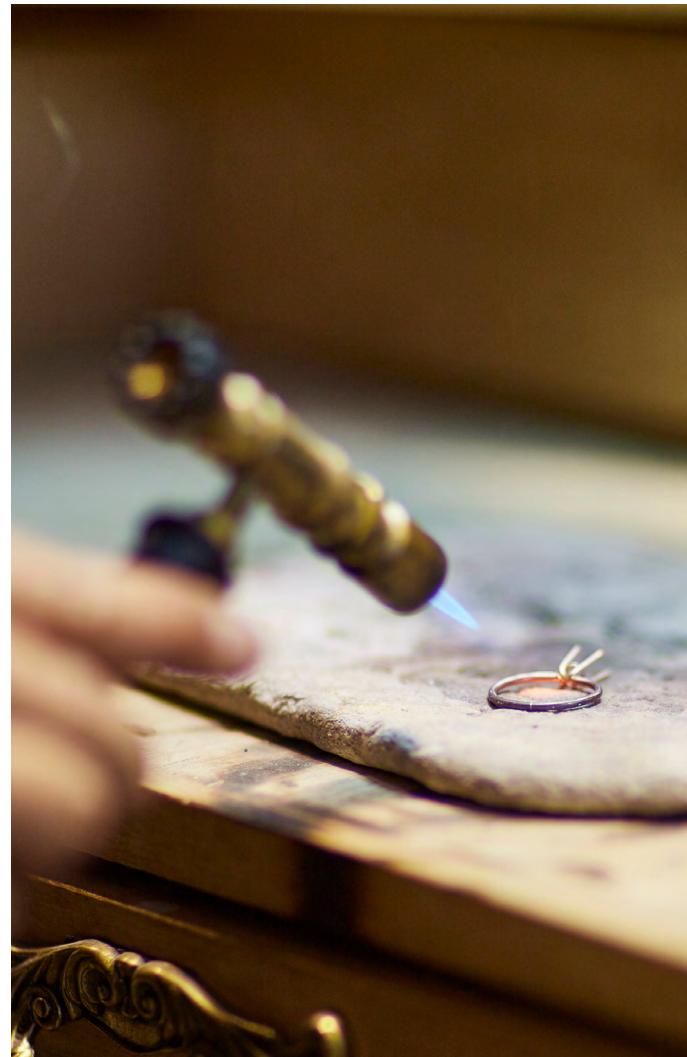
# Resilience of the Craft Sector

## *What do we mean by resilience in the context of craftsmanship?*

In the field of craftsmanship, resilience is not an accidental but a structural quality. Craft enterprises, by their very configuration, show a remarkable capacity for adaptation and survival in changing economic, social, and technological environments. This resilience is manifested not only in the preservation of techniques or knowledge, but also in sustained economic viability despite numerous contemporary challenges.

Main factors explaining this resilience include::

- Low depreciation of investments: Craft workshops usually require light infrastructures and durable tools, with little dependence on large machinery or complex technologies. This characteristic reduces financial risk and allows productive activity to be maintained with low levels of fixed investment.
- Productive flexibility. Craft production is based on processes that are scarcely standardised, which allows for rapid adaptation to changes in demand, market trends, or specific client needs. This



flexibility provides a comparative advantage over rigid and massified industrial models.

- Low need for initial financing. Many craft activities can be started on a small scale, with limited resources and personal or family structures. This reduces the entry barrier and facilitates the reactivation of activity after periods of crisis or temporary pause, without major financial burdens.
- Capacity for customization and for generating added value and authorship. Craft is characterized by its ability to create unique, personalized, and emotionally significant products, which makes it possible to position itself in market niches that are more resilient to price and less vulnerable to competition from large chains or global platforms.
- Proximity to the client and relational and personalized economy. Direct contact with the final client—whether at fairs, workshops, local markets, or online—encourages close communication, continuous feedback, and customer loyalty that acts as a buffer in situations of uncertainty.

Independence and control over the value chain. In many cases, the craftsman controls the entire product life cycle: design, production, marketing, and after-sales service. This operational self-sufficiency reduces exposure to external disruptions and allows activity to be reorganized with agility.

For all these reasons, resilience in craft lies not only in its cultural or symbolic dimension, but in the very

characteristics of its economic and organisational model. In a European context marked by instability, ecological transition, and the need for more sustainable and human models, craft emerges as a particularly suitable paradigm for a more resilient future.

### ***Impact of Recent Crises on the European Craft Sector***

In addition to the economic crisis that began in 2008 and reached its peak of influence in 2012 in a large part of EU countries, between 2020 and 2023, the European craft sector also had to face unprecedented challenges:

- The COVID-19 pandemic caused the temporary closure of workshops, cancellation of fairs, loss of in-person sales, and disruptions in supply chains. Many craftspeople had to reinvent their business model in a very short time.
- The war in Ukraine and the energy crisis have generated shortages and rising costs of raw materials, logistical problems, and an increased cost of living, affecting both production and the purchasing power of consumers.
- Inflation and the reduction of purchasing power have particularly impacted the middle segments of the craft market.

- Accelerated digital transformation has required new skills, investment in technology, and redesign of commercial channels.

According to the European resilience study by the European Crafts Alliance, more than 60% of respondents reported having experienced a significant or very strong impact during these years, especially in terms of income, mental health, exhaustion, and isolation.

### ***Key Factors of Resilience in Craft Practice***

“Craft thinking” is an increasingly used concept to advocate for a particular way of thinking, creating, and relating to the world based on the principles of craft making. It is not only about producing objects, but about an adaptive, ethical, and aesthetic mindset. Craft thinking is contextual, experiential, and sensitive to territories and their communities.

The analysis of the European Crafts Alliance study identifies eleven key components that explain the resilience of the craft sector. These are grouped into three main dimensions:

#### **1. Personal Qualities**

- Having a clear purpose: connection with cultural, environmental, or community values.
- Confidence in one’s own skills.



- Determination, patience, inner strength.
- Flexibility to adapt and reinvent oneself.
- Optimistic mindset and problem-solving capacity.

## 2. Professional Capacities

- Technical mastery and the ability to innovate without losing the essence of the trade.
- Combination of creative and entrepreneurial skills.
- Continuous learning and openness to new tools and methodologies..

## 3. Community Environment and Structural Support

- Peer support network: craft communities, networks, platforms, collectives.
- Access to support mechanisms: financing, training, counseling.
- Collaborative ecosystems: cooperation with designers, cultural centers, educational institutions, and social economy networks.

### ***Persistent Challenges for Future Resilience***

Despite the adaptable nature of the sector, significant structural threats persist:

- Disappearance of knowledge transmission pathways. The loss of formal education in trades, together with a vision anchored in the past that

needs revalorization in the current context, hinders generational renewal.

- Unequal access to technological and financial resources, especially in rural areas or peripheral regions.
- Lack of support policies adapted to the micro-enterprises reality of the sector.
- Precariousness and work overload, especially in one-person enterprises.
- Institutional invisibility and lack of sectoral representation in political dialogue.

These structural threats require the implementation of lines of action which, according to the conclusions of the European study and the contributions of the sector, should revolve around the following:

- Development of public policies that recognize the strategic value of the craft sector as a driver of sustainability, territorial cohesion, and green employment.
- Guaranteeing universal access to continuous training, digital technology, and business skills.
- Promoting support infrastructures: networks of shared workshops, craft innovation hubs, access to tailored financing.
- Encouraging collaborative work through cooperation networks, visibility platforms, and exchange spaces.
- Promoting awareness campaigns on the social and cultural value of craft as artistic and traditional trades, as part of Europe's living heritage.



# Technology, Digitalisation and Innovation

## *Innovating from Craft: An Essential Challenge*

Innovation is not foreign to the craft world. Far from the stereotypes that oppose tradition to modernity, innovation has always been consubstantial to craft trades, both in the search for technical solutions and in creative experimentation or adaptation to new social demands.

In the current context, marked by digital acceleration, changes in consumption, the need for sustainability, and global competition, innovation and digitalisation have become essential conditions for the viability of the craft sector in Europe.

It is not only a matter of incorporating technological tools, but of rethinking processes, materials, languages, sales channels, and business models from the unique capacities of craft work.

It is often overlooked that a large part of traditional trades today incorporate semi-industrial or industrial components. Among them are the use of processed raw materials, prefabricated parts such as fasteners, bases, or metal elements, as well as the use of electric machinery. Added

to this is production in repetitive series, guided by patterns which, while improving processes, tend to standardize results.

This reality should not be understood negatively in itself. Rather, it reveals that contemporary craft practice unfolds in a hybrid scenario, where tradition and adaptation to market demands coexist dynamically. The need to shorten production times and maintain competitiveness drives many workshops to incorporate technical solutions that allow them to sustain their activity.

However, this context raises a legitimate and necessary debate: Where do the limits of craft lie today? How can its symbolic, cultural, and technical value be preserved without sacrificing its economic viability? The challenge does not lie in idealizing a purely manual past, but in finding an ethical and creative balance between expert knowledge, the identity of the trade, responsible innovation, and care for the production process.

In the post-industrial era, craft can no longer be defined exclusively by manual execution. Rather, it must be understood as a practice that articulates thought, technique, materiality, and meaning, and that continues to play a key role in building more conscious, sustainable, and human ways of life.

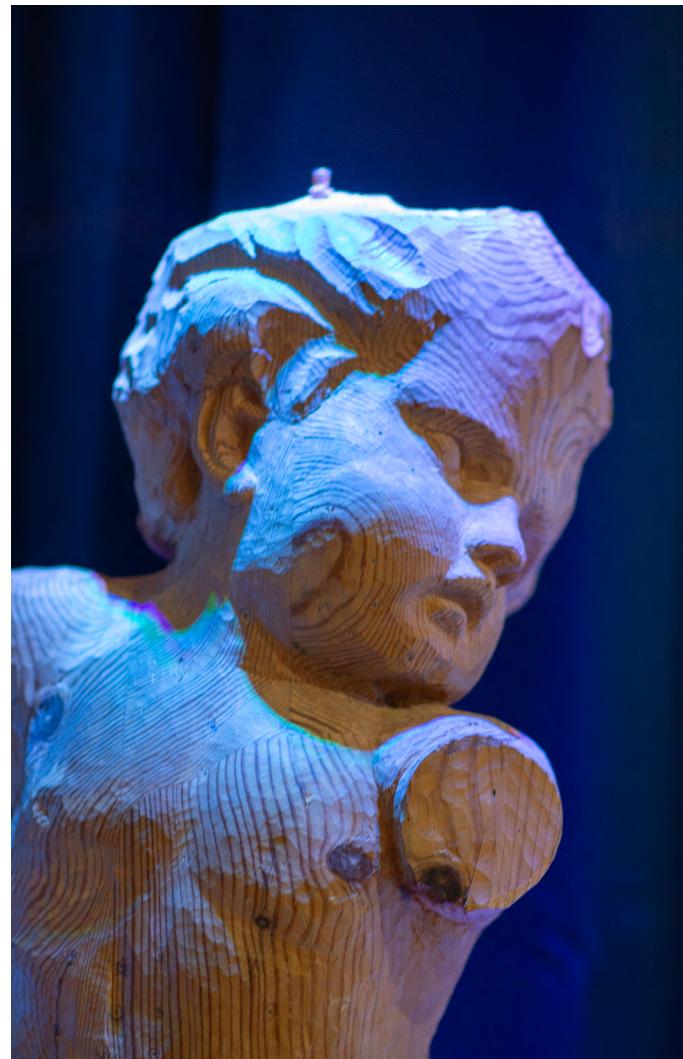
## *Digital tools at the service of craftsmanship*

The European study on the technological context in craft identifies various digital technologies that are already being used—at different levels of maturity—by professionals and craft workshops:

- Design and Manufacturing
- Computer-Aided Design (CAD) software.
- 3D modelling tools.
- Laser cutting, CNC milling, and 3D printing.
- Process Digitalisation
- Digital twins (digital replicas of prototypes or pieces)
- Production management, traceability, or inventory systems.
- Platforms for managing customized orders
- Communication and Marketing

Social media has become a key strategic tool for visibility, positioning, and direct sales of craft products. In particular:

- Instagram has consolidated itself as the sector's main network, thanks to its visual nature, its ability to showcase processes, details, and the workshop's aesthetic universe, and its potential to build communities of loyal followers and direct buyers



- TikTok has emerged as a platform of growing relevance among young audiences, where short videos on techniques, processes, trade history, or behind-the-scenes content generate strong engagement.

Many craft workshops already use these networks as a direct sales channel, redirecting to their online stores or managing orders through private messages, without the need for intermediaries. These platforms also allow educating consumers about the value of craft work, showing the “making of” of each piece, and generating emotional bonds between the craftspeople and their community.

In addition, craftspeople make use of:

- Online sales platforms (marketplaces or own stores).
- Digital newsletters and email marketing strategies.
- Augmented reality for product visualization experiences.

Digital technology makes craft activity more accessible, sustainable, and competitive, without entailing the loss of identity and authorship of craft products.

### ***Challenges for the digitisation of the craft sector***

Despite its potential, the digital transformation of the European craft sector—according to the responses given in

surveys by the sector’s own actors in Europe—faces significant obstacles:

- Lack of specialized training in digital technologies applied to trades.
- Limited access to equipment, connectivity, or software, especially in rural areas or among microenterprises.
- Lack of knowledge of success stories adapted to craft models.
- Difficulty in integrating digital tools without losing the identity of the manual process.

It is therefore necessary to adopt a strategic approach that combines:

- Specific training adapted to the needs of the sector.
- Platforms for technological demonstration and experimentation.
- Support networks among workshops, technology centers, designers, and universities.

### ***Blockchain, Authenticity and Traceability: The ITO Project***

An innovative example of advanced technological application to the craft sector is the ITO project, launched in 2024 with the aim of exploring a certification system based on blockchain technology for craft linked to material.

This system would allow:

- Tokenizing craft pieces through NFTs (non-fungible tokens)
- Recording immutably and verifiably the origin of materials, production processes, authorship, and sales contracts.



- Guaranteeing the authenticity and traceability of pieces, even in international markets.
- Facilitating the digital sale of physical objects with documentary backing and digital certification.

In addition, the ITO model proposes accessible solutions for small workshops: adapted smart contracts, NFC tags, augmented visualization of processes, and shared archiving systems.

This type of tool strengthens transparency, professionalization, differentiation, and the cultural value of craft products, aligning with the values of sustainability, proximity, and originality.

### ***Collaborative Innovation and Open Experimentation***

Innovation in the craft sector cannot be understood solely as technological development, but also as a cultural, organizational, and social practice.

It involves:

- Exploring new forms of collaboration between craftspeople, designers, technologists, and artists.
- Developing innovation residencies, open laboratories, co-creation programs.
- Reimagining the languages, formats, and functions of craft objects from new contemporary narratives.

Some European countries are already committing to this path through craft innovation hubs, shared production centers, design-craft accelerators, and residency programs in FabLabs or applied research centers.

### ***Proposals for a Digital Agenda of the Craft Sector***

To ensure an inclusive, creative, and useful digitalisation for the craft sector, the following strategic lines are proposed:

- Design specific public policies for the digitalisation of the craft sector, including training, infrastructures, investment aid, and technical support
- Incorporate craft innovation into the EU's cultural, industrial, and educational digitalisation strategies.
- Finance pilot projects for technological experimentation applied to craft, in collaboration with innovation centers and universities.
- Create a European network of craft innovation laboratories, where prototypes, materials, experiences, and innovative services adapted to the sector can be developed.



# Market, Consumption and New Economies

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## *Limitations of Current Studies and the Need for an Inclusive Definition*

The analysis of the European craft market faces the significant structural limitation of the absence of a harmonized and broad definition of which activities should be considered craft. This lack of consensus directly affects data collection, comparability between countries, and the formulation of evidence-based sectoral policies.

Most existing studies, such as The European Market for Crafts (2023), focus exclusively on consumer craft products—fashion, accessories, decoration, ceramics, jewelry, etc.—and exclude sectors of great economic, cultural, and technical weight, such as the restoration of historic-artistic heritage; the production of musical instruments; or trades linked to sports such as saddlery and saddle-making. Also excluded are craft products aimed at construction, landscape architecture, or specialized interior design; as well as the production of goods for professional use in theatre, cinema, haute cuisine, art education, or museography, among others.

If these activities were included in market studies, the real size and economic value of the European craft sector would increase very significantly. This bias requires interpreting the available data with caution, understanding that they reflect only the part of the craft market closest to the urban and digital final consumer.

## *The European Craft Market: A Large-Scale Reality*

Even with these limitations, the available data show a sector with economic weight and growth potential. The study by the European Crafts Alliance (2023) estimates that:

- The Serviceable Available Market (SAM) reaches 153 million consumers.
- The estimated annual market value stands at 50 billion euros.
- The average annual spending on craft products is 355€ per person.

## *Who Buys Craft: Profiles and Motivations*

The craft consumer in Europe presents a profile that is mostly:

- Female (69%).
- Distributed between 20 and 70 years old, with strong presence in the 46–70 range.

- With high presence on social media: Instagram, Facebook, and Pinterest.

Different types of buyers have been identified:

1. Investors (spending > 1.000€/year).
2. Craft lovers (spending between 300€–1.000€).
3. Occasional buyers (spending < 300€).

The main motivations for purchase are:



- Valuing objects with a unique imprint and those made by hand.
- Preserving traditional techniques.
- Supporting the local economy and sustainability
- Seeking an emotional connection with the object and the maker.

### ***What Is Bought and Where***

The most in-demand products are:

- Ceramics, textiles, wood, and jewelry.
- To a lesser extent, glass, leather, natural fibers, and handcrafted cosmetics.

The most commonly used purchasing channels are:

- Craft fairs and markets (51%)
- Design shops and galleries (45%).
- Direct online purchase from the craftsperson (website, Instagram, WhatsApp).
- Sales in the workshop or showroom.

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The role of social media as a channel for discovery and conversion into sales has grown exponentially. Instagram and TikTok not only allow the product to be showcased, but also enable telling its story, building community, and channeling orders without intermediaries.

### ***The Non-Buyer: A Latent Opportunity***

15% of respondents stated that they had not purchased craft in the last year, but only 5% said they were not interested. The rest expressed circumstantial barriers:

- Lack of availability in the places where they usually shop.
- Scarcity of occasions.
- Perception of high prices.

These responses indicate that there is ample room to attract new consumers through strategies of visibility, education on the value of craft products, and presence in accessible sales channels.

### ***The New Economies of Making: Emerging Trends***

The craft sector is converging with new forms of economy that reinforce its strategic value:

- Circular economy: repair, reuse, local materials, waste reduction.
- Purpose economy: ethical values, authenticity, cultural identity.
- Experience economy: open workshops, visits, experiential training.
- Slow economy: long production times, conscious consumption.

- Digital economy: e-commerce, online content, blockchain traceability.

These trends open new business opportunities, positioning, and connection with younger and more conscious audiences.

### ***Recommendations to Strengthen the Craft Market***

1. Support presence in fairs, shops, and digital markets through specific aid..
2. Promote training in digital communication and marketing.
3. Recognize and finance mixed sales and education experiences: open workshops, demonstrations, creative tourism.
4. Facilitate internationalisation through joint European platforms.
5. Strengthen the collection of official statistical data on craft consumption.
6. Support territorial commercialization networks and clusters that enable economies of scale.

# Sustainability and Territory

## *Craft as a Sustainable Practice by Nature*

Unlike other productive sectors, craft intrinsically presents many of the qualities that define a sustainable production model

1. Responsible and controlled use of natural resources, with preference for local or recycled materials.
2. Small-scale production, without intensive industrial processes or polluting automation.
3. Low environmental impact and a limited carbon footprint, both in production and in transport, by prioritising local sales.

4. Durability of the final product, as opposed to models of planned obsolescence or fast consumption.

In a European context where ecological transition and the circular economy are pillars of industrial policy, craft positions itself as a reference model for rethinking consumption, production, and the relationship with the environment.

## *Proximity, Territory and Ecological Footprint*

One of the most powerful distinctive values of craft is its connection to the territory. Unlike globalised industrial production, the craft object:

- Is made close to the consumer, which reduces the need for transport, packaging, and complex logistics.



- It uses materials from the surroundings (local clays, nearby woods, native plant fibers), fostering local circular economies.
- It is embedded in a craft-based productive ecosystem grounded in knowledge of place, relationships with nearby suppliers, and collaboration among workshops from the same area.

This geographical, cultural, and human proximity strengthens the sustainability of the production process and of the object itself, which incorporates in its design and finish the values of the territory where it is born.

### ***Authorship as a Guarantee of Authenticity and Cultural Value***

Another central element of the European craft model is authorship. In contrast to standardised, anonymous, or replicable products, the craft object:

- Is signed, designed, and executed by a recognizable person, whose trajectory, know-how, and creative vision form part of the product's value.
- Incorporates a personal and cultural narrative, connecting it with traditions, local techniques, family contexts, or community stories.
- Makes it possible to defend originality against copies and to value authenticity as a good in itself.



This approach of “craft authorship” is especially relevant for the most conscious consumers, who seek products with soul, identity, and ethical and aesthetic traceability..

### ***Cultural Identity, Territorial Cohesion and Rural Development***

Craft does not only produce objects; it sustains communities. Its presence in rural areas and historic neighborhoods fulfills a key social and territorial function:

- It anchors population in rural areas by offering rooted and sustainable employment options.
- It stimulates the local economic fabric through direct sales, cultural tourism, or training activities.
- It reinforces the identity of territories through techniques, materials, forms, and styles that are part of intangible cultural heritage.
- It contributes to territorial cohesion, reducing imbalances between urban and rural areas.

For all these reasons, craft must be considered a strategic asset in local and territorial development policies, not only from the economic perspective, but also from the heritage, social, and ecological perspectives.

### ***Geographical Indications and Traceability: The European Dimension***

In 2023, the European Union approved a regulation to protect the geographical indications of craft and industrial products, recognizing for the first time the need to protect geographical origin also in this type of production.

Craft, therefore, enters the map of products with designation of origin, just like food or beverages, and a new horizon opens up of:

- Legal protection of the link between product and territory.
- International recognition of local know-how.
- Creation of European seals of authenticity and traceability.

These policies can be complemented with technologies such as blockchain and smart labels to reinforce transparency, authenticity, and consumer trust, as proposed by the ITO project.

### *Recommendations for a Sustainable and Territorial Craft Policy*

- Include the craft sector in circular economy and ecological transition strategies..
- Promote sustainable public procurement of craft products, especially in events, museums, heritage, and tourist spaces.
- Support the creation of protected geographical indications for craft products.
- Finance projects on traceability, eco-labeling, and adapted blockchain technology.
- Promote craft as a driver of rural development, repopulation, and territorial innovation.
- Formally recognize the role of craft in preserving Europe's intangible cultural heritage.





# Part III

# Policies, Legislation and Recognition of Craftsmanship in Europe



# National and Regional Legislation on Craftsmanship (by countries)

## Introduction: A Regulatory Mosaic in Europe

The European craft sector currently lacks a common regulatory framework. Each Member State defines, regulates, and recognises craftsmanship according to its legal tradition, territorial structure, and economic or cultural vision of the sector. This legislative diversity generates a wealth of approaches, but also significant difficulties in coordination, professional mobility, and international visibility.

With the aim of identifying models, detecting good practices, and guiding possible lines of harmonisation, this chapter presents an analysis of legislation on craftsmanship in four European countries —France, Italy, Germany, and Portugal— which, due to their size and applied models, can provide a general vision of the European situation.

To these examples we add the explanation already provided in previous chapters on legislation and regulation in Spain and existing legislation in the Autonomous Community of Castilla y León.

## *Francia*

### Official definition

French craft is defined as any independent activity of production, transformation, repair, or provision of services, carried out by a natural or legal person employing fewer than 10 workers (according to the Loi Artisanat, Commerce et Très Petites Entreprises of 2014).

### Legislative framework

- Mandatory registration in the Répertoire des Métiers.
- Legal protection of the title “Maître artisan”.
- Entreprise du Patrimoine Vivant” (EPV – Living Heritage Company).

### Examples of activities

- Food trades, textiles, leather, wood, metal, construction, and personal services.

### Notable aspects

- Dual training.
- Regional support.
- Certification of excellence (EPV).

## **Italy**

### Official definition

Manual and professional activity in which human work prevails over mechanical work (Law No. 443/1985).

### Legislative framework

- Mandatory registration in the Albo delle Imprese Artigiane.
- Exclusive competence of the regions.
- Territorial labels.

### Examples of activities

- Artistic ceramics, leather goods, restoration, musical instruments, carpentry.

### Notable aspects

- Tourism + culture.
- Regional incentives.
- High social recognition.

## **Germany**

### Official definition

Craft is regulated by the Handwerksordnung (HwO) as professional activities requiring training and authorization.



### Legislative framework

- Mandatory registration in the Handwerksrolle.
- Official classification (Anlage A and B).
- Qualification requirements.

### Examples of activities

- Bakery, metallurgy, optics, restoration, bookbinding.

### Notable aspects

- Dual training.
- Prestige of the Meister.
- Institutional articulation.

## *Portugal*

### Official definition

Production of goods or services through traditional manual processes (Carta de Artesão e UPA).

### Legislative framework

- Voluntary registration.
- Supervision by the IEFP.
- Distinction between individual and production unit.

### Examples of activities

- Embroidery, weaving, ceramics, musical instruments, basketry, cork.

### Notable aspects

- Updated register.
- Framework for geographical indications.
- Link with rural employment.



# Comparative Approach: Convergences and Divergences

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Aspect	France	Italy	Germany	Portugal
Craft Register	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Voluntary
Legislative Competence	National and regional	Regional	National	National
Vocational Training	Dual, certified	Dual, flexible	Dual, Meister	Not structured
Protection of Trade	EPV, Maître artisan	Regional register	HwO Meisterbrief	Carta de Artesão
Classification of Trades	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

There is strong institutional variability in terms of competence, registration, and trade protection.

Conclusion: Countries with structured training systems and clear professional recognition (Germany, France, Italy) offer greater visibility.

A minimum level of European harmonisation would be fundamental.





## Part IV

# Challenges, Needs and Good Practices of European Craftsmanship



## Introductory frameworks: the craft sector on the European agenda

Although craftsmanship does not have its own dedicated policy, the European Commission has begun to recognise its relevance in various areas:

- In April 2022 it presented a Proposal for a Regulation on Geographical Indications for Craft and Industrial Products. The objective is to protect and give visibility to craft goods such as Murano glass, Limoges porcelain, or traditional jewellery, granting them a level of protection like that of food products with PGI/PDO.
- Craftsmanship is increasingly considered within the framework of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), which constitute a priority axis in programs such as Creative Europe and Cluster 2 of Horizon Europe, contributing to social cohesion, innovation, and territorial development.
- Craft SMEs fall within the scope of the Small Business Act and EU strategies that prioritise small enterprises in the digital and ecological transition.

These initiatives not only demonstrate growing recognition of the strategic value of craftsmanship, but also the



institutional willingness to embed it within cross-cutting axes linked to culture, rurality, digitalisation, SMEs, and local economy.

### ***SMEs, Digitalisation and Ecological Transition***

EU policies directed at SMEs — including artisans— are structured around several key axes:

- The SME Strategy seeks to reduce administrative burdens, facilitate access to financing, and improve SME integration in the single market.
- Within the Green Deal, adoption of sustainable production models is encouraged: energy efficiency, circular economy, and eco-labelling.
- The Digital Europe Programme promotes the incorporation of advanced technologies in emerging sectors, with opportunities for digitalised and traceable craftsmanship.

Artisans, like microenterprises, can access these programs, although adjustments are needed to match their scale and specific capacities.

### ***Cultura, ruralidad e industrias creativas***

Several European policies integrate craftsmanship as part of a cultural or territorial approach:

- Creative Europe, which promotes collaborative projects, transnational networks, and training in CCIs.
- . Interreg/LEADER, which funds cross-border cooperation projects in rural areas, many linked to craft trades, heritage, and creative tourism.
- Cluster 2 of Horizon Europe, which includes projects on cultural heritage innovation and creative sectors.
- Rural employment, training, and inclusion programs, funded by EAFRD and the Just Transition Fund

### ***European Instruments and Support Lines***

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- Creative Europe – CCI projects, networks, training, international visibility.
- Erasmus+ (KA2/KA1) – Training exchanges, educational and cooperation projects.
- COSME – Support for SMEs and market access through the Enterprise Europe Network.
- Interreg/LEADER – Rural development, craft tourism, territorial cooperation.
- Horizon Europe Cluster 2 – R&D on culture, heritage technologies, advanced digitalisation.
- Structural Funds – Regional cohesion policies, rural economy, and vocational training.

## ***Main Gaps and Challenges***

Lack of a global and coordinated strategy specifically dedicated to craftsmanship within EU programs.

- Disconnection between general lines and the real needs of craft micro-enterprises.
- Limited funding for local-origin digital and sustainability training.
- Absence of a mechanism ensuring the systematic inclusion of craftsmanship across all sectoral policies.

## ***Strategic Recommendations***

1. Create a European roadmap for craftsmanship, cross-cutting across sectors such as culture, SMEs, rurality, and digitalisation.
2. Incorporate specific indicators and objectives on craftsmanship in structural and digital programs.
3. Facilitate access of artisans to financing, training, and European networks by adapting requirements to their scale.
4. Promote pilot programs for innovation and digital certification, along with regional hubs.
5. Build lasting alliances between craft associations, SMEunited, and the European Commission to ensure visibility, representativeness, and European governance of the sector.



# Relevant European Initiatives for the Craft Sector

## ***Introduction: The Value of European Initiatives for the Sector***

Although craftsmanship does not have a specific European program, numerous EU initiatives have supported craft projects directly or indirectly supported craft projects, fostering innovation, training, digitalisation, territorial cooperation, and cultural entrepreneurship.

These initiatives allow for:

- Financing pilot and experimental projects.
- Establishing collaboration networks between countries.
- Strengthening digital and entrepreneurial skills.
- Connecting craftsmanship with cross-cutting policies such as culture, rurality, digitalisation, SMEs, and local economy.

For these opportunities to have real impact, it is essential that initiatives for the management of European funds linked to craft development are led by European craft organisations. This requires articulating and structuring

the European ecosystem of representative entities of the sector, providing them with resources, technical capacity, and institutional recognition to play a leading role.

## ***LEADER and the Participatory Rural Development Approach***

LEADER is a rural development methodology based on local and multisectoral participation, financed by the EAFRD.

Impact on craftsmanship:

- Financing workshops, equipment, training actions, and promotion.
- Support for tourist itineraries, fairs, museums, and craft routes.
- Strengthening territorial identity and the sustainability of traditional trades.

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Examples:

- Craft centres in rural areas (Spain, France, Austria).
- Cross-border cooperation between local craft groups.

Erasmus+: Training, Cooperation and Educational Innovation

### Impact on craftsmanship:

- KA2 projects for the development of training materials, micro-credentials, innovative methodologies.
- Mobility of apprentices and trainers in traditional trades (KA1).
- Development of digital, business, and green skills applied to craft.

### Relevance:

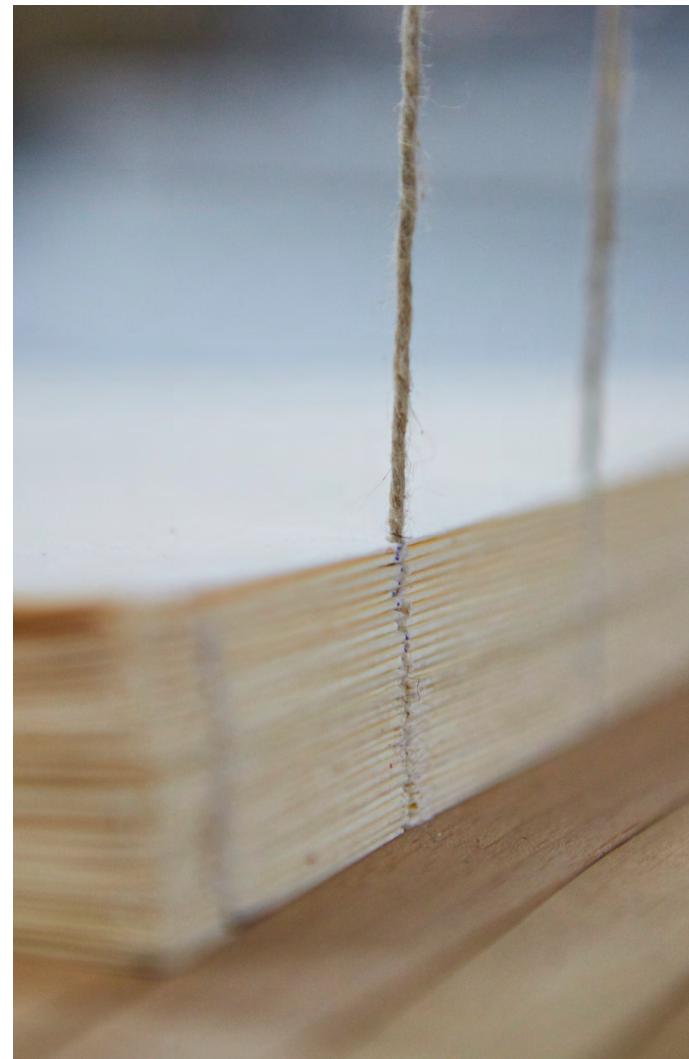
- Strengthens the professional recognition of the sector.
- Generates transferable resources at European level.
- Reinforces collaboration between associations, training centers, and workshops.

### ***COSME and SME Competitiveness***

COSME was the EU's main SME program until 2020 and is now integrated into the Single Market Programme (2021–2027).

### Impact on craftsmanship:

- Support for internationalisation, innovation, access to financing, and collaboration networks.
- Development of sectoral clusters, pilot markets, and digital platforms.



- Promotion of the creative economy and products with high added value.

Examples:

- Initiatives to position craft within creative and sustainable value chains.
- International promotion of European craft brands and products.

### ***Other Programs with Potential for Craftsmanship***

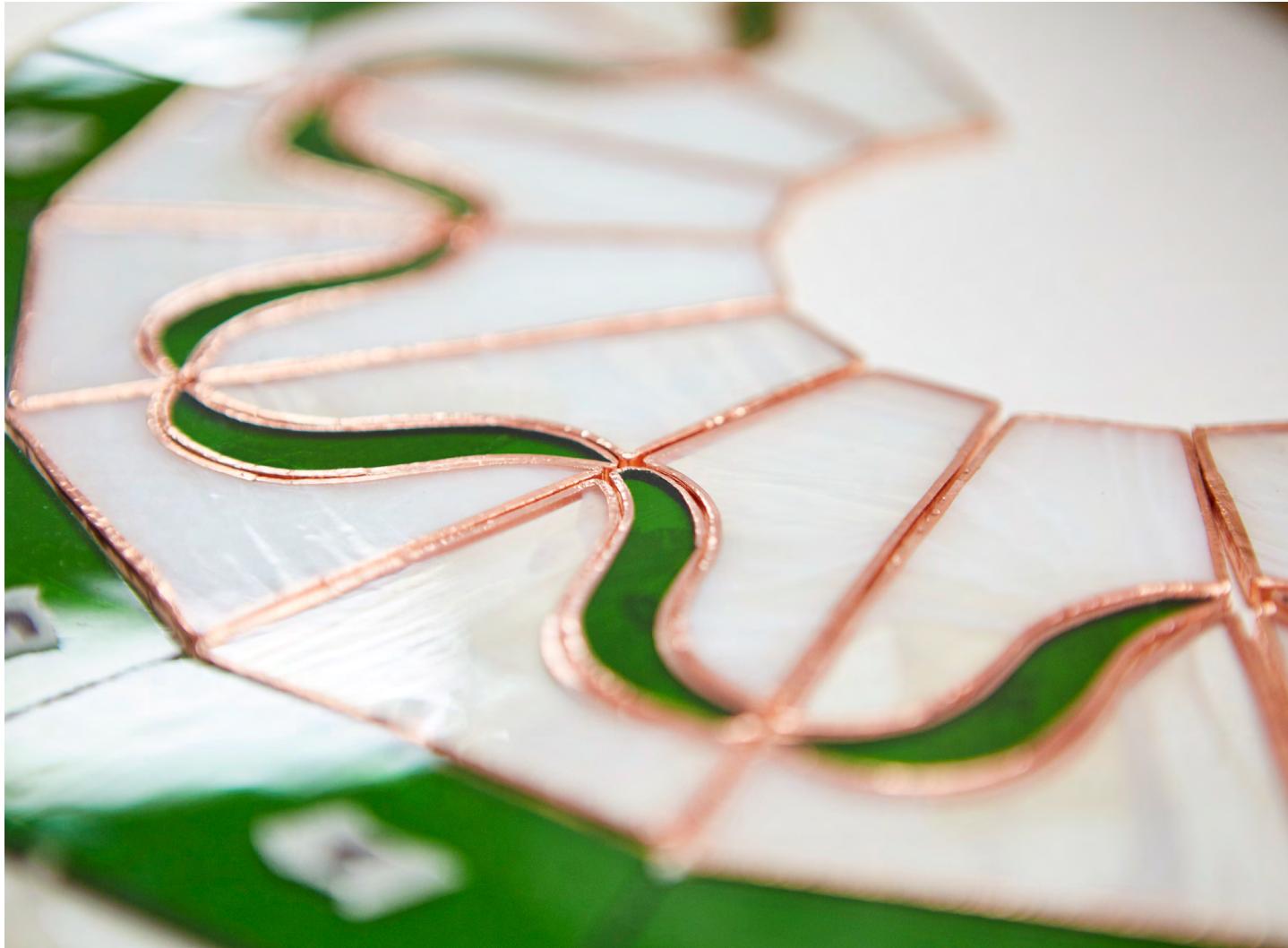
- Creative Europe – Artistic projects, mobility, cultural networks.
- Horizon Europe (Cluster 2) – Innovation in CCIs, digitalisation, sustainability.
- Interreg Europe / POCTEP / SUDOE – Cross-border territorial cooperation.
- New European Bauhaus – Sustainable design, aesthetics, inclusion.
- Digital Europe – Digital skills, advanced technology.
- Next Generation EU. Funds for digitalisation, entrepreneurship, training.

### **Keys to Better Leverage European Initiatives**

- Clear, adapted information on calls and requirements.
- Training in European project management for associations and workshops.
- Promotion of strategic alliances among craft sector entities.
- Visibility of good practice and replicable results.

### ***Final Recommendations***

1. Consolidate a European platform of craft best practices funded with EU resources.
2. Create specific lines within Erasmus+ and LEADER for craftsmanship.
3. Establish national and regional contact points for specialised advice.
4. Facilitate access of micro-enterprises and artisans to projects through simplified calls.





## Part V

# Recommendations and Strategic Guidelines for the Future of European Craftsmanship



## Needs Identified by the Agents of the European Craft Sector

Craftsmanship must stop being seen as a vestige of the past and instead be assumed as a strategic asset for the future of Europe. Beyond its heritage or aesthetic dimension, it constitutes an economic sector with real capacity to generate quality employment, provide sustainable solutions, and strengthen the identity of territories.

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Part V has identified a shared vision for 2035, formulated strategic lines of action, and compiled concrete recommendations for institutions, governments, and sector stakeholders. These proposals are viable, but can only become reality through sustained political will, participatory governance, and investment proportional to the sector's importance.

To achieve this, it is essential to integrate craftsmanship into the EU's structural policies, not as an appendix to culture or tourism, but as a transversal axis in the fields of economy, innovation, sustainability, and territorial cohesion.

In this horizon, craft organisations must occupy a central place, such as structuring agents, legitimate interlocutors,



and catalysts of change. They are the ones who best know the reality of the sector and must lead, together with institutions, the planning and management of funds designed for its development.

Craftsmanship has a place in the Europe of today and tomorrow.

The identification of needs in the European craft sector starts from active listening to the agents themselves: craftspeople, associations, professional networks, researchers, and project managers linked to the field of craft. This chapter sets out in a structured way the main demands expressed in sectoral studies, participatory forums, and professional meetings, with the aim of guiding public policies, training strategies, and support lines adapted to the reality of the sector.

### ***Need for Heritage Education***

The lack of heritage education hinders a comprehensive and conscious vision of craftsmanship as cultural manufacture and contributes to its undervaluation. In many contexts, craftsmanship continues to be perceived as a simple “souvenir” or “handicraft,” rather than as a valuable expression of popular and cultural art.

This reductionist view generates direct consequences, such as unfairly low prices or the growing consumption of mass-produced items imitating craft styles without respecting their origin or meaning. Added to this is the impact of the social consumption of standardised design, widely present in fashion, decoration, utilitarian objects, and even in cultural discourses.

This pattern privileges the homogeneous, the replicable, and the easily marketable, over uniqueness, process, and

cultural identity. It increases the risk of losing creative diversity. Without education or recognition, local styles, rooted trades, and cultural expressions tend to fade before globalised or trendy aesthetics. This is particularly visible among young artisans who, not feeling heirs to their material culture, distance themselves from their roots and creative potential.

Many end up trapped in the logic of the “sellable,” imitating industrial models of momentary success, abandoning ethical principles, and losing identity, territorial reference, and symbolic depth.

### ***Needs in Training and Transmission of Knowledge***

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One of the fundamental axes identified is the urgency of strengthening training and the transmission of craft knowledge. Sector stakeholders are demanding that educational programs become better adapted to the specificities of the trades, in both formal and non-formal contexts.

They call for the creation of workshop-schools, mentorship systems between generations, and the official recognition of traditional knowledge as part of intangible cultural heritage. They also emphasise the need for a flexible training offer that facilitates access for youth, people undergoing professional retraining, and vulnerable groups.



### ***Needs in Institutional Support and Visibility***

Artisans and their organisations call for greater recognition from public administrations. The sector demands an active presence in cultural, economic, and territorial development policies, as well as the participation of its representatives in the design of public strategies.

Visibility is also a priority: communication campaigns aimed at citizens, the educational system, and consumers can help dignify the image of craft work and foster its social appreciation.

### ***Needs in Economic Sustainability***

Ensuring the economic viability of workshops is essential for the survival of the sector. For this, it is indispensable to integrate craft sector representatives into evaluation committees for European calls.

Stakeholders highlight the need for accessible and hybrid financing mechanisms, specific aid for modernisation and business transmission, as well as tax incentives tailored to the reality of craft micro-enterprises.

They also stress the importance of facilitating commercialisation through participation in fairs, the creation of ethical distribution networks, and the strengthening of short sales channels.

Specific lines could be created for contemporary craft projects, European pilot funds to facilitate digital and ecological transitions, promotion of microcredits, more mobility programs, and greater access to small and medium-sized workshops, fully leveraging programs such as Creative Europe, Interreg, Horizon Europe, InvestEU, Erasmus+, COSME, etc.

### ***Needs in Digitalisation and Innovation***

Although digitalisation is perceived as an opportunity, many artisans encounter barriers in its implementation. Practical training programs are required in digital tools applied to promotion, online sales, social media management, or computer-aided design.

There is also a proposal for the development of collective platforms to make European craft production more visible, while respecting its values of authenticity, sustainability, and uniqueness.

### ***Needs in Associationism and Networks***

The associative fabric of the sector needs to be strengthened in order to play a more active role in representing and defending common interests. Stakeholders highlight the importance of creating spaces for collaboration among workshops, training centres, designers, cultural

institutions, and related sectors such as tourism or the social economy.

Priority actions include exchange programs, transnational cooperation, and the promotion of European networks to share resources, knowledge, and good practices..

### ***Conclusion***

The needs identified by sector stakeholders converge in a common demand: the need for a comprehensive strategy that recognises the economic, social, heritage, and environmental value of craftsmanship in Europe.

Meeting these demands will not only revitalise the sector but also unlock its full potential as a driver of sustainable development, territorial cohesion, and cultural innovation.

# Foundations for a European Craft Strategy

## ***An Unpostponable Need***

At a historic moment marked by digital transformation, ecological urgency, and the search for more human and sustainable economic models, European craftsmanship offers a value-added model based on:

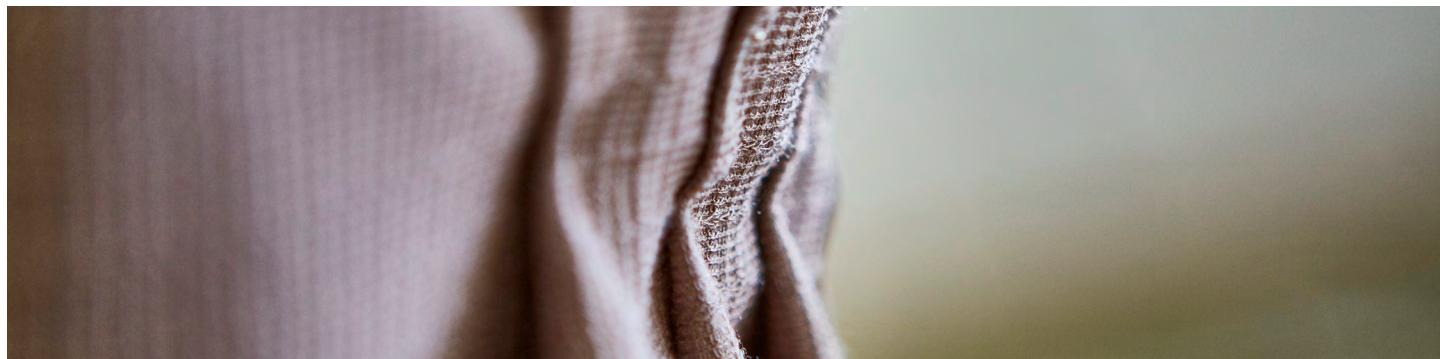
- Responsible and local production.
- Technical knowledge transmitted between generations.
- Cultural identity and territorial diversity.
- Capacity for adaptation, personalisation, and resilience.

However, the absence of a coordinated European strategy has historically limited the sector's potential. Despite recognition in different frameworks (CCIs, SMEs, rural development), craftsmanship remains largely forgotten within the EU's structural policies.

## ***Pending Structural Challenges***

The previous chapters have highlighted the main obstacles facing the sector:

- Lack of a common European definition of craftsmanship.
- Legislative and institutional fragmentation, with no harmonisation mechanisms.
- Low visibility and underrepresentation in EU decision-making spaces.



- Limited access to digitalisation, vocational training, and adapted financing.
- Disconnection between sectoral policies (culture, employment, industry, training, rural development).
- Strategic opportunities in the current European framework.

Despite these challenges, the current European context offers unprecedented windows of opportunity to place craft at the center of a broader strategy:

- The Green Deal and the transition toward the circular economy.
- Human-centred digitalisation promoted by the Commission.
- The new cohesion policy based on territorial values.
- The Regulation on Craft Geographical Indications (2023).
- The interest in social design, local knowledge, and intangible heritage.
- The key role of the Cultural and Creative Industries as a driving sector for the EU.

## The Key Role of European Craft Organisations

An effective strategy must be based on representative and participatory governance, where European craft organisations:

- Are recognised as legitimate interlocutors before the Commission and the European Parliament.
- Participate in the formulation, management, and evaluation of specific programs.
- Have resources, technical training, and stable networks to cooperate across countries.

Structuring the European craft ecosystem is a necessary condition for any future roadmap.

### ***Foundations for a Common Strategy***

Based on the analysis carried out, a European strategy for craftsmanship should be based on the following principles:

- Official and harmonised recognition of the sector.
- Policy transversality: digitalisation, sustainability, employment, culture, cohesion.
- Accessibility, especially for micro-enterprises and rural or peripheral workshops.
- Representativeness, ensuring the sector's voice in decision-making levels.
- Shared European identity, respecting the diversity of traditions, while developing new categories with new trades and local expressions.

# Strategic Axes of Action

## *Introduction: from Diagnosis to Action*

An effective strategy cannot be limited to abstract recognition of craftsmanship's value. It requires concrete and sustained measures, organised around major axes of action. These axes must facilitate articulation between public policies, sector initiatives, and European frameworks of financing and governance.

The six axes proposed below make it possible to move from observation to action, and to serve as a basis for medium- and long-term programs, plans, and collaborations.

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## *Legal Recognition, Institutional Framework and Representative Governance*

Objective: Guarantee the visibility and legal/operational recognition of craftsmanship as a strategic economic and cultural sector.

- Harmonise the European definition and categorisation of craftsmanship and promote a “European Artisan Statute.” that allows mutual recognition of trades among Member States and their professional mobility.

- Establish a specific CNAE/NACE code.
- Integrate craft and its different categories into ESCO (European Skills, Competences, and Occupations classification) and into European statistical systems such as Eurostatt.
- Create a European Craft Observatory.
- Recognise craft organisations as official interlocutors before the Commission.
- Include representatives of the sector in advisory bodies on culture, industry, employment, and SMEs.

## *Training, Transmission and Employment*

Objective: Ensure generational renewal and professional qualification in the European craft sector.

- Develop European qualification frameworks for craft trades.
- Promote dual and multidisciplinary vocational training (in-person and digital).
- Incorporate micro-credentials and non-formal learning.
- Fund Erasmus+ programs focused on traditional techniques and entrepreneurial skills.
- Promote youth employment and social inclusion programs through craftsmanship.



## *Innovation, Digitalisation and Sustainability*

FOACAL

Objective: Integrate the sector into the digital and ecological transition in programs such as the Digital Europe Programme or the European Social Fund Plus.

- Support adapted digitalisation (networks, e-commerce, design).
- Fund pilot projects for traceability (blockchain, smart labels).
- Promote innovation based on hybrid techniques and sustainable materials, for example by generating additional European craft labels that add value to sustainable proposals.
- Develop hubs of digital and sustainable craftsmanship..
- Include craftsmanship in circular economy policies, the European Green Deal, and LIFE program.

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## *Market, Visibility and International Promotion*

Create spaces for showcasing, circulation, cooperation, and strengthening the position of craft products in European and international markets through programs such as Creative Europe, Erasmus+, Interreg, Citizens (CERV), etc.

- Create a European craft quality label.
- Promote Geographical Indications, prioritising craft over industrial.
- Strengthen European Craft Days.

- Promote an architecture of international fairs, joint digital platforms, and a network of national and European exhibition spaces.
- Establish a European Craft Festival, periodic and rotating, specifically dedicated to making visible, celebrating, and promoting contemporary and heritage craft in the EU.
- Facilitate access to fair, ethical, and sustainable marketing networks.
- Generate European campaigns for visibility and awareness on the value of craft as artistic and traditional trades.

### ***Culture and Intangible Heritage***

Objective: Recognise craftsmanship as a vector of social cohesion and European cultural expression.

- Include craft trades in intangible heritage catalogues (national and European).
- Finance cultural mediation actions, creative tourism, and heritage education..
- Establish European centres for documentation, training, and innovation in craft.
- Strengthen craftsmanship's role in the New European Bauhaus.

### ***Territorial Development and Rural Cohesion***

Objective: Turn craftsmanship into a driver of local economic development and rural repopulation.

- Integrate craft projects in LEADER, Interreg, and EAFRD.
- Support hubs and workshop networks in rural areas.
- Finance tourist routes linked to craftsmanship.
- Promote shared infrastructures in low-density areas.



# Inspiring European References that Reinforce this Vision

In Europe, there are consolidated experiences that demonstrate that it is possible to connect craft with innovation, cooperation, visibility, and public policies. Without aiming to be exhaustive, we present below some examples that strengthen the viability of the proposals set out in this White Paper:

- **Révélations (Francia):** International biennial that turns Paris into a showcase of craft excellence, generating dialogue between craftspeople and designers. Its model demonstrates that craft can occupy a central place in major contemporary cultural circuits.
- **WORTH Partnership Project (UE):** European program that funds collaborations between craftspeople, creatives, and technologists, combining financial support, mentoring, and international projection. A successful formula for boosting innovation in the sector.
- **CRAFTS CODE (Interreg Europe):** Network of European regions working together to improve public policies aimed at craft SMEs, with an

emphasis on shared learning and institutional cooperation.

- **European Artistic Crafts Days (JEMA):** Initiative born in France and replicated in more than 20 countries, which opens craft workshops to the general public every year. An emblematic example of citizen awareness and intergenerational transmission.
- **TÁCTICA (Spain):** Network of training centers in trades promoted from Spain with an Ibero-American scope, offering a model applicable to the creation of craft training networks on a European scale.
- **CRAFT HUB:** European project that brings together cultural and educational organisations around experimentation with materials, processes, and craft methodologies. It represents an integrative platform between craft, research, and sustainability.

These cases confirm that craft is already present in European dynamics of innovation, cooperation, and sustainability. What is needed now is to consolidate and scale up these initiatives into a common strategy of recognition and strengthening of the craft sector.

# Proposed Roadmap and Timeline

## *Technical Vision*

Type of Proposal	Examples	Suggested Intervention Level
Political Claim	Legal recognition, inclusion in NACE or ESCO	European Commission, national governments
Technical Tool	Creative Europe lines, observatories, microcredits, Erasmus+	DG EAC, DG REGIO, Eurostat, EIF
Cultural/Symbolic Initiative	European Festival, European Days, campaigns	Cultural networks, cities, Parliament

## **Technical Vision**

What We Ask	What It Refers To	Who Can Make It Happen
Recognition Changes	We want craft trades to be visible in European laws, statistics, and public policies. We are not industry nor only heritage: we are living, non-mass creation.	European Commission, national and regional governments.
Tools to Help Us Grow	We need real access to financing programs, training, and data adapted to our scale, pace, and way of working.	EU directorates-general, development agencies, technical and financial networks.
Initiatives to Connect with Society	We propose campaigns, meetings, and platforms that bring craft into contact with citizens, education, and other creative sectors	Cultural networks, municipalities, European Parliament, cooperation programs.

## ***Need for Progressive and Multi-Scaled Planning***

The construction of a European strategy for craft requires a phased and realistic roadmap, allowing the combination of immediate actions with medium- and long-term structural measures.

This planning must take into account:

- The institutional and territorial diversity of Europe.
- The different levels of maturity of the craft sector in each country and region.
- The need for time to consolidate networks, build trust, and adapt legal frameworks.

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A roadmap is proposed, structured in three phases: take-off (2026–2028), consolidation (2029–2031), and maturity (2032–2040).

### ***Phase I – Take-off (2026–2028)***

Objective: To activate the basic structures of coordination, recognition, and financing of the sector.

- Institutional recognition of the craft sector as a priority field within the framework of CCIs, local economy, and sustainability.
- Launch of the European Craft Observatory.

- Development of a harmonized definition of craft and a European repertory of trades.
- Establishment of a European network of representative sector organisations.
- Systematic inclusion of craft in calls for programs such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe, LEADER, and Interreg.



- Promotion of Craft Geographical Indications.
- Creation of a specific European contact point for craft.

### ***Phase II – Consolidation (2029–2031)***

Objective: To extend pilot models, consolidate European governance, and make the sector's impact visible.

- Implementation of a European craft quality label.
- Inclusion of a CNAE/NACE code for craft in the European statistical classification.
- Financing of craft innovation hubs and shared workshop networks.
- Incorporation of craft modules into formal training pathways (VET and universities).
- Impact evaluation of the measures adopted in terms of employment, sustainability, heritage, and local economy.
- Formal participation of craft networks in European forums on cultural, industrial, and social policies.

### ***Phase III – Maturity (2032–2040)***

Objective: To turn craft into a structural sector of the European economy and a reference model for just transition.

- Formal recognition of the sector within the framework of European Treaties and cohesion policies.
- Incorporation of craft into the main instruments of economic, digital, and social development.
- Lasting strategic alliances with related sectors: design, tourism, heritage, training, circular economy.
- Full integration of craft into the European Green Deal and territorial resilience policies.
- Generation of exportable models of governance, certification, and training at international scale.

#### Global Vision: A Europe with Roots and a Future

This roadmap aspires to make craft one of the vectors of a more cohesive, sustainable, and culturally rich Europe, where meaningful making, shared knowledge, and territorial identity are fully integrated into policies of innovation, employment, and well-being.

# Conclusion

## *Craft as a Key to the Future*

Craft is not a residue of the past, but an active reservoir of knowledge, techniques, values, and alternative economic models. In a global context marked by digital transition, climate emergency, and territorial fractures, craft represents:

1. An economy of proximity, based on sustainability, personalisation, and low impact.
2. A system of cultural transmission that connects generations, territories, and communities.
3. A model of economic resilience, flexible and accessible, capable of generating stable and diverse employment.
4. A source of creative innovation, which unites tradition and experimentation, technology and memory.

Europe cannot build its future without protecting, renewing, and projecting these pillars. To bet on craft is to bet on a Europe with roots, with identity, and with soul.

## *Cross-Cutting Keys for Political Action*

From the reflection carried out throughout the White Paper, several key conclusions emerge that should guide any European strategy toward craft:

1. The urgency of official and harmonized recognition, allowing the sector to be included in statistics, legislation, and financial frameworks.
2. The need to articulate representative governance, where European craft organisations lead the management of funds and proposals.
3. The cross-cutting role of the sector, which connects culture, employment, sustainability, innovation, and social cohesion.
4. The importance of adapting existing programs, making them accessible to the reality of micro-enterprises and workshops.

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# Annex 1. Final Proposals for Public Authorities and European Entities



#### Recognition and Governance:

- Approve a European definition of craftsmanship and a common repertoire of trades.
- Include craftsmanship in CNAE/NACE codes and Eurostat statistics.
- Establish a European Craft Observatory.
- Recognise sectoral organisations as official interlocutors in the EU.

#### Training and Employment:

- Promote a European system of craft qualification.
- Finance Erasmus+ programs for training in traditional trades.
- Encourage generational renewal through dual vocational training and intergenerational learning.

#### Innovation and Sustainability:

- Finance craft innovation hubs (digital, ecological, circular).
- Support traceability with tools such as blockchain.
- Include craft in the funds of the European Green Deal.

#### Market and Visibility:

- Develop a European craft quality label.
- Expand the use of Craft Geographical Indications.

- Create European awareness campaigns.

#### Culture and Heritage:

- Integrate craftsmanship into intangible cultural heritage policies.
- Create European centres for documentation, training, and innovation in craftsmanship.

#### Territorial Cohesion:

- Include craftsmanship in programs such as LEADER, Interreg, and NextGenEU..
- Finance rural clusters and local workshop networks.
- Promote tourism and creative trade linked to crafts.



## Annex 2. European Networks and Platforms Active in Craftsmanship



A selection of European networks and platforms active in craft is presented below, potential allies for accessing financing, visibility, cooperation, or technical support in line with the objectives of this White Paper.

- Ateliers d'Art de France – National network with strong European presence. Organizes the Révélations Biennial, represents thousands of creators.  
[www.ateliersdart.com](http://www.ateliersdart.com)
- Crafts Council UK – Main UK entity for contemporary crafts. Promotes research, fairs, and international cooperation.  
[www.craftscouncil.org.uk](http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk)
- European Crafts Alliance – Pan-European network representing sector organisations before European/global institutions.  
<https://europeancraftsalliance.org/>
- LOEWE Foundation Craft Prize – International award celebrating craft excellence and generating global visibility.  
[www.loewecraftprize.com](http://www.loewecraftprize.com)
- Creative Europe Desks – National advisory offices for EU cultural funding, including crafts..  
[culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe](http://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe)
- European Creative Hubs Network – European network of creative/cultural hubs, many with crafts and design  
[www.creativehubs.eu](http://www.creativehubs.eu)
- JEMA – European Artistic Crafts Days – Annual open-doors event for craft workshops, coordinated from France and extended across Europe.  
[www.journeesdesmetiersdart.fr](http://www.journeesdesmetiersdart.fr)
- Crafting Futures – British Council – Program supporting sustainable crafts and community development through trades.  
<https://arts.britishcouncil.org/>

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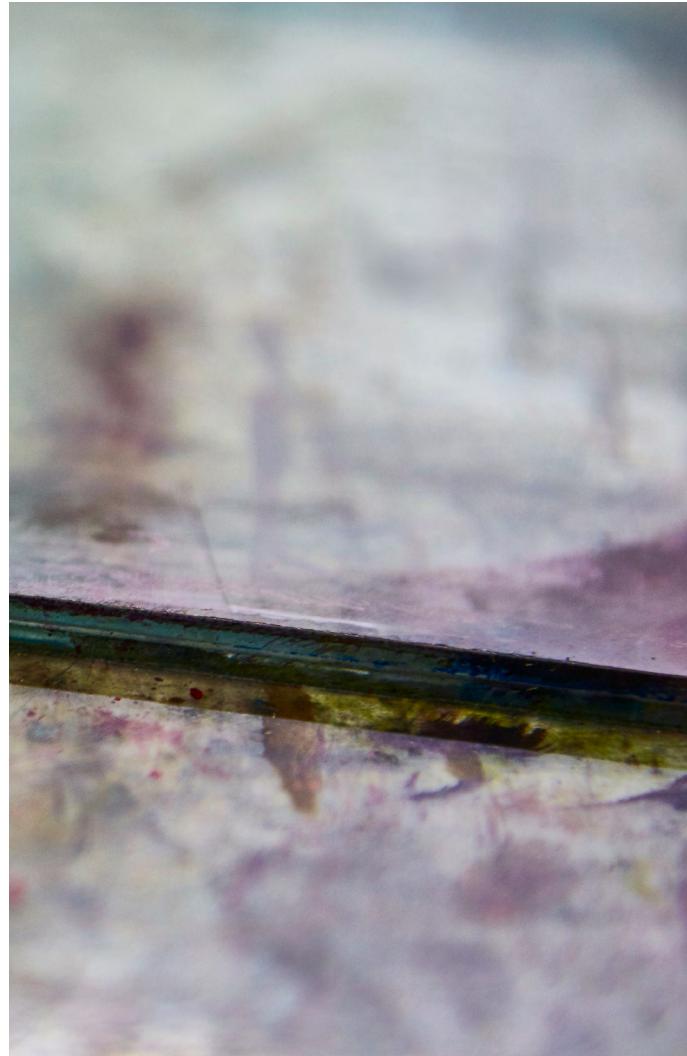
## Methodological Note

The drafting of the White Paper on Craft in Europe has been based on a combination of documentary analysis, comparative legislative review, and systematization of European and national sources. The process has included:

- The identification of relevant regulatory, institutional, and programmatic frameworks in the European context.
- The detailed review of craft legislation in several Member States.
- The consultation of official databases, technical reports, and sectoral studies produced by public bodies, professional networks, and research centers.
- The incorporation of recent academic literature on the contemporary role of craft.
- The use of European project and initiative platforms (Creative Europe, Erasmus+, COSME...).
- The integration of practical experience and accumulated knowledge from European and Spanish craft organisations.

This approach has made it possible to build a rigorous, contextualised, and applicable diagnosis, as well as to formulate strategic proposals grounded in the reality of the European craft ecosystem.





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# Updated Sources



Complements to the White Paper on Craft in Europe

### More Up-to-Date Quantitative Data

The data collected in the White Paper comes mainly from sectoral reports between 2018 and 2022. Despite the lack of specific statistics afterward, they have been cross-checked with the latest Eurostat databases and recent studies by the European Crafts Alliance (2023), as well as the European Crafts Alliance (2023).

The creation of a European Craft Observatory is recommended to update and harmonize these data continuously.

### Official Recognition of Traditional Knowledge

In several European countries, there are mechanisms for the formal recognition of competences acquired outside the formal education system. For example, France applies the Validation of Acquired Experience (VAE), which allows professionals to accredit their experience



in craft trades. It is proposed to integrate craft trades into professional qualification catalogues (EQF/NQF) and to develop European systems of micro-credentials and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

### **Generational Transition: Concrete Measures**

Initiatives such as the German Meister-BAföG program, which finances young apprentices to obtain the master craftsman qualification, or the intergenerational mentoring programs in Sweden and France, are highlighted. Italy offers tax incentives to young people who inherit craft workshops. These measures can serve as a model for a European program for generational renewal in craft.

### **International Framework**

Organisations such as UNESCO have recognise the importance of craft in the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). WIPO promotes respect for intellectual property in the field of craft, while UNCTAD fosters the inclusion of craft in sustainable development programs. There are also trade agreements that protect craft products through designations of origin.

### **Complementary Certification Systems**

In addition to Craft Geographical Indications, the EU recognizes other labels applicable to the sector: the European Ecolabel, fair trade certifications, and differentiated quality marks at national level. Some regions promote cultural and sustainability distinctions, such as the EPV label in France or the regional systems in Spain (such as Artesanía de Galicia).

### **Gender Perspective**

Although women's participation in craft is high, barriers persist in access to advanced technical training, leadership, and professional visibility. It is recommended to implement measures such as representation quotas in sectoral bodies, specific aid calls, visibility of female role models, and training in leadership and digitalisation aimed at women craftspeople.

### **Inclusion and Diversity**

Craft has high potential for social inclusion, as demonstrated by experiences in Belgium and the Netherlands that integrate migrants and refugees through training in trades.

There are also inclusive programs for people with disabilities in Germany and Spain, based on sheltered workshops and adapted mentoring. It is essential to promote programs that reinforce this integrating role of the sector.

### **Impact Indicators**

A set of key indicators is proposed to evaluate the impact of craft policies:

- Number of direct and indirect jobs generated
- Percentage of women and young people in the sector.
- Number of rural workshops or those at risk of disappearance recovered.
- Participation in European programs (Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Interreg, etc.).
- Enterprises supported through public funding.
- Training or transmission activities carried out.
- Sustainability of the materials used.
- Projects with intercultural, gender, or social inclusion impact.



# Glossary of Key Terms









FoACAL  
Castilla y León