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## **CCI Internationalization pack: validated methodology and tools**

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Project number 3115

Priority Axis 1: Promoting the Mediterranean innovation capacities to develop smart and sustainable growth

Objective 1.1: To increase transnational activity of innovative cluster and networks of key sectors of the MED area

## WP 3 - TESTING

### PU - Public

<b>Deliverable</b>	3.5.2 CCI Internationalization pack: validated methodology and tools <sup>1</sup>
<b>Description</b>	After the testing phase closure, services and methodologies have been reviewed, validated, and prepared for their final version. This will significantly support the transferring effectiveness, minimizing the risks of future configuration changes.
<b>Contributing partners:</b>	ART-ER S. Cons. p. a. (lead partner) AMI - Aide aux Musiques Innovatrices CoBO - Municipality of Bologna CIMAC - Intermunicipal Community of Central Alentejo UVEG - University of Valencia SERDA - Sarajevo economic regional development agency CCSEV - Official Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Shipping of Seville Lazio Region - REGIONE LAZIO - Direzione Regionale Cultura e Politiche Giovanili BA - Barcelona Activa SA SPM AF - Arty Farty

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Lead partner: ART-ER S. Cons. p.

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## Executive Summary

Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) play a strategic role in promoting and supporting the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of European and MED regions.

The turnover of the sector in Europe exceeds Euro 500 billion, equal to 4.4% of GDP, with over 12 million people employed. More than 90 regions have also included Cultural and Creative Industries in their smart specialization strategies, making Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) available to support the sector in the development processes<sup>2</sup>.

While employment in the Cultural and Creative sector grows faster than total employment and the sector itself has demonstrated, over time, a greater capacity for resilience than others, there are some specific weaknesses that expose it to economic uncertainty and increase the difficulty for businesses to internationalize.

The Cultural and Creative Industries are in fact characterized by a strong linguistic and cultural heterogeneity and employees are mostly self-employed workers. Most businesses are small or very small that carry on projects or activities that are difficult to scale (standardizable or replicable).

Chebec has contributed to the construction of technical processes and political policies to support the sector, with tools and methodologies, innovative activities and products aimed at facilitating the strengthening of entrepreneurial skills and the access to international markets for creative and cultural companies in compliance with their own identity.

The present document has been prepared by ART-ER - with the contribution of Chebec partners - to transfer the internationalization tools and methodologies developed during the pilot action and to guide interested parties (service providers, public administrations) through the various project outputs.

Chebec is a European project, funded by the Interreg MED programme, that has been implemented between February 2018 and October 2020 by 10 full and 5 associate partners from France, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain and from the Balkans - Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

Chebec tackles CCIs' main challenge in the Mediterranean area: supporting CCIs' growth, favoring access to new markets while keeping their own identity, with the final aim to enhance MED clusters attractiveness.

Here follows a list of the main results achieved in the project:

- **82 cultural and creative organizations participated** in the internationalization programme.
- **Nearly 400 hours of training**, that is, 43 hours on average for each pilot.
- **Almost 1,280 hours of consultancy** have been provided **to a total of 66 beneficiaries**, that is nearly 20 hours of consultancy for each beneficiary.
- **Along** with the training programme, **2 of the 3 planned mobilities** have been executed, **attended by 40 beneficiaries in each one**. The mobility in Bologna had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 outbreak. It was finally replaced with a series of online webinars on EU projects.
- **18 internationalization plans have been funded** through the Innovation Voucher scheme, **with nearly 50,000 € invested by partners**.

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<sup>2</sup> European Parliament - 2016 Report on a coherent EU policy for CCIs  
[http://www.keanet.eu/wp-content/uploads/Impulse-paper-on-the-role-of-CCIs-in-innovating-European-industry\\_integrated.pdf](http://www.keanet.eu/wp-content/uploads/Impulse-paper-on-the-role-of-CCIs-in-innovating-European-industry_integrated.pdf)

- **3** web tools were developed: **Online training guide** with accessible contents addressed to cultural entrepreneurs and start-ups with practical advice to internationalise an artistic or creative project; **Map of CCI clusters and networks** of Chebec regions to identify potential collaborators and key actors on other regions; **Internationalization readiness webtool** to assess the organization's suitability to implement an internationalization plan.

Chebec has implemented actions for 3 main target groups: (1) CCI associations, companies and professionals, (2) Business support organizations and (3) Public administrations.

For group (1), Chebec has experimented an integrated support program including innovative actions developed in each participating region and actions developed jointly at cross-country levels (international matchmaking actions).

For group (2), several web tools have been developed with the aim to improve services for the CCI sector, helping business support organizations in upgrading their offer and their capacity to support CCIs..

For group (3), main focus has regarded the drafting of a set of competence building actions and the identification of policy recommendations based on Chebec experience. An addendum to the foreseen deliverables is represented by the activities implemented in response to the COVID 19 crisis, and in particular to the online set of consultancy services and to a position paper on the impact of the crisis.

An additional key action that Chebec project has implemented relates to the monitoring and evaluation process that has been developed since the very beginning and has applied to all project actions through regular data collection campaigns and analysis of those data.

The present deliverable has been developed as a stand alone document summarizing all project outputs but shall be integrated with specific project deliverables that are mentioned in the document.

It is composed by:

- the description of the methodology adopted by the project to develop the pilot action
- the description of the several tools (online and offline) designed to increase CCIs entrepreneurial and internationalization competences
- a chapter dedicated to the activities linked to boost the network and to involve the policy makers
- a final recommendation on how to boost CCI support program in the MED regions

It also includes a set of Annexes in which are reported the guidelines and the templates adopted to implement the pilot action, ready to be transferred and adapted in other MED regional contexts.

## Chebec approach towards Internationalization

Chebec approach takes inspiration from the fastest boats of the XVIII century used by traders, but also corsairs and pirates to explore, exchange, connect and reinvigorate the MED economy.

Chebec tackles CCI's main challenge in the Mediterranean: **accessing to new markets** while keeping their own identity, with the final aim to favor MED clusters' attractiveness for creative people.

Chebec tested **an integrated support program** for cultural and creative companies and professionals, developing international competences and contacts.

The program included training, consultancy, mobility actions, matching events and an innovation voucher scheme to concretely favour transregional collaborations.

Competence building activities were released also for policy makers and support organisations to improve the effectiveness of their actions.

Partners are organizations coming from MED regions with relevant CCI clusters, with integrated profiles - public authorities, intermediary organizations, Universities and NGOs - wide experience, solid relations with their regional players and EU networks.

## Methodology

Chebec methodology is based on **five pillars** that were built when the project was designed:

- **the partnership covers different parts of the CCI ecosystem:** (1) organizations active in the cultural sector that gather artists, professionals and companies, (2) policy makers and intermediary organisations mainly focusing on economic support activities in their regions and (3) a university research unit focused on the economy of culture.  
The diversity of this partnership has ensured that outputs have integrated different points of views both when developing specific initiatives and when analysing their outcomes.
- the project was conceived as a **hands on initiative:** all partners are based in regions that have identified CCIs in their specialization strategies and have been involved in previous European initiatives focusing on CCI support. Having knowledge of the sector, the partnership's objective was to implement practical actions to test new measures for CCI internationalization.
- the project has included **central actions** (joint tools, action monitoring etc.) and **regional/local actions** (carried out by partners in their own ecosystems) both planned and implemented in a coordinated manner.
- a **monitoring system** was implemented since the very beginning with the objective to identify and measure outputs and elaborate lessons from those results.
- **communication** has also been a key task all along the project duration through the development of specific vehicles to spread project outputs and increase beneficiary visibility.

An additional pillar has been added during the project course: **adaptation to the new conditions generated by COVID-19 has become a central issue.** Planned actions have been reformulated and

new actions have been launched always with the objective to have a practical approach, in line with our initial mission of “hacking the CCI sector”.

Chebec addresses 3 main target audiences and specific actions have been designed for each of them:

- **CCIs companies and professionals**  
CCI companies and professionals are the beneficiaries of most actions (pilot support programmes, webtools and innovation vouchers) and they are, at the same time, the “testers” of these services which will be part of a complete internationalization programme for CCIs after Chebec ends. They have been key players in the monitoring and evaluation activity.
- **Business support organizations**  
Those organisations dedicated to CCIs or with a general purpose are also important for Chebec. Most partners belong to these categories, they have been able to gain experience in the internationalization field and in CCIs and have enlarged their visibility in the sector.
- **Public administrations**  
Public administrations are central in the CCI sectors: they highly participate in the CCI economy being, in many cases, in the distribution and production of cultural products or providing support to the sector. Chebec has included those in many actions through learning building initiatives and connecting them with other ecosystem members.

## Chebec tools

Chebec has developed several tools to target our **3 main audiences**.

Those are of different nature: some consist of experiences and actions that may be studied and transferred in other contexts, others are web tools made available for the community. The latter, in particular, may be used by companies themselves, by business support organizations or by other organizations in the ecosystem.

## Pilot support programme

Chebec pilot support programme is made of several services to support selected organizations in improving their capacity to internationalize.

Chebec pilot support programme included several stages to enable partners to implement support activities in their regions:

- **Set up of guidelines and working tools:** common guidelines, tools for beneficiaries’ check-up and assessment and online guide to support startups from the sector have been designed together. Guidelines and working tools were developed centrally to be used by all partners during the test stages; they worked, indeed, as indications allowing the consortium to carry out similar activities without overlooking the peculiarities of CCIs in their own territory.
- **Pilot implementation selection and services delivery.**  
The selection of beneficiaries that would test the programme were organised in each partner region according to each partner’s specific rules for launching calls for applications. The promotion was also organised locally as well as the pre-selection of beneficiaries.



A final selection appointing a few beneficiaries who would access the innovation voucher scheme was made jointly by the Chebec partnership.

In particular, the pilot programme included the following main actions in all regions:

1. **launch of the call for proposals**
2. **launch programme day** - a kick-off day to meet-up with all programme participants
3. **training days** - minimum 4 training days organized in group sessions
4. **mentorship and consultancy** - mainly during individual sessions
5. **access to local business contacts** - individual services
6. **access to international meetings** - both group and individual sessions
7. **promotion - communication on beneficiaries**
8. **innovation vouchers** - adopted to support cross-regional collaborations
9. **follow-up activities** - collection of feedback

The pilot programme general coordination was ensured by the Municipality of Bologna in collaboration with ART-ER whereas the other Chebec partners were responsible for local implementation. The pilot programme in Emilia-Romagna was implemented by the Municipality of Bologna and ART-ER jointly implemented specific support and actions for local selected beneficiaries.

### Training, mentorship and consultancy

Training, mentorship and consultancy represent the centre of pilot programme value proposition. The objective was to support beneficiaries in (1) **acquiring business management skills** and (2) **improving their capacity to internationalize**.

Those services were launched at the beginning of the pilot and were carried out also after international exchanges were taking place in order for beneficiaries to work on possible connections and opportunities with the support of experts.

### International matchmaking

Chebec international matchmaking initiatives were organised in Sevilla (April 2019) and Marseille (September 2019) with a similar methodology which included preparation, site activities and followup:

1. Preparation stage:  
this stage was key for the success of matchmaking outputs. Before the mission, participant profiles were collected and possible “matches” were identified. The Chamber of Commerce of Seville expertise in such activity was key to prepare business matches in a professional way
2. In situ activities:  
Both matchmaking events included:
  - guided networking moments in order for participants to present their organization, identify possible connections and develop possible ideas for collaboration
  - group trainings with a hands on approach
  - workshop to diffuse experiences and opportunities in the CCI sector
3. space for exposing/showcasing CCI products/services as well as visits to specific organizations

#### 4. collection of feedback with the objective to help with contact followup

The **participation in both matchmaking initiatives was positive** both in terms of participation (39 participants in Sevilla and 36 in Marseille) and in terms of feedback from those participants. Feedback was positive as regards contacts started and new ideas and learnings.

Chebec had also foreseen a third mobility action, which was supposed to take place in March 2020 in Bologna. However, due to COVID-19 containment measures this action was cancelled and transformed into **online activities**:

- webinars on EU funding for the CCIs sector were organized in September and October 2020, providing the chance to all beneficiaries to participate, learn, and exchange ideas;
- a digital booklet listing all beneficiaries, their offer and contact was created and published on the web, this should help foster connections and relations even after the project comes to end.

#### Innovation vouchers

The innovation voucher scheme supported specific initiatives aimed at beneficiary development internationally.

It is organised at partner level based on common basis - a guide was defined to ensure common contents among all partners - and has been developed as a test to launch “innovation vouchers” on a small scale.

A selection of partners have dedicated a limited budget - up to € 10.000,00 - for funding innovation and internationalization actions developed by 1 to 4 beneficiaries from their regions to develop.

In particular, those actions regarded:

- collaborations between organizations in Chebec regions (e.g. 1 beneficiary from one region implements an activity with 1 or more beneficiaries from other Chebec region(s)).
- cross activities to develop new actions: (e.g. 2 or more organizations decide to apply jointly to EU/regional/national calls. The voucher can cover costs for meetings and/or consultancy services).
- internationalization actions Those shall target the Med programme area in particular the Chebec regions (e.g. 1 beneficiary develops an action to get visibility in the Med area: participation in a Fair or in a specific event, mission to another Chebec region for developing partnerships).
- internationalization and innovation processes (e.g. 1 beneficiary acquires a new service or working tool developed in another MED area or in its own area but with the scope to be attractive abroad)

In order to be compliant with all partners’ rules in terms of provision of funds to external parties, the innovation scheme was implemented on a cost reimbursement to cover most possible expenditure:

- travel/accommodation costs
- booth stand rented in at a fair exhibition, fee to take part in a fair exhibition /event/other within the Interreg MED Area
- consultancies
- purchase of non-depreciable goods or materials
- consultancy to develop prototypes or demo

- other expenses (e.g. communication materials)

Staff costs were excluded from the possible costs to be claimed.

For accessing the innovation voucher scheme, calls for applications were launched and the selection was made at partner and trans-partner level.

The scheme was planned over the period December 2019/April 2020 but due to restrictions after the diffusion of the Covid 19 pandemic, the period was extended until September 2020 in order for beneficiaries to adjust their project plans according to the new situation.

The Innovation Voucher scheme was coordinated by ART-ER.

## Monitoring

Monitoring Chebec activity and assessing the impact on various project targets is a core action implemented during the project: it started at the very beginning of Chebec and has run until the very end, with the objective to evaluate project technical progress and outputs from pilot activities.

This activity was designed and implemented by Econcult, the research unit part of the Applied Economics Department of the University of Valencia, which conducts research activities on the relationships between culture and development.

### Project technical assessment

This specific evaluation concerned the Chebec project as a whole, not only the pilot action. By analysing a wide range of documents and ad hoc questionnaires developed, two reports were created:

1. Project technical assessment-first report: first evaluation of the results of the allowing the consortium to evaluate the results achieved and propose changes in the management of the project if necessary;
2. Project Technical Assessment - Second Report: the final evaluation represents the overall technical (qualitative and quantitative) analysis of the activities achieved.

It is important to highlight that - despite the fact that the partnership decided to carry out two different kinds of assessments, one focused on the project and one on its core action, the pilot programme - these two aspects are extremely connected.

Indeed, project and partners' organization and planning (WP1 management) can deeply affect the actions developed for the beneficiaries (WP3 testing). This was taken into account when carrying out both evaluations and to decide upon recommendations to provide.

Here follows a general description of the monitoring activities during the project for what concerns **Chebec pilot action**:

Evaluation Stages	Ex ante	Mid-term	Summative
<b>Aims</b>	To define expectations and goals	To monitor development of pilots and its specific actions	Major functional factors
<b>Targets</b>	Partners Beneficiaries Regional stakeholders	Partners Beneficiaries	Partners Beneficiaries Regional stakeholders
<b>Type of indicators</b>	1. Problem and hypothesis 2. Initial expectatives 3. Inputs 4. Goals 5. Criteria success	1. Monitor indicators 2. Outputs 3. Outcomes	1. Comparative indicators 2. Impacts 3. Goals

*Figure 1 shows the architecture used by UVEG to monitor the pilot action among beneficiaries*

For the **assessment of beneficiary progress** intended to monitor the efficacy and efficiency of the programme, two main actions are conducted:

- **ex ante assessment:**  
at the beginning of pilot actions, beneficiaries went through a survey to evaluate several key aspects: (1) their perception and motivation about organization's internationalization strategy, (2) organization challenges when the organization goes international, (3) needs for internationalization, (4) expectation on Chebec tools, (5) on offered services, (6) on impacts generated in the territory.
- **ex post assessment:**  
the same survey was completed at the end of the support period to evaluate the perception beneficiaries have on their progress during the programme and outcomes they have effectively reached during the support period.

In addition, a research has been conducted on the impact of Covid 19 on supported organizations. This initiative had not been foreseen within the Application Form but it was deemed necessary after the consequences of the pandemic abruptly impacted on the activities and dynamics of the CCIs sector.

For the monitoring of project progressing, main actions have regarded the monitoring of **specific actions**:

- a survey was implemented after each matchmaking event.
- a survey was implemented on the base on pilot actions and on training activities

## **Learnings from pilot project peculiarities**

During the implementation of pilot programmes, Chebec partners have organised services according to their organization features and to the characteristics of selected beneficiaries. From the diversities of approaches, peculiarities and key learnings can be drawn.

- the combination of group sessions and individual activities have ensured that beneficiaries accessed a tailor made service and reached a common level of knowledge despite differences in business development stages among beneficiaries.
- diagnosis sessions with beneficiaries were necessary at the beginning to develop training contents and define a service approach. This was especially necessary as most beneficiaries were newcomers in the partners' ecosystems.
- in most cases, beneficiaries were heterogeneous as regards activity sectors or business development: this has been a positive aspect as beneficiaries have been able to explore collaborations with different sectors, which also enabled local groups to be set for working together and expanding their horizons. The pilot has also been an opportunity for organisations at different stages of development to learn from one another.
- for those programme groups where beneficiaries had already experience in internationalization, networking opportunities were a key element: group meetings with experts giving talks on specific topics or talking about their business experience was a key aspect and also favoured exchanges between beneficiaries.
- matchmaking outputs have been positive: several collaborations have been developed after those initiatives. This is mainly because of the high number of participants in both matchmaking and also due to the very nature of participating organizations which are small organisations - in which opportunities can be taken in a short period of time - and because direct participants had the appropriate decision power to embrace new opportunities.
- innovation voucher schemes represent a good option for supporting the development of international collaborations (these may support initial expenses as travel costs for organizing meetings between parties or external support to launch new services). If a cost reimbursement approach is used on a larger scale programme, important management costs may be planned.

## Online tools

Chebec partners have developed 3 web tools that may be used as a suite or as stand alone resources. They represent complementary digital elements supporting offline initiatives in all stages of the programme.

### Internationalization readiness webtool

The **Chebec Internationalization Readiness Webtool** is an instrument supporting CCIs organization in self-evaluating whether they are prepared to launch their activities abroad and access new markets.

It has been developed by ART-ER with the scope to target 2 main groups of people:

- entrepreneurs in the CCI industry that are starting internationalization activities and may autonomously assess their *state of affairs*, allowing them to identify what they are strong on and what actions they should take to improve what they are lacking before accessing new markets;
- operators in business support organizations that need a support tool to take decisions on how to support CCI entrepreneurs. This way they can better understand the starting point of organizations that they plan on assisting through specific support paths. Those support organisations are focusing on CCIs or general purpose.

This tool is the result of several research, development and exchanges with experts. In particular. The following steps have been taken to develop the Chebec Internationalization Readiness Webtool:

Step 1- desk research on literature and similar existing tools

Step 2- draft of the tool framework taking into account CCI's characteristics, entrepreneurship and pivotal aspects to internationalize.

Step 3 - integration and validation by experts in CCIs and internationalization following the Delphi methodology

Step 4 - creation of the questionnaire

Step 5 - test of the questionnaire and improvement both technically and in terms of contents

In particular, the tool is available online and mainly includes 2 elements:

- a questionnaire based on 6 different areas as described in the framework (see figure 2)
- a report that provides users with a visual on their performance associated to the framework areas and a list of recommendations (see figure 3)

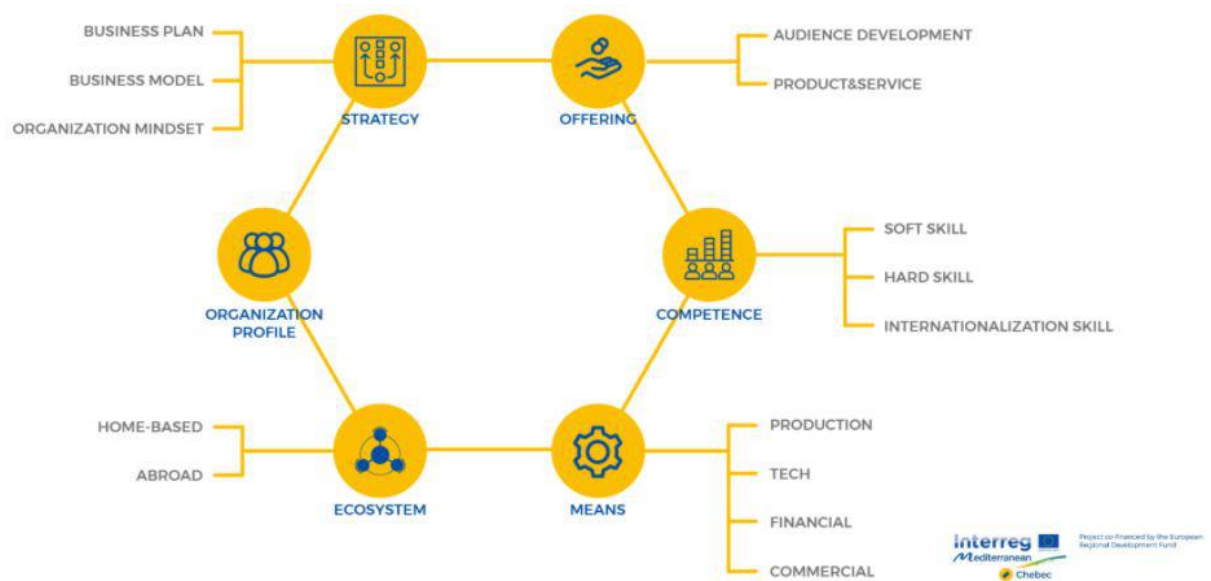


Figure 2 shows Chebec Internationalization webtool framework



Figure 3 shows the output page of the Internationalization Readiness Webtool

Main features and practical information for accessing Chebec Internationalization Readiness Webtool:

- the tool is available online at the following address:  
<https://chebec-internationalizationtool.art-er.it/>
- it is in English
- it is GDPR compliant
- Original tool (no copyright limitations)
- it is free
- It is possible to link it from other sites

### Online map to support startups

The **Chebec online map to support startups** represents a guide for Cultural and Creative startups to develop knowledge - in various entrepreneurship areas with a specific focus on internationalization - and competence in the field of strategic thinking.

It has been developed by Barcelona Active with the objective to help companies assess their plans viability and identify steps to be taken on their internationalization process.

The map helps answer a series of key questions for CCI internationalization by providing short courses and documentations:

- Why should artists/creatives go international? How do artists/creatives internationalise their work?
- What kinds of legislation and technical characteristics have to be considered?
- What is needed? Where should artists/creatives start?

This online map is a capacity building tool for professionals and start-ups currently active in the cultural and creative sector and aims at sharing practical advice and promoting available opportunities for artists and cultural professionals.



*Figure 4 shows main contents of Chebec online map to support startups*

The map is composed of a series of learning modules for users to acquire basic skills and knowledge to start an internationalization path: it is organised in several key areas (see fig 4) based on Chebec Internationalization Readiness Webtool, that are accessible through a visual map leadid to specific contents (original videos especially produced for the the map purpose) and readings.

Users may access the visual contents and/or access a written guide.

Main features and practical information for accessing the **Chebec online map to support startups**:

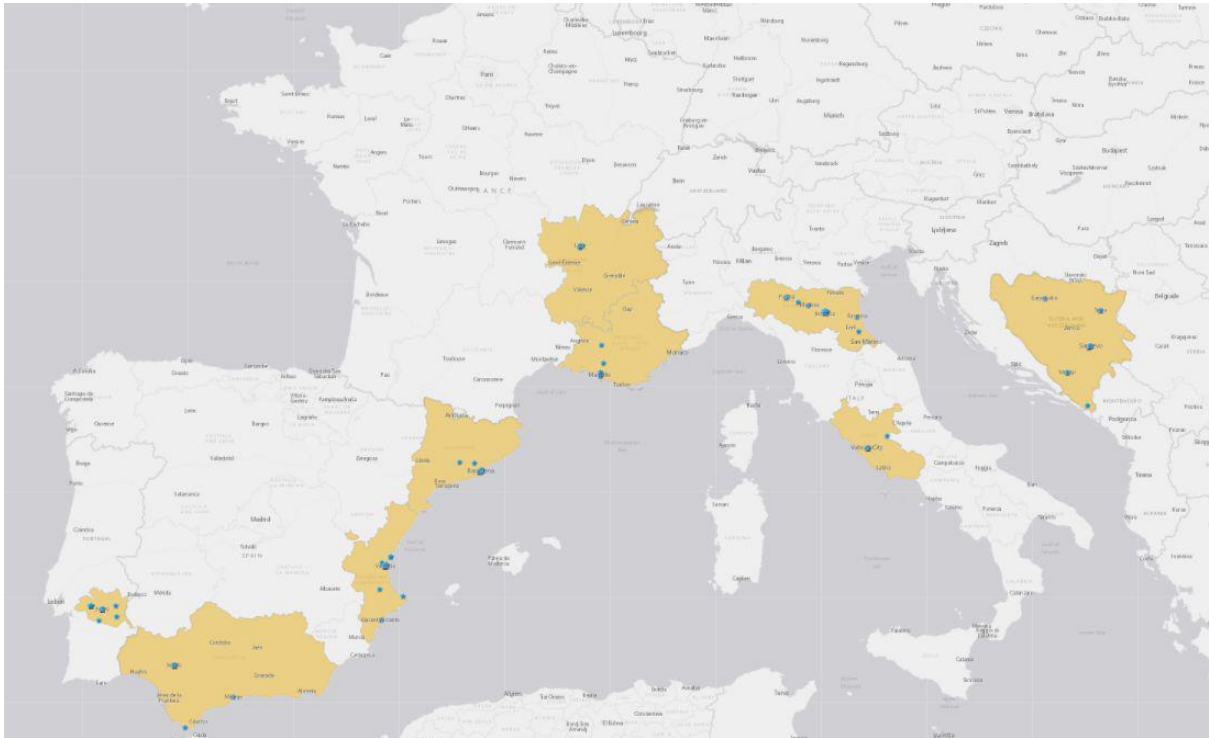
- the tool is in English
- it is an original tool based on original contents copyright free
- it is accessible for free at the following address: <http://bit.ly/chebecguide>

### CCI Clusters and Networks map

The CCI Clusters and Networks map has been developed by CIMAC with data supplied by all the partners in the scope of the Chebec project.

The map (see Fig. 5) gathers information on those existing clusters and networks - both formal and informal - that operate in the 9 Chebec regions in several artistic and cultural areas: performing arts, cultural heritage, visual arts, design and applied arts, literature books and reading and architecture.





*Figure 5 shows Chebec CCI Cluster Map*

Over 100 clusters/networks have been included in the map with a description and contact details with the objective to favour collaborations between CCI professionals.

Main features and practical information for accessing the Cluster map:

- the tool is available online at the following address<sup>3</sup>:  
<https://bit.ly/3ox0Sfz>
- it is in English
- it is free of charge

## Policy development support for CCIs

Intermediary organisations and policy makers also represent key targets for Chebec. The project has developed specific initiatives for this specific audience with 3 main objectives:

- create connections with CCI representatives: this is mainly possible through the organization of local events
- build competences: this is mainly possible through Chebec webinars
- identify how to support companies based on CCI distinctive features: this is the objective of the document on policy recommendations

### Local events

Those are events for the CCI local community. They target Chebec beneficiaries and other members of the ecosystem with several objectives: (1) create connections between ecosystem members, (2)

<sup>3</sup> Please use the extended address:

<https://geo.alentejocentral.pt/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=37d3128ec1a445fd95df7a3dae-a21cad>

organise training/diffusion sessions on specific sector features/competence/initiative, (3) give a voice to Chebec participants and increase their visibility in the community. They have often been organized together with external stakeholders. All partners have organised at least one local event during the project duration.

## Webinars

Chebec webinars have been designed and organised by CIMAC with the scope to diffuse knowledge on the CCI sector among operators and decision makers at Chebec regions dealing with the CCI sector support.

Webinars were provided by experts with recognised competence in specific areas linked to CCI policies with the objective to share knowledge and practices linked to CCI sector support.

Webinars mainly targeted decision-makers and institutions or key actors that can incorporate Chebec outputs and approaches and can contribute to transferring project outputs.

The 3 webinars should have tackled several topics: a more general approach (1st webinar) to specific cases, including the pilot action results of Chebec (last webinar).

The Covid-19 Pandemic causes a shift in the last webinar approach. The cultural sector was one of the most affected by the crisis, with unknown consequences. Thus, the focus of the last webinar concerned the effects of the pandemic in the world and in culture and also the opportunities for change that the crisis can bring.

The webinars have, in certain cases, been organized together with local events in order to help the development of a debate among stakeholders.

## Policy recommendations

This document has been produced by Lazio Region with the contribution of all Chebec partners.

It represents the main contribution in the debate on how to implement policies to support CCIs internationalization. It addresses political decision-makers and stakeholders appointed to elaborate the strategies or manage the financial instruments intended for the development of the CCIs and is connected to regional smart specialization.

The aim of this document is to inform policy makers about the project results, involve them in strategic planning process of new action tools in the CCIs sector and convince them to integrate these actions into mainstream regional strategies, as key pillars of the development of the CCI sector.

The document is available at Chebec website.

## The future: how to exploit Chebec resources

The CCIs Internationalization Pack developed through the testing phase and validated by the pilot action, together with the other tools that the partnership realized, is intended to be a reference document for the organizations (public and private) that aim at improving their services and opportunities to support CCIs in their services routine.

In particular, being realized after gathering feedback and contributions of experiences of several partners, located in 5 countries of the MED area, this pack is able to keep into account the different

implementation options, guidelines and alternatives that the partners in the challenge have experienced as regards business growth, go-to-market approaches and internationalization strategies.

Furthermore, CHEBEC partners may act as reference points to support other organizations in transferring and implementing the measures here described.

The pack has been tested in regions/contexts with substantial differences as regards:

- entrepreneurial propensity
- density of cultural and creative professionals and companies
- specific support measures already active
- presence of dedicated institutions and support bodies (public or private)

It's added value is due to the fact that both methodology and tools have been realized to be easily adaptable according to the different needs of a specific ecosystem<sup>4</sup>.

Organizations that intend to implement the program may select and apply the combination of tools and services that suit their interests better.

Follows here a table with the main assets of the CCI pack, matched with inputs and recommendations on their specific needs and framework conditions for being successfully adopted.

<b>Back-end documents</b>	
<b>Guidelines</b>	It's the key document to set up the support program for CCIs, since it gives a clear idea about time, effort and resources needed. It is in particular important for public bodies, since it is a reference document for those organization who need to be compliant with public funds and rules (eg. transparency, service purchasing, reporting etc).
<b>Working tools</b>	As for the guidelines, the working tools developed (templates for contracts with beneficiaries, for the call to select beneficiaries, for a first assessment of the beneficiaries' state of the art, for monitoring the progresses within the path etc) are extremely useful when the support package is implemented by a public body, which needs to respect several bureaucratic tasks. They are also very important to guarantee homogeneous and detailed documentation of the program implementation
<b>Service delivery</b>	
<b>Training</b>	Training activities usually are carried out as the first step, to set a common working framework (taxonomy), and a common level of knowledge on the most relevant topics related to an internationalization path. Topics may vary according to the level of

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<sup>4</sup> The overall methodological approach takes inspiration from the Design Option Paper concept. Being an output of the INNOSUP program (H2020), the DOP identifies and documents implementation options, guidelines and implementation alternatives for a set of measures that partners (Innovation Agencies) have experienced during the project and gives recommendations to other bodies on how to implement them.

	beneficiaries and on the goal of the program. (The presentations used in class during the pilot action are available and might also be used as self-training tools).
Mentorship	Mentorship represents the less standardised type of service since is very much related to the networking capacities of the Service providers. Yet it is the most valuable, since several business opportunities may rise from the capacity of the Mentor in suggesting the right development strategy, or in putting in contact with the beneficiaries with possible partners/buyers/funding opportunities.
Consultancy	Also the consultancy path may vary according to the nature and to the needs of the beneficiaries. Being CCI very heterogeneous, the recommendation is to build a portfolio of possible consultants as wide as possible. It is crucial to assess the state of the art of the beneficiary at the beginning of the path, and to evaluate the progresses made at the end.
International matchmaking	These events represented the key moment for testing the beneficiaries' capacity. Pitching sessions, field visits, and speed-networking tables are the methodologies adopted by Chebec. The (international) networking capacity of the organizing body is the key aspect, to guarantee effective and targeted matchmaking. It is also very important to find out easy-to-use ways of sharing participants' contacts well before the events, in order to give them the time to organize their agenda. <sup>5</sup>
Innovation Vouchers	Being implemented by public bodies and funded by public funds, Innovation Vouchers have been the most critical aspect of the CCIs pack. Even if the total amount of the budget was relatively modest, bureaucratic aspects represented an overload of work that beneficiaries needed to carry out. The recommendation for implementing this kind of measure, is to try to find alternative sources of funding (eg private sponsorship) or to conceive them as grants <sup>6</sup> .

## Foster CCIs support in MED regions through Chebec contributions

### How to make the most from the CHEBEC results?

As discussed in the previous paragraphs, tools and methodologies set up during the testing phase could be implemented in all kinds of ecosystems (from the most advanced, focusing on scale up and internationalization actions - to the less developed, bringing competences and information on how to set up a CCI company). However, as for all support programs, these tools and measures need to be integrated in a more complex and structured system of policies, able to create a true impact and conceived as agile and concrete.

<sup>5</sup> a specific report on matchmaking activity is included as Annex

<sup>6</sup> a specific report on IV implementation is included as Annex

Especially in this difficult moment, Regions need to react and make sure that this sector, which has been severely hit, continues to be considered as a key strategic axis for the Mediterranean economic development.

Some structural measures with a greater economic impact are indeed necessary to set the ground for a more tailored support path as the one realized by CHEBEC.

Out of the research carried out to evaluate the Covid-19 impact on Chebec beneficiaries<sup>7</sup>, several observations have been made:

- as regards organization characteristics, the research confirms 2 features there are high levels of precariousness:
  - most beneficiaries are self employed - this confirms the Eurostat data for year 2018 that shows that 33% of workers in CCI are self employed compared to 14% of the whole economy for the same period and (2) a fair proportion of beneficiaries (22%) work in another sector at the same time;
  - SMEs are mainly are micro: 58% of beneficiaries employ 1 to 5 people;
- As regards how the beneficiaries have faced the crisis, there are two aspects to observe:
  - Beneficiaries have adapted their organizations: mainly through smart working (88%), reducing activities to the minimum (45%), investing on digital activities (33%)
  - Most beneficiaries have developed new projects and ideas during the period, dedicated to administrative and management (including research of aid), have participated in training dedicated to acquire new skills and worked on their business model.
- As regards the crisis impact, most beneficiaries confirm they have been affected in terms of business volume in different ways and foresee that they will be affected in the long term (88% estimate that the crisis will impact them over a long period).

Those observations have been made on Chebec beneficiaries but may be useful for planning actions for CCI companies in the Mediterranean regions.

Reinforcing internationalization services is an asset to help companies in our regions to grow, cooperation is key for the development of the sector especially during the present crisis.

OECD has indeed identified cooperation as a key issue for CCIs to overcome the Covid-19 crisis<sup>8</sup>: **cooperation with other sectors** for the development of sustainable business models (see the example of CCI contents distributed through digital tools) and cooperation within the CCI ecosystems to overcome the crisis and develop long term development models.

Ecosystem cooperation is a key imperative and policy makers have a key role to play *“to design public supports that alleviate the negative impacts in the short term and help identify new*

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<sup>7</sup> Chebec project, “Impact of Covid-19 on the Chebec project” available at <https://chebec.interreg-med.eu/>

<sup>8</sup> see the proceedings of the OECD “Summer Academy on Cultural and Creative Industries and Local Development”

*opportunities in the medium term for different public, private and non-profit actors engaged in cultural and creative production.”<sup>9</sup>*

Here follows a list of background activities that could contribute to the creation of a fertile and friendly environment for CCI support:

- implement a standardised monitoring activity on CCIs economic and social impacts, with benchmarks with other sectors and other countries
- dedicated budget for cultural and artistic aspects when realizing public works
- a new “Creative Public Procurement” to qualify public spending not only in terms of best value for money, but also as regards other types of indicators used by cultural and creative sectors (e.g. social impact etc)
- favoring the aggregation of CCIs professionals/companies in more competitive, more resilient and / or more vertical organizations;
- hiring of design and creative profiles into the PA for investing in the digitalisation and redesign of public services to facilitate modernization and cost reduction and adopt a true user-centered approach;
- support the creation of high level skills and professionals in Cultural and Creative Industries in Universities;
- promote the implementation of a database/platform for creative professionals to facilitate the match between demand and offer of creative services also from corporates;
- encourage the creation of new cultural and creative tourism routes in companies, research laboratories, in the production backstage etc;

As regards the possible future directions to be taken by the MED program to boost and facilitate the spreading of measures in favor of CCIs development, the pilot action carried out by CHEBEC allows to focus specifically on the following points:

- the setting up of new schemes able to take into account the perspective of a “Creative Public Procurement”.  
As demonstrated by the difficulties experienced by the Innovation Vouchers scheme implementation, it would be crucial to keep into account, within the MED regulations related to public procurement, the peculiar market needs that rule the artistic/cultural/creative request of services.
- support the matchmaking of funds: the MED program is specifically directed to support regional public administrations in exchanging best practices to improve policies and measures. New calls for CCIs support could foresee a specific engagement of complementary funds to carry out support programs in pilot actions, increasing the impact that such programs could have in terms of number of participants and economic efforts.
- engage different actors, giving support and connecting regional ecosystems. A critical point of the European project is the engagement of policymakers and regional stakeholders, who often do not feel sufficiently engaged in the project activity development. The program could foresee the participation of local actors, each of them focusing on a specific task - development of policies, service providing, networking activities...)

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<sup>9</sup> see OECD “Coronavirus (COVID-19) and cultural and creative sectors: impact, innovations and planning for post-crisis”



## Annexes

Below a list of annexes with the documents and methodologies produced.

**Annex 1:** Template drafted to evaluate the state of affairs of a CCI organization and identifications of support actions to be carried out during the consultancy

**Annex 2:** Application Form template for the presentation of an internationalization project

**Annex 3:** Guidelines to implement an Innovation Voucher scheme action

**Annex 4:** Template for the contract for beneficiaries accessing mobility actions and receiving reimbursements

**Annex 5:** Assessment questionnaire before trainings

**Annex 6:** Template of the assessment report for mobility action

**Annex 7:** Internationalization readiness webtool

**Annex 8:** Online guide to support startups from the sector

**Annex 9:** CCIs cluster maps

**Annex 10:** Report on innovation voucher



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**Annex 1:** Template drafted to evaluate the state of affairs of a CCI organization and identifications of support actions to be carried out during the consultancy

**Chebec - Beneficiary assessment and action plan**

Beneficiary \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of the project team leader \_\_\_\_\_  
contacts \_\_\_\_\_

External expert: \_\_\_\_\_  
Starting date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ending date: \_\_\_\_\_

A. Beneficiary assessment

1. Description of the business idea

*goals, services/products, clients, competitors...*

*(retrieve information from application form)*

Team members profiles (age, gender, seniority, academic skills, domain of expertise, function within the organization)

.....

Reference market

.....

Evaluation and comments - after first assessment with consultant:

*Please describe main milestones and critical points as regards the entrepreneurial competencies and internationalization perspectives*

.....

## 2. SWOT analysis on the project key aspects

	S	W	O	T
<b>Organization and team</b>				
<b>Market potential</b>				
<b>Knowledge</b>				
<b>Financials</b>				
<b>Internationalization opportunities</b>				

### B) Training path and networking opportunities

#### 1. Training activities, networking

##### 1° cycle: entrepreneurship

Date	Topic	attendance	feedback from the questionnaire
13 feb			
20 feb			
26 feb			
6 mar			
13 mar			

##### 2° cycle: internationalisation

Date	Topic	Attendance	Feedback from the questionnaire

Participation in international mobility actions	Y/N	main activities realized

Opportunities	date	main activities

### C) Coaching: Action plan and Proposal of activities

#### 1. Pre assessment

	General remarks and grade (from 1 to 5)
entrepreneurship	
internationalization	

#### 2. Key activities

Type	Topic	duration (hours)
[ex. distance coaching]	[market analysis]	

#### 3. Proposal for deliverables

1.
2.

#### 4. Follow up

date	coach	topic
6 may	FDG	assessment on project assessment and first proposal for the consultancy path and outcome: ..... .....

#### GANTT for the consultancy path

DOMAIN	Action description and Goals	Deliverables	mar-19	apr-19	may-19	jun-19	jul-19	aug-19	sep-19	oct-19	nov-19	dic-19	gen-20	feb-20	mar-20
assessment															

We hereby declare that we are aware of the contents of the document, that we agree on goals and activity plan, and that the activities and deliverables above described have been duly accomplished

Date, venue

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project team leader signature & consultant signature

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ART-ER tutor signature

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**Annex 2:** Application Form template for the presentation of an internationalization project

**Name of the organization/professional:**

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**Address**

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**VAT number**

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**Contact person:**

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**Email:**

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**Name of the project:**

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**Description of your internationalization project**

1. General overview. Please describe the goals that you intend to reach if you are selected to access the Innovation Vouchers.

max. 1000 words

2. Please indicate if you have already identified partners/Chebec beneficiaries/collaborators that will cooperate with you in the project (name, brief description, role in the project, Chebec reference partner)

- 
3. Please indicate the type of activity you would like to carry out (multiple choice):

- ☐ **collaborations between organizations in the Chebec regions** (e.g. 1 beneficiary from one region implements an activity with a beneficiary from another Chebec region)
- ☐ **cross activities to develop new actions** (e.g. 2 or more organizations decide to apply jointly to EU/Regional/National calls)
- ☐ **internationalization actions** (participation in a Fair or in a specific event, mission to another Chebec region for developing partnerships)
- ☐ **innovation processes** (new service or working tool developed in another MED area or in its own area but with the scope to be attractive abroad).

4. Please detail the activities you would like to carry out, the indicative timeline of each of them and where they will be implemented:

max. 1000 words

5. For project presented in collaboration with other Chebec beneficiaries  
Please detail the activities your partner would like to carry on, the indicative timeline of each of them and where they will be implemented:

max. 1000 words (per partner)

6. Impact in the long term: Please indicate whether the activities you will develop have been conceived within the framework of a long-term strategy/project (e.g. in view of applying to a EU project).

max. 500 words

7. Please describe in which way the project will be useful for your core activities

max. 500 words

8. Innovativeness of your project: what are the innovative features of your internationalization project?

max. 500 words

9. Please describe which impact do you expect to have in your regional context

max. 500 words

#### **Budget of your internationalization project**

**total requested amount (in EURO) : .....**

Please attach to the form an excel file or word document showing the estimated budget of the activities you will carry out (foreseen expenses and description)

COST DESCRIPTION	FORESEEN COSTS (€)	DETAILS
- Travel (bus/plane tickets etc)		
- Accomodation and food		
- participation Fees		
- Booth/stand rental		
- Communication materials		
- Consultancy services		
- Other		

**Beneficiaries can also send other attachments deemed useful to better describe their internationalization project idea (e.g. links, videos, documents et)**

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### **Annex 3:** Guidelines to implement an Innovation Voucher scheme action

#### 1. Context

**Innovation vouchers** are included in Chebec Application Form which identifies them as:

*“an innovative tool for the Creative and Cultural sector, at least as regards the regions involved in Chebec. Beneficiaries will be professionals and SMEs, especially those selected to access Chebec local support programs”.*

In particular, Innovation Vouchers are included in Task 3.4 on “testing of innovation vouchers” that foresees that:

*“The consortium will provide innovation vouchers as an additional support for the development of joint initiatives (up to 3 vouchers per partner) as a result of the international activities carried out previously, with the goal of further developing them (support to cover travels, consultancies or other expenses), according to an innovative methodology, that will take into account the overall results of the services tested by the beneficiaries.”*

Due to the purposes of the project and its objectives, innovation vouchers can be defined as “innovation and internationalization vouchers” in order to be better in line with the scope of this tool.

#### 2. Chebec partners involved

ART-ER coordinates task 3.4.

The Innovation Voucher is awarded by Chebec partners who have a dedicated budget for this task to their own beneficiaries.

According with the application form, 8 partners out of 10 will provide the scheme in their regions: ART-ER, AMI, ARTY FARTY, BARCELONA ACTIVA, CCSEV, CIMAC, LAZIO REGION, UVEG.

### 3. Budget

The budget for each Chebec partner amounts to up 10.000 € which can cover from 1 to 4 vouchers.

### 4. Main objectives

Innovation Vouchers aim at:

- funding specific activities related to internationalization (and innovation) implemented by CCIs companies and professionals;
- testing and assessing an implementation mechanism of the vouchers and developing a routine to fund “innovation vouchers” that may be used in other contexts.

Collaborations between beneficiaries who have taken part to the Internationalisation action and coming from different Chebec regions are very welcome.

The following is to be considered:

- To develop this collaboration, each beneficiary of the previous stage shall submit the application to the Chebec partner of its region.
- Attention should however be paid by applicants when planning an integrated activity involving potential beneficiaries coming from different Chebec regions and when planning and reporting expenditure in order to ensure the best usage of the budget available and avoid that the same cost is asked for reimbursement twice
- Rules of the Med programme are applied (e.g. money transfer between Chebec partners are not allowed).

The selected beneficiaries can also collaborate with external parties (also outside Chebec partners' regions) provided that those are based in the MED area and that activities are developed in the MED area.

### 5. Selection of innovation voucher beneficiaries

As for the previous phases of the pilot actions (selection for the access to the pilot - WP3.2 and selection of the mobility activities WP3.3.) **calls, candidatures and applications will be directly handled by each partner, following the common guidelines (i.e. this document) and respecting common deadlines and duties.**

#### 5.1. Who shall access innovation vouchers

Chebec pilot action beneficiaries selected in each region are eligible for the innovation vouchers, i.e. beneficiaries already selected in the first phase of the Pilot Action in partner regions. Each candidate shall present only one application.

#### 5.2 Process



- **Terms and conditions to access the innovation voucher scheme** (targeting Chebec beneficiaries only) is launched within the partnership. The contents are stated in the terms and conditions(attached) and will be replicated in the calls launched by the partners.
- A template for the **application form** will be shared. Partners will collect applications through the same channels they used for the previous pilot phase.
- **Communication:** each partner is responsible for disseminating the opportunity, the contents and rules
- **Selection:** The selection will be made on the basis of the following:
  - application contents
  - pitch/interview

Candidates shall present a proposal through the application form and go through an interview and a pitch session in which they will have up to 30 minutes to present their idea in front of the evaluation committee.

- **Selection committee:**
  - each partner makes a selection and ranks the applications coming from its territory (on the basis of the application and the interview/pitch);
  - a meeting may be organised (with representatives of each partner) to establish the winning projects and to define the final ranking for each partner region.

### 5.3. Evaluation criteria

#### 5. 3.1. Criteria for the evaluation of the application forms

Applications will be evaluated in a 0 to 30 scale according to the following criteria:

- Position in the ranking achieved by the beneficiary organization in the Call for Proposals for accessing Chebec pilot action (maximum 5 points)

5 points	1st and 2nd position
4 points	3rd and 4th position
3 points	5th, 6th and 7th position
2 points	7th to 10th position
1 point	over 10th position

- Coherence of the project proposal with the core activities and mission of the beneficiary organization (maximum 5 points)
- Impact of the project proposal in the medium-long term (5 points)
- Innovativeness of the project (maximum 5 points)
- Impact in Chebec regions (maximum 5 points)
- Engagement and participation in local activities (maximum 5 points)

Minimum threshold level for each criterion - except the first one: 3 points. Those applications that will not reach this minimum threshold for all criteria will not be selected

### 5.3.2. Criteria for the evaluation of the pitch/interview

Pitch/interviews will be evaluated in a 0 to 20 scale according to the following criteria

- Quality of the project content and internationalization objectives (maximum 10 points)
- Technical and economic feasibility (maximum 10 points)

The selection and ranking will be made by an appointed committee in each partner region (with internal and/or external experts) using the above criteria.

Partners will ensure to make the selections in a transparent way:

- completing an evaluation sheet for each application
- completing evaluation meeting minutes (including application ranking)

N.B: Since each partner is responsible for its budget and for diffusing this opportunity in their region the call, the selection is made at partner level. The meeting among partners has the goal of finalizing the list of projects that will access the Innovation Voucher scheme.

## 6. Internationalization projects and expenses

**Innovation implementation:** each partner manages the voucher implementation with its own beneficiaries meaning that the partner will draw an agreement per each beneficiary, setting rules on activities and reimbursement rules.

Innovation vouchers may be granted to selected candidates by using one of the following methods, in accordance with each partner's internal rules:

- A) Reimbursement basis: beneficiaries pay for their own expenses (e.g. travel costs, consultancy services, etc) and then claim costs to the Chebec partner by providing all the required documents;
- B) Pre-payment: the Chebec partner pre-pay for its own beneficiaries' expenditures if linked to activities developed in the framework of the Innovation Voucher scheme.
- C) Hybrid method of payment: Some expenditures could be paid by partners in advance (flight, hotel ecc ) while other expenditures will be paid by partners on a reimbursement basis (services, fair costs, taxi, food, ecc)

### 6.1. What shall be implemented with innovation vouchers

The **innovation voucher** shall cover projects related to the following activities:

- **collaborations between organizations in the Chebec regions** (e.g. 1 beneficiary from one region implements an activity with a beneficiary from another Chebec region).
- **cross activities to develop new actions** (e.g. 2 or more organizations decide to apply jointly to EU/Regional/National calls. The voucher can cover travel costs for meetup and/or consultancy services).
- **internationalization actions.** Those shall target the Med programme area in particular the Chebec regions (e.g. 1 beneficiary develops an action to get visibility in the Med area:

participation in a Fair or in a specific event, mission to another Chebec region for developing partnerships)

- **innovation processes** (1 beneficiary acquires a new service or working tool developed in another MED area or in its own area but with the scope to be attractive abroad).

#### 6.2. Expenses covered with Innovation vouchers:

- travel/accommodation costs (including costs to stay abroad) for business trips in order to attend to meetings/fairs/events etc. within the Interreg MED Area
- booths rented in a fair exhibition, fee to take part in a fair/ exhibition /event/other within the Interreg MED Area
- consultancies
- purchase of non-depreciable goods or materials
- consultancy to develop prototypes or demo
- other (e.g. communication materials)

Staff costs will not be covered by Innovation vouchers

Depreciable goods will not be funded by Innovation vouchers

Generally speaking, beneficiaries shall comply with the rules stated by the MED Program which are available at the following link:

[https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Sites/Programme/Toolbox/Reference\\_documents/19\\_Eligibility\\_of\\_expenditures\\_V4\\_20181220.pdf](https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Programme/Toolbox/Reference_documents/19_Eligibility_of_expenditures_V4_20181220.pdf)

#### 7. Procedures for implementing innovation vouchers

The following shall be considered:

- **transparency for selection:** partners shall be able to give evidence that the beneficiaries have been selected in a transparent way (see above - point 5)
- **formal agreement:** partners shall develop an agreement with their beneficiaries (contract or confirmation letter - ART-ER will share a template)
- **payment of costs:** Chebec partners shall either reimburse effective costs to beneficiaries or directly pay the expenses on behalf of the beneficiaries
- **reporting:** beneficiaries shall provide a report describing how the innovation voucher has been used/benefits they have gained/issues they have encountered. They shall also provide all documents and evidences (invoices, tickets etc) giving evidence on how the budget has been used.
- **beneficiaries shall contribute to the evaluation process:** this is necessary for elaborating the "Report on Innovation voucher allocation results" Chebec partners shall deliver at the end of the project.

**N.B.:** When reporting costs related to innovation vouchers, it is necessary that partners apply the same rules applicable to its own reporting, also in terms of accuracy in justifying expenditure eligibility. A template of the contract between Chebec partners and beneficiaries awarded with the Innovation Voucher will be sent to the JS for its approval. In this document details on reporting procedures will be available.

#### 8. Expected Timeline

Guidelines, call for proposals and application form validated	20 September 2019
Launch of the call	mid1st week of October 2019
Deadline for applying to the Innovation voucher Scheme	mid15 November 2019
Local committee in each region evaluates the applications and carries out interviews choosing from 1 to 3 beneficiaries	early DecemberEnd November 2019
Trans-regional committee online meeting to validate the projects selected by each Chebec partner	midby 20 December 2019
Communication of results	end of December 2019 - beginning of January 2020
Implementation	from end DecemberJanuary to April 2020
Reporting of expenditures	by May 2020

## 9. Questions and answers

In Marseille technical meeting, the partnership discussed together on the methodologies that should be adopted for the implementation of the Innovation voucher schemes.

Issues and questions were raised. Starting from those question, here is a FAQ list:

Issues and questions raised	Answer	Notes
Can beneficiaries apply to Innovation Vouchers to carry out activities outside the MED area and outside the EU?  e.g. Arty Farty explains that one of its beneficiaries will participate in an initiative in South America. Would it be possible to fund part of the expenses with Innovation Vouchers?	No. As a general rule, Innovation Vouchers should only be provided for projects and activities within the MED area.	The JS explains that cases like this one should be examined specifically.
Who can apply?	Only beneficiaries that have already been selected to take part in the pilot action can apply.	
How many applications can each beneficiary present?	Each beneficiary can only present 1 application to the partner from its region.	Partners are required to support beneficiaries before they submit their project (i.e.

		organizing an infoday) and provide detailed answers to their questions.
If 2 beneficiaries from 2 partner regions want to apply with a joint project, how many applications should they present?	The 2 beneficiaries will present 1 application <u>each</u> : beneficiary 1 will present it to the partner from its regions, beneficiary 2 will present it to the partner from its region. Both applications shall describe the project in its general purposes and goals, and in detail the actions that will be funded by the two partners .	Joint projects can include more than 2 beneficiaries. The same procedure should be applied. For instance, if 3 beneficiaries decide to present a project they will present 1 application each to their reference partner.
What happens if, in a joint project presented by 2 beneficiaries, one beneficiary wins in its region but the other one does not win?	Beneficiaries will need to evaluate whether they are able to carry out the project with less funds.	
What if one beneficiary with a feasible and effective project needs to carry out activities before the implementation period foreseen for the innovation voucher scheme (Jan-April 2020)?	The JS affirms that the timeline and rules decided among partners need to be respected to assure transparency and allow the reporting of the expenses in due time. Therefore, actions shall be carried out within the foreseen period. The partnership shall respect the indications provided.	Note: “flexibility” is pivotal, especially to carry out CCI-related activities. Thus this suggestion and lesson-learned will be added in the policy recommendation of the Chebec project. UVEG adds, indeed, that in the real world, strict rules, such as those applied by the public administrations, create too many obstacles for the creative organizations. UVEG suggests to explore opportunities to facilitate processes and create connections among the public administrations and the functioning mechanism of the CCI sector.
When should expenses be incurred to comply with the timeframe set for the	From the end of December January to April 2020. The Innovation voucher will not	expenses can be paid after the project is officially selected otherwise partners can face

innovation voucher scheme?	cover expenses incurred before or after that period.	problems related to reporting. This should also be specified in the call for proposals.
Where can beneficiaries consult indications related to the rules and eligibility of expenditures?	Rules and eligibility of expenditures are the same of the program MED. They must be clearly indicated in the call for proposals and in the agreement. It must be clear that certain expenses are not allowed (e.g. luxury restaurants)	
Should beneficiaries ask for 3 offers before selecting services (that will be paid by the innovation voucher scheme)?	In order to respect transparency rules, for consultancy services, beneficiaries should ask for 3 offers from 3 different providers. They will need to evaluate the best offer.	
Is it possible to widen the timeframe to allow beneficiaries to carry out activities?	It is not possible to extend the period dedicated to Innovation vouchers due to reporting procedures that partners need to carry out before the end of the project (which ends in July 2020)	
Can partners use a hybrid solution for reimbursement (pre-payment of expenditures or on a reimbursement basis)?  Partners highlight the fact that many organizations will not be able to pay for all expenses in advance	Yes, the JS has approved the Hybrid methodNo,a hybrid method of payment is not allowed.	
Can beneficiaries from the same partner region present a joint project?	Yes, however it must be clear that the scope of innovation vouchers is internationalization. Beneficiaries should present different applications and in the application costs shall be	

	clearly identified for each beneficiary.	
Can the deadline for applying to the call for project be pushed to the end of November?	The deadline to send applications is 15th November and interviews should be concluded within the end of November.	
Can beneficiaries present a joint project made up of more than 2 beneficiaries?	Yes.	
Can they ask for reimbursement for costs related to staff?	No, innovation vouchers will not cover staff costs.	
How many innovation vouchers should each partner provide? Should this be decided before launching the call for proposal or afterwards, after evaluating the quality of the project received?	Each partner can provide from 1 to 3 innovation vouchers. In order to avoid problems and to allow beneficiaries to have a clear idea of the sum that can be requested (which should help them in defining the project idea) , <u>partners should decide how many vouchers they will provide before launching the call.</u>	
What should we do if one beneficiary wins the Innovation Vouchers but refuses to accept it because he/she cannot carry out the project anymore?	Due the lack of time, Innovation Vouchers will not be allocated. The budget will be therefore available for other activities.	
If partners decide to provide a fixed sum for meals (per diem), should beneficiaries present a receipt anyway?	The use of per diem needs to be in line with PP internal rules.	The JS will receive an official email by the LP with the present request
Can a beneficiary use Innovation Voucher to pay for services/products provided by another beneficiary?	No, that is not allowed.	
Are there specific rules regarding travel and accommodation for external experts?	Rules for travel and accommodation for external experts (including per diem)	

	have to be in line with the rules of the respective PP, that will claim the expenditure,	
How can partners evaluate criteria 5 "Impact in Chebec regions" (maximum 5 points)?	<p>You can consider 3 aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- joint projects involving different beneficiaries from different regions are more impactful on chebec territory (so for example a joint project might get more points compared to a "solo" project through which the beneficiary only wants to pay for a consultancy service in other region)</li> <li>- if the project is in line with the regional strategy (e.g. S3), that might as well get more points</li> <li>- if projects are developed in Chebec regions specifically, they will get more points.</li> </ul> <p>Some beneficiaries might decide to present a project to be developed in the MED area but not specifically in Partners' region, which is eligible and in line with the programme rules, but projects addressing Chebec regions will get more attention</p>	
How can partners evaluate criteria 6 "Engagement and participation in local activities" (maximum 5 points)	<p>This can be evaluated by taking into account the signature sheets used for the activities. Organizations that participated in all of the classes during training (5 points) while some other organizations skipped a few classes so they are going to receive fewer points. Also, if you organized other events and they participated that's a positive point.</p>	
A beneficiary from Valencia is	Our recommendation is to	



<p>organizing a meeting in Valencia with representatives of international industrial heritage networks. The purpose of the meeting is to show their heritage in order to access international networks, and promote their international activity in their own territory.</p> <p>Some of these representatives are in Germany and their idea is to pay for the transport of this person from Germany to Valencia.</p> <p>Since the execution is in Valencia (MED region) can these expenses (flight payment from Germany and accommodation) be covered?</p>	<p>provide a good argumentation with the documentation of the selection of these activities for vouchers, so that it is understandable why in this case this type of activities have been selected and why in this case out-of-Med contacts bring a particular benefit to the business approach.</p> <p>Thinking of the evaluation of the set of tested activities, a further recommendation is to have a focus on this type of promotional activities, on how far they contribute to a medium and long term sustainability of the different business/marketing approaches to be supported by the project.</p>	
<p>Who should partners refer to when they have doubts related to eligible expenditures for innovation vouchers?</p>	<p>Answer from the JS:</p> <p>As you know validation of project activities for funding is within the responsibility of FLC, so that it is always advisable to involve the referring FLC, if the partners have doubts about eligibility within the programme guidelines and the agreed framework contract for the innovation vouchers.</p>	

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**Annex 4:** Template for the contract for beneficiaries accessing mobility actions and receiving reimbursements

[venue], [date]

Beneficiary's project "TITLE"

Beneficiary's name **NAME**

VAT nr: 00000000

certified email:

name@pec.it

legal representative: Name Surname

e-mail: name@email.it

Mobile: 0000000

**Subject:** Participation **Initiative 2** - rif.: Pilot Action project CHEBEC - Interreg MED

**CUP: E47G18000020007**

Dear *Beneficiary*,

**premises:**

- **[Chebec partner name]** is the **[leader/partner]** of a transnational project, named Chebec - Hacking the Mediterranean economy through the CCI Sector, co-funded by the European program Interreg MED (Subsidy contract nr. 3115), which is committed to developing actions for the advancement of internationalization capacity of operators within the Cultural and Creative Industries;
- in the framework of WP3 of the Chebec project, it is foreseen that an internationalisation support service package for CCI is to be delivered by project partners of the MED area through pilot actions involving beneficiaries, to whom will be provided assessment and support services such as training, consultancies, coaching, preparation of matchmaking (phase 1), mobility actions (phase 2) and innovation vouchers (phase 3);
- **[Chebec partner name]** published the call for applications on **[dd/mm/yyyy]** on **[website]** (legal reference - if any - nr XXXX/2019) which foresees the possibility to access to three different stages through selection procedures;
- **[Chebec partner name]** selected the beneficiaries of the pilot action (legal reference XXXX/2019);
- **BENEFICIARY NAME** was selected to access the stage called **Initiative 2 - International mobility and matchmaking** [legal reference nr XXX/2019] consisting of international exchange activities such as networking and matchmaking events to the following destination: **Seville/Marseille in the period from .... to ;**
- This agreement only regulates participation to **Initiative 2 - International mobility and matchmaking**;
- **BENEFICIARY NAME** can participate in **Initiative 2 - International mobility and matchmaking** with a maximum of **[XXX]** persons (owners, employees or other);

it is agreed on the following:

**[Chebec partner name]** undertakes to provide support to the **beneficiary selected** for participating in the international networking and matchmaking initiatives as foreseen in the CHEBEC project, **Initiative 2 - International mobility and matchmaking**: this will imply the

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participation of the beneficiary in networking events, B2B meetings, sum-up meetings, seminars, visits organized by the hosting project partner.

Participation requires that the beneficiary takes part in all the planned activities. Participants will have to write a report at the end of the international mission following the instructions given by [Chebec partner name] and actively participate in the evaluation activities carried out by [Chebec partner name] or other project partners.

The participation will be given for free (there will be no fee). [Chebec partner name] will cover the beneficiary's mobility costs to Seville/Marseille for a **maximum amount** of euro **XXX,00 for Seville/Marseille (euro XXXXX/00 – XXXX/00)** as an overall threshold for the total of the people involved in **Initiative 2 - International mobility and matchmaking** on behalf of the BENEFCIARY. The amount will be transferred on a cost reimbursement basis, duly justified for expenses strictly necessary to participate in the programme (no reckless expenditure will be reimbursed) in the period of the stage called Initiative 2 - International mobility and matchmaking. Only travel expenses for return flight (**economy class**), accomodation, local transport and meals (if not already paid by the hosting project partner) will be reimbursed upon receipt of:

- ☐ copies of accounting documents of all the costs incurred (e.g.: receipts, invoices, tickets, proof of payment showing costs are correctly paid) sent to [Chebec partner name] within **dd/mm/yyyy** (please, note that [Chebec partner name] needs also **boarding cards otherwise the flight ticket will not be reimbursed**);
- ☐ reimbursement note issued by the beneficiary containing the details of all the costs incurred compulsorily within the **dd/mm/yyyy** at the latest, penalty the impossibility to proceed to the reimbursement;
- ☐ the present agreement signed in each page;
- ☐ the IBAN (mandatory) of the beneficiary's bank account.

The absence of even just one of the data and/or documents in the manner and terms indicated above will make it impossible to proceed with the refund. In case of non-participation of the beneficiary, [Chebec partner name] will not refund any cost.

[Chebec partner name] is not responsible for any accidents or damages of any kind, meaning material, economic and physical that may be caused or suffered in connection with the activities of this letter and for any reason.

**The beneficiary undertakes to:**

- ☐ participate in all the activities included in **Initiative 2 - International mobility and matchmaking**;
- ☐ sign the attendance list provided by a CHEBEC partner in order to give evidence of the participation in all activities;
- ☐ produce the report requested by [Chebec partner name] and participate in monitoring and evaluation activities;
- ☐ provide suitable documentation for reimbursement;
- ☐ promptly notify [Chebec partner name] at the address [chebec partner email address] about any change occurred after the submission of their application – having an impact on Art. 3 of the call related to target applicants' requirements.

[Chebec partner name] is the owner of the announcement/Call and of the consequent processing of personal data pursuant to Article 13 of the European Regulation n. 679/2016.

**Public Obligations, Transparency and Dissemination of Information by Public Administrations:**

In compliance with the provisions of art. 26 Legislative Decree no. 33/2013 "Obligations of publicity, transparency and dissemination of information by public administrations" we inform you that

[Chebec partner name] will publish your data on XXXXX.

By signing this document you give authorization to publish the aforementioned data.

We kindly ask you to sign this letter for acceptance.

[Chebec partner name]  
legal representative

**FOR ACCEPTANCE**  
Beneficiary

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Annex 5:** Assessment questionnaire before trainings

Business Models and internationalization

1. Have you attended courses on business modeling?
2. Have you developed a business model for your organization?
3. Rank from 1 to 5 the level of advancement of your business model
4. Have you attended courses on internationalization?
5. Have you developed an internationalization strategy for your organization?
6. Rank from 1 to 5 the level of advancement of your internationalization plan

Value proposition and business plan

1. Have you attended courses on value proposition?
2. Have you developed a value proposition for your organization?
3. Rank from 1 to 5 the level of advancement of your value proposition
4. Have you developed a business plan for your organization?
5. Rank from 1 to 5 the level of advancement of your business plan
6. What element of your business plan do you think are most valuable?
  - a. financial resources
  - b. infrastructure
  - c. human resources
  - d. international positioning
  - e. short-term strategy
  - f. long-term strategy

Value proposition and business plan

1. Have you attended courses on fundraising?

2. What stakeholders have you involved?
3. Rank from 1 to 5 the level of advancement of your fundraising plan

#### Negotiation

1. Have you attended courses on negotiation?
2. Rank from 1 to 5 the level of your negotiation

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#### Annex 6: Template of the assessment report for mobility action

Executive summary

Mobility action event agenda

Description of the activities developed during the event

Activity	Summary contents	Positive points	Possible improvements	Recommendations

Beneficiaries' profile and feedback

Participant	Description of the organization	Feedback

Conclusions

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#### Annex 7: Internationalization readiness webtool

<https://chebec-internationalizationtool.art-er.it/>

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#### Annex 8: Online guide to support startups from the sector

<https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/uoc.corporate/BarcelonActiva/CHEBEC/v4/curso/index.html>

## Annex 9: CCI cluster maps

<https://geo.alentejocentral.pt/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=37d3128ec1a445fd95df7a3daea21cad>

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## Annex 10: Report on Innovation Voucher allocation

### INTRODUCTION

#### Chebec project

Chebec, a project co-funded by the Interreg MED programme, intends to support cultural and creative organizations in improving their internationalization capacities. The **partners involved tested a new support** path consisting of several initiatives in 9 mediterranean regions: training on topics related to entrepreneurship and internationalization, one-to-one consultancy services, transnational networking events and an innovation voucher scheme.

Around **80 beneficiary organizations** experimented with this support package: they are very heterogeneous and operate in the CCIs sector, as defined by Creative Europe (performing arts; visual arts; cultural heritage; design and applied arts; literature, books and reading; architecture).

Through the actions developed within Chebec the consortium pursues two main goals: support CCIs startups in enhancing their entrepreneurial and internationalization skills thanks to a new support programme which that can be replicated in other territories to **foster the development of CCIs** as a whole; draft policy recommendations based on new findings to advise decision-makers on the main needs of this sector, with the aim of encouraging future policies.

#### The report on Innovation voucher allocation results

The Innovation Voucher Report provides a detailed **overview of the planning and implementation phases of the Innovation Voucher Scheme**, a tool designed to boost the international development of projects carried out by cultural and creative organizations.

It corresponds to the third phase of the Support Package for CCIs<sup>10</sup> tested within Chebec, which, having been implemented for the first time by most of the public administrations, deserves an in-depth analysis due to the complexity of its architecture and bureaucratic and administrative constraints.

This funding mechanism is, in fact, designed as a cooperative instrument working to its full potential when it manages to foster international partnerships, co-design actions and new relations rather than a simple grant to be invested in “solo” activities.

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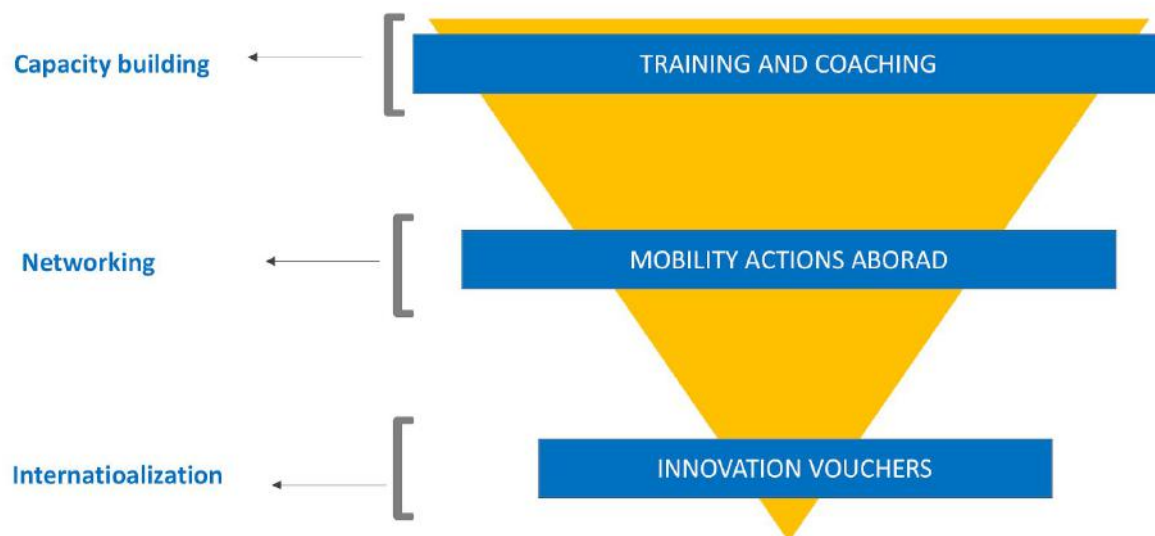
<sup>10</sup> The CCIs support package is a comprehensive document containing all the actions developed within the Chebec project to support the internationalization of cultural and creative organizations: training, consultancy services, innovation vouchers, digital tools. The aim is to provide the reader with a guide for CCIs support that can potentially be transferred to other territories. It also includes recommendations on how to improve CCIs support in the MED regions and proposals for the next Interreg MED programme.

The document outlines the selection of beneficiary organizations; their internationalization projects and results achieved; the difficulties encountered; a few conclusions and recommendations that should work as indications to further improve this instrument.

### THE INNOVATION VOUCHER SCHEME

Innovation vouchers are included in Chebec Application Form, which identifies them as “*an innovative tool for the Creative and Cultural sector, whose beneficiaries are those professionals and SMEs, selected to access Chebec local support programs*”.

The partnership had foreseen to provide innovation vouchers as a final and **additional support for the development of joint initiatives** as a result of the international activities carried out previously (training, coaching, networking events).



#### Objectives of the Innovation Voucher Scheme

This instrument was designed to attain two results:

- test a funding tool conceived to implement specific activities related to internationalization, carried out by cultural and creative enterprises;
- assess a new mechanism and develop a routine that may be used in other contexts.

#### Guidelines

In order to test this initiative in all partner regions while ensuring consistency, the consortium drafted a document aimed at defining all the actions needed to prepare, implement and monitor this funding instrument: the **Innovation Voucher Guidelines**.

The indications provided - written to support the first trial of this tool - can be adopted in other contexts and by other organizations: they can be used to better understand the architecture of the activity, whose methodology can be adjusted and modified according to the specific objectives and needs of the territory that will replicate Innovation Vouchers.

The guidelines tackled the following aspects:

1. objectives of this action;
2. budget invested by each partner and reimbursement criteria;
3. types of actions and costs funded by this instrument;
4. selection process and beneficiaries involved;
5. evaluation criteria for the project presented;
6. timeline
7. Q&A

After discussing the instructions of this document during Marseille Technical Meeting in September 2019, partners officially agreed on applying the following processes and methods:

- Each partner would use the **Guidelines** to carry out homogeneous activities, this will, in fact, allow for the implementation of similar actions as well as the possibility of a benchmark among the regions that tested this initiative;
- Each partner<sup>11</sup> would share with their respective beneficiaries a **Terms and Conditions** document (or Call for proposals) with *dos and don'ts* to take part in this action;
- A common template for the **Application Form** would allow beneficiaries willing to participate to communicate their projects according to specific standards;
- A common template **Agreement** to be signed by the partner delivering the Innovation voucher and the beneficiary of this action, which would detail rules and procedures for reimbursements.

A few partners also decided to increase the sum dedicated to Innovation Vouchers to foster more collaborations and efficacy of this instrument:

Organization	Initial Budget for Innovation Vouchers	Actual Budget spent for Innovation Vouchers
ART-ER and Co.Bo	5.000 € (2.500 per project)	10.000 € (2.500 per project)
A.M.I.	5.000 € (2.500 per project)	3203,17 €
Arty Farty	5.000 € (2.500 per project)	-
Lazio Region	5.000 € (2.500 per project)	5.000 € (2.500 per project)
Barcelona Activa	5.000 € (2.500 per project)	2.500 € (2.500 per project)
CCSEV	5.000 € (2.500 per project)	7.500 € (2.500€ per project)
UVEG	5.000 € (2.500 per project)	10.000 € (2.500 per project)
CIMAC	5.000 € (2.500 per project)	10.000 € (one with 3.950 €, one with 3.600 € and one with 2.450 €)

<sup>11</sup> Except for IPA partners, SERDA, which had not foreseen a budget dedicate to the Innovation Voucher Scheme in the Application Form



## Call for proposal

The call for proposals - following a similar template in all regions - was shared by the members of the Chebec consortium with their respective beneficiaries, being each partner organization in charge of the budget for the Innovation Voucher Scheme, hence the final decision concerning the projects that would access this phase.

**Terms and conditions to access the Innovation voucher scheme**

**Potential applicants:**

**Sum invested in this initiative per partner:**

**Actions and types of collaborations possible**

**Cost covered:**

**Application and selection procedures**

The call for proposals outlined:

1. the characteristics of the project that would be presented

**Collaborations between organizations in Chebec regions**  
*(e.g. creation of new creative products/services)*

**Cross activities to develop new actions**  
*(e.g. consultancy services to apply jointly to calls)*

**Internationalization actions**  
*(e.g. participation specific events, mission to another Chebec region for developing partnerships)*

**Internationalization and innovation processes**  
*(e.g. acquisition of services or working to to access foreign markets more easily)*

2. indications on how to apply to access this action, selection procedures and criteria;
3. the budget available per project and the costs covered by this instrument;
4. the deadlines for implementing and reporting the activities

**The timeline**

The application process and the selection procedures took place in November and December 2019. This would have allowed beneficiaries to follow through with their activities from January to May 2020.

However, due to the pandemic generated by COVID-19, some projects experienced a set-back while others had to be completely reviewed. In fact, several projects entailed traveling abroad, meeting with partners/customers/distributors, participating in international fairs which, due to containment measures, could no longer be implemented.

In June 2020, after Chebec was granted a 3-month extension, **beneficiaries were asked to modify the projects presented in accordance with the current situation**: they were validated by the respective partner and implemented within 20th September 2020.

### The selection process

After sharing the call for proposals with their respective beneficiaries, partners made a first selection at local level, which consisted in the evaluation of the application forms received and an interview to deepen specific aspects presented in the project.

The application form designed by the partnership aimed at detailing the internationalization projects that beneficiaries would present. It focused on questions that, together with the interview, would allow the consortium to evaluate the initiative in accordance with the criteria set in the call for proposals:

- Position in the ranking in the Call for Proposals for accessing Chebec pilot action
- Coherence of the project with the core activities and mission of the beneficiary
- Impact of the project in the medium-long run
- Innovativeness of the project
- Impact in Chebec regions
- Engagement and participation in local activities (training and consultancy services)
- Quality of the project content and internationalization objectives
- Technical and economic feasibility

The final ranking was later validated by the whole consortium in the course of an *ad hoc* meeting involving all partner regions. A few initiatives presented were co-designed by two or more beneficiaries from different Chebec regions, thus, **a cooperative approach** had to be adopted for the final validation.

The partnership, indeed, believes it is crucial to shed light on the relevance of carrying out the selection in a collaborative way: this method can lead to further and stronger synergies among beneficiaries.

However, due to the structure of the project (the budget for the allocation of the innovation voucher was distributed on each partner and each partner was thus responsible for the selection of its own beneficiaries), formally the final decision on the voucher allocation needed to remain under the responsibility of each partner. Worth to note that the collaborative environment of the project, and the submission of projects that foresaw exchanges and joint actions among beneficiaries of different regions, allowed to take a final decision that was shared and approved by the whole consortium.

### A possible selection procedure

The following method, elaborated by Barcelona Activa, aims at providing clarity on the selection of the beneficiaries of an innovation vouchers scheme that involves more partners in order to ensure that there are clear selection criteria, especially as regards the projects that might be developed among more than one beneficiary from different partners. Since it has not been agreed at partners level when the project was drafted, it couldn't be possible to implement it within the CHEBEC application of the Voucher Scheme.

The method is the one used in Horizon 2020 ERA-Net calls where (as in the Innovation Voucher scheme) each country finances its national members of a cross-border consortium. It would work as follows:

Selected
Not selected

Partner	Partner X	Partner Y	Partner Z	Partner V	Partner W
Applicant	<b>A – 1000</b>	<b>E – 4000</b>	<b>B2 – 2000</b>	<b>L – 3000</b>	<b>N – 2000</b>
Applicant	<b>B1 – 2000</b>	<b>F – 2000</b>	<b>I1 – 2000</b>	<b>I2 - 3000</b>	<b>O – 2000</b>
Applicant	<b>C - 2000</b>	<b>G - 2000</b>	<b>J - 2000</b>	<b>M - 2000</b>	<b>P - 2000</b>
Applicant	<b>D - 3000</b>	<b>H - 1000</b>	<b>K - 2000</b>		

Each partner will fund all (individual) projects until exhausting the budget (eg. Partner X) or until it cannot fund more projects without exceeding it (partner Y). A partner cannot fund a project partially or negotiate with the potential beneficiary a smaller project in order to fit into the budget. If a project cannot be funded but there remains a budget available to fund a lower ranked project, the latter would be funded if they meet some minimum quality criteria/threshold (e.g. case H).

Cross-border projects will be funded if both partners have enough funding (e.g. cases B1 and B2). Otherwise, if one of the two beneficiaries cannot be funded by its respective partner, the whole project will not be selected, even if the other beneficiary had been pre-selected by its own partner (e.g. case I1 and I2).

This model would mean that not always the best projects would be selected (e.g. projects J and M would be selected instead of project I, even if the latter is probably better) or that the funds will not be used in its entirety. At the same time, it provides greater clarity than a process where there would be negotiations between partners or with beneficiaries. This method would not require a meeting to select cross-border projects, since the selection would be automatic.

Besides this, we would like to make another remark as regards expenses such as consultancy services or purchase of goods or materials. In order to avoid any conflict of interest/misuse of funds, it could be added to the call the condition that a beneficiary cannot purchase consultancy services or goods or materials from another Chebec beneficiary (e.g. a beneficiary cannot hire another one to develop a website).

The image shows a screenshot of the CHÉBEC application form. Several sections are highlighted with yellow callout boxes and red arrows:

- Overview and objectives of the project:** Points to the 'Name of the organisation/professional', 'Address', 'VAT number', 'Contact person', 'Email', and 'Name of the project' fields.
- Types of action/collaboration:** Points to the 'Description of your internationalization project' section, specifically the multiple-choice options for collaboration types.
- Activities and timeline:** Points to questions 4, 5, and 6, which ask for details of activities, timelines, and long-term impact.
- Long-term impacts and relevance for the core activities of the project:** Points to question 7, which asks for a description of how the project will be useful for core activities.
- Innovation:** Points to question 8, which asks for innovative features of the project.

Other visible sections include 'Budget' (with a table for cost description and foreseen costs) and 'Innovation' (with a field for innovation processes).

A few months after the final ranking, due to the impossibility of carrying out the largest part of the foreseen actions (travels, participation or organization of events etc), beneficiaries were provided with an amendment for the Application Form that would collect the adjustments, both in terms of activities and of budget allocation, of the projects to the new situation. Worth to note that beneficiaries have been requested to maintain - as much as possible - the same goals and objectives proposed in the AF.

During the first selection, several collaborative projects among Chebec beneficiaries and/or other partners from MED regions were registered.

Nevertheless, due to *force majeure*, most reviewed projects - presented after the emergence of COVID-19 - foresaw fewer activities in cooperation with third parties.

A challenge for such an instrument would also be to develop processes, approaches and tools that are able to stimulate and support foreign collaborations in times of stricter rules.

For instance: management and organization of online networking meetings with a limited number of participants so as to stimulate connections and new ideas; tutorials and trainings on how to use of virtual instruments to collaborate remotely.

## The projects presented and the results achieved

Below an overview of the projects that accessed the innovation voucher scheme: due to the negative impacts generated by COVID-19, several initiatives had to readapt to the new context while others radically changed from beneficiaries had envisaged in the first place. In very few cases beneficiaries could not manage to follow through with this action. Worth to note that, in some other cases, beneficiaries found alternative ways to carry out activities and to achieve their results.

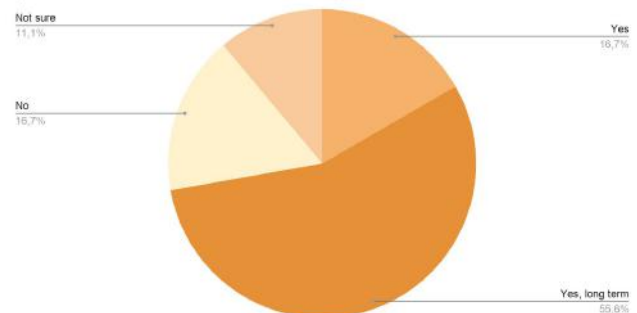
## BENEFICIARIES' FEEDBACK

To validate the impact and feasibility of this new innovative tool, qualitative and quantitative inputs have been collected through the direct involvement of beneficiaries.

Organizations that accessed this scheme were asked to fill in a survey developed by UVEG with specific questions on this action. Feedback could also be acquired through the activity report that each organization had to complete, which also foresaw the following request: "Please share with us your views on how to improve the innovation voucher scheme in future programmes (e.g. in terms of procedures, destination, expense type)".

The answers to the questionnaires analysed by UVEG - counting on 18 respondents out of 19 Innovation Vouchers granted - indicates that, for many organizations, this was an opportunity to start tackling new markets, which they would have otherwise delayed or not done at all: 55% of surveyees stated that without the funding they would have implemented international activities but longer term while 28% would have not or are not sure.

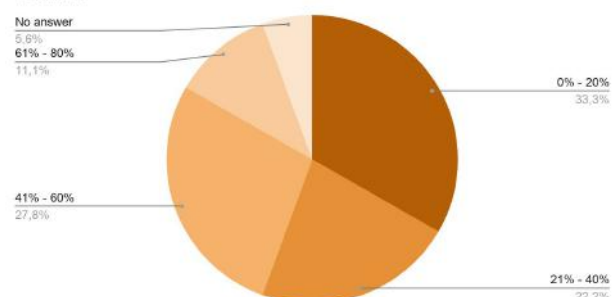
Would you have developed the activities of your internationalization plan if you had not received the Voucher funding?



78% of beneficiaries taking part in this scheme affirmed they did not develop activities in partnership with other organizations from the Chebec pilot program. This information can, in part, be linked to the difficulties generated by COVID-19. However, it is important that the consortium is aware of the fact that there is room for improvement: it is the role of intermediaries to stimulate direct connections and synergies. Mobility actions, which are limited to a few days together, are not enough to foster strong ties, which are essential for the development of projects together. Other intermediate tools should therefore be adopted, such as online matchmaking platforms where beneficiaries can meet and start networking sessions or World Cafés to brainstorm and pop out new ideas. It is also pivotal that intermediary organizations know the beneficiaries of other regions too so that they can better "connect the dots", see potential opportunities and provide suggestions for the creation of potential partnerships or projects etc.

Slightly more than 50% of respondents declared that the innovation voucher received covered less than 40% of the cost related to their internationalization project while 39% of

Percentage of the internationalization plan covered by the Voucher



surveyees said that the funds granted helped them pay among 40-80% of expenses foreseen.

Even though this instrument was designed to provide further support to the development of activities rather than a full reimbursement, it should be taken into account the fact that CCI's often face difficulties in terms of sustainability. Their potential inability to cover all costs might lead them to not follow through with the project, thus decreasing the impact of the innovation voucher itself. To face this issue, a possibility could be to extend the period of implementation (which amounted to less than 4 months) to provide beneficiaries with more time to look for other types of funding, sponsors or investors, supporting them also in the fundraising.

Below the **remarks of beneficiaries** organizations, clustered according to the thematic addressed. It is worth to notice that several inputs for the enhancement of the innovation voucher scheme concerned **administrative and bureaucratic burdens**.

Indeed, beneficiaries' complaints regarded the fact that budgeting rules and reporting procedures are too strict and not flexible: it does not adapt well to cultural and creative organizations, which tend to be fluid and versatile, a characteristic enabling them to be extremely resilient.

Since this instrument is conceived to boost international operations rather than funding the entire project, the sum available is limited: requiring a disproportionate amount of documentation can decrease the efficiency and added value of such an instrument.

A possibility could be to foresee different levels/rules for reporting, in direct proportion to the amount granted.

Type of suggestion	Feedback from beneficiaries
Increased impact and capitalization of actions	It would be important to allow the winners of the Innovation Voucher to continue the path they started with this grant, perhaps by making other specific calls available only for those winners who want to concretely continue the development of internationalization.
	The amount granted to companies should be greater. To carry out internationalization activities, above all, you need time and money.
Broaden the types of expenses covered (especially staff costs)	Chebec is aimed at artistic realities and therefore it is necessary to take into account the actual expenses that these have: a suggestion is therefore to expand the expenses types.
	Paying people directly working at the project should be allowed.
	The cultural sector is underfunded. This means that as opposed to what happens if you have a classic start-up business model, much of the labour and direct investment is not being funded or supported regardless of how much return you can get in the medium or long run. Cultural organizations depend on the highly specific skill of artists and cultural workers: if staff costs are not covered by these types of scheme, it is very hard for beneficiaries to collaborate with each other, design,

	create and implement. Because in artistic projects human resources are of the essence, personnel costs should be included .
	Within the budget, a part should be considered for the caché and the corresponding social security expenses and taxes that artists have to carry out the project.
Decrease administrative burden	Organizations often work with collaborators that they trust and that have been chosen after research on the market for their quality / price ratio. Being forced to ask for three quotations slows down processes and can cause decrease in the quality and set-backs in the organization of projects.
	The amount of bureaucracy and the repetitiveness are totally disproportionate to the scope of the call. Especially considering that there is not a foreseen budget for staff. As beneficiaries we take the risk of doing something wrong and losing thousands, and if that doesn't happen, we find ourselves in managing a bureaucracy that appears to be even more complex than that of much larger calls (in terms of grants).  This bureaucratic complexity diminishes the value of the Chebec project.
Increased flexibility	It would be helpful if the management were more flexible. I needed to give precise information about how I'd use the budget, but even without having the professionals hired. So it was a bit difficult hiring them with a rigid budget.
	In view of the pandemic situation, there should have been more flexibility for the use of vouchers in the acquisition of digital equipment that promote the realization of multimedia components in the communication of the supported structures. And it was desirable to increase the number of projects supported from the voucher application phase.
	During execution, allow the inclusion of new items in the budget that justifiably add value to the project initially presented.
	The restriction to address online only Interreg-MED regions proved to be a bit limiting. In France, we could address only a small number of regions (compared to whole Italy, for example) and both us and our consulting agency couldn't help to feel we were losing a chance to explore more the French market.
Reimbursements	As a possible improvement, we propose to advance part of the voucher payment, so that the beneficiary project can better manage the resources and facilitate the organization of the activities.



## CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the Innovation Voucher scheme managed to support beneficiaries in implementing projects to begin accessing new markets: it was the right push to start a few internationalization activities that otherwise might have been delayed or not carried out at all.

For some of the organisations involved it was also a chance to strengthen ties and test partnerships with foreign enterprises, which might continue in the future through the design of other projects. Also, these relations are pivotal because they can be exploited to better understand a foreign market and collect insights on the dynamics of a different territory.

Nevertheless, being this funding instrument new and tested on CCIs for the first time, several difficulties and the need to improve its architecture have been registered.

In particular, the major issues should be tackled to be able to create a tool that can satisfy the peculiarities of this sector, in terms of efficiency, efficacy and quality:

- increase the flexibility of administrative processes and decrease the bureaucratic burdens;
- develop indicators and criteria that can truly reflect the needs and modus operandi of this sector;
- further facilitate international connections and foster the strengthening of ties with foreign organizations.

In addition to important time and energy requested to fulfil all the administrative obligations associated with an INTERREG project, the beneficiaries in the innovation voucher scheme cannot truly evaluate artistic quality when choosing their suppliers, which is a pivotal aspect for CCIs organization. The method adopted by the programme lies upon the principle of “best value for money”, that incites to opt for the cheapest offer, excluding fundamental criteria as environmental performance, cultural diversity, inclusion, social impact, etc.

Resilience and impact of this type of financing relies on a different (economic) approach, one that takes in consideration the specificities of the CCI SMEs and operators to respond to the contemporary challenges.

Innovation Vouchers could be implemented through two types of approach: funding an Innovation Voucher with little or no regard to how it would be used by beneficiaries (lump sum); funding an Innovation Voucher after the presentation of a project and the provision of proof of expenditures (reimbursement).

The first option would allow for an increased flexibility, nevertheless this methodology is not easily applicable because there are yet not enough official documents and guidelines from the European Commission on how to apply this method.

To improve this instrument it is also important to **develop a structured modus operandi that can further foster the collective perspective of this action**, for both intermediaries and beneficiaries. Partners should be able to collaborate more before and during the selection.

Enhanced synergies among partners are pivotal to help participating beneficiaries in being “on the same page”. In fact, the level of readiness of beneficiaries can vary greatly: it is the role of partners to help beneficiaries match with other organizations, giving them the chance to reach good results despite their readiness.



Moreover exchanges of views and reflections are essential when carrying out selection procedures to be able to choose internationalization projects that truly have the capacity to internationalize, thus increasing the value of this instrument.

Partners should also focus on human resources management because in international projects involving several actors, team-building and relationship management are essential to reach results, an appointed facilitator should be in charge of that.

#### Innovation Vouchers within an integrated strategy for CCI

As mentioned beforehand Innovation Vouchers are part of wider schemes and not simple financing grants. In that sense, their efficiency depends on the design and implementation of the programme they are integrated in.

The Chebec pilot action underlined, once again, specificities of the CCI sector that should be taken into consideration when developing Innovation Vouchers in this sector: the limited size of the enterprises, the extreme precariousness of job contracts etc.

This means that impact generated by Innovation Vouchers can be further fostered by highlighting the importance of the preparatory phase (to deliver tailor made support on training, capacity building, reinforce networks or other) , during which intermediaries should take active action to address the beneficiaries needs and boost their capacity of responding, providing them with adapted and advanced tools and knowledge.

It is important that the purpose of the Innovation Voucher assistance is clearly conveyed to beneficiaries: i.e. reinforce cooperation between beneficiaries, provide financial help to access certain goods or services, allow testing of some solutions without risking the company's cashflow etc.

Depending on this scope, the amounts and rules for applying and using the voucher can be better detailed, which, since it normally involves very small structures, they should be easy to apply to and to implement in an adjusted timeframe.

Finally, Innovation Vouchers serve to test a product, service or cooperation at a small scale or in a limited timeframe. The wider programme in which the vouchers are included (e.g. the overall Chebec pilot action) should then provide some follow-up solutions (sponsoring from other entities to the initiatives with demonstrated results, access to special financing conditions, assistance to capitalisation through other programmes, etc.). To that end, it is fundamental that public and private stakeholders are involved in the overall process, to provide coherence, sense and effectiveness to the overall scheme.

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**Annex 11:**

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**Annex 12:**

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**Annex 13:**

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**Annex 14:**