



Cultural and creative SMEs as catalysts for change

Towards new perspectives for Leeuwarden



Photo: Bart Lindenhovius

Local Action Plan Leeuwarden
ECoC-SME
June 2021





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Photo: Lucas Kemper



Introduction

We started out on our ECoC-journey as early as 2007 with some forward thinkers dropping the idea of becoming a European Capital of Culture. Already then, the initiators intended to use the ECoC-year as a catalyst for change in different areas.

After the first substantial efforts of a growing group of enthusiasts, a dedicated team was put in place in 2011. Leeuwarden and Fryslân wanted to become the Dutch European Capital of Culture (ECoC) in 2018 promising great culture, and more importantly culture as a catalyst for economic development, social inclusion (“Iepen Mienskip”), for ecology, and for multilingualism. Accordingly, LF2018 was born, and during the LF2018 year we succeeded in doing just that, with (amongst other results) an extra economic impact of LF2018 of € 230-320 million and 2,500-3,200 extra “yearjobs” (a fulltime job for a year).

But for us, LF2018 was just a (substantial) stop on our journey: 2028 was, and still is, our real challenge and we’re only halfway there. In ECoC-SME we’re looking to renew and re-energize our cultural-economic legacy. Therefore we developed the follow-up program LF2028 which will have a tri-annual programming called Arcadia, with the first edition coming up in 2022. It is a 100-day international art and culture event, with the first one to be held from May to August 2022.

With the ECoC-SME project we aim to make sure the effects of LF2018 and LF2028 are lasting and extend beyond the area of cultural impact to the economic domain. We aim to optimize the effect of large cultural events like LF2028 for SME growth and the development of entrepreneurship, specifically in the cultural and creative industries (CCI).

This Action Plan (AP) is the result of numerous interactions with local stakeholders and international partners. We’ve drawn upon lessons learned from other ECoCs (to be) in the ECoC-SME-network and from our own experience in organising LF2018. The aim of the AP is to contribute to a supportive ecosystem for the CCI-sector, helping and stimulating the sector to seize the opportunities of the ECoC-event. Such an ecosystem is a catalyst for the development and strengthening of the CCI sector. For Arcadia 2022, a supportive ecosystem for the CCI-sector is also of great importance in developing the program, because in most parts of the program we are connecting artists of national and international quality to local creative people and producers. A professional, diverse, innovative and lively local CCI-sector is needed for this to take place.

The two main objectives of this Action Plan are:

- To add to our start-up ecosystem in such a way that it also supports entrepreneurship in the CCI sector.
- To better connect the CCI sector to the development of regional policy instruments.

This leads to two concrete actions presented in the Action Plan:

- CCI-proofing the Frisian startup-ecosystem
- Connecting the CCI-sector to the development of the Frisian Project Machine

Part I – General information

Project: ECoC-SME

Partner organisations: Gemeente Leeuwarden & Stichting Inqubator

Country: The Netherlands

NUTS2 region: NL12 Friesland

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NB: Friesland is a bilingual province, called Fryslân (in the local language) and Friesland (the former Dutch name, better known internationally and sometimes still in use in Fryslân). In this Action Plan both names are used.



Photo: Lucas Kemper

Part II – Policy Context

II-1. Policy Instrument

This action plan aims to improve the Frisian eco-system for starting entrepreneurs in the CCI-sector. The specific PI targeted by the action plan is the **Beleidsbrief Europa** and subsequent **Uitvoeringsagenda Europa** (Strategy & Action Plan for Europe) of the Province of Fryslân.

The province of Fryslân started writing the *Beleidsbrief Europa* in 2018 and the *Beleidsbrief* was approved at the beginning of 2020. Subsequently an *Uitvoeringsagenda* or Action Plan was developed, for which a wide group of stakeholders was consulted (including the municipality of Leeuwarden). The *Uitvoeringsagenda* was then adopted in early 2020. One of the most important elements in the *Uitvoeringsagenda* was the development of a vehicle for improved European project development: the Frisian Project Machine. For the development of this vehicle, a

wide coalition was sought and a steering group and working group composed of representatives of various stakeholders were founded. The municipality of Leeuwarden was represented in the steering group (i.e. the vice-mayor) and the working group (Anke Hoekstra). As such we were in a clear position to influence the outcome of the development process which led to the design of the Frisian Project Machine in late 2020.

In addition to the *Beleidsbrief Europa* and the *Uitvoeringsagenda Europa* of the province, the ECoC-SME project has focused on the Frisian support system for (starting) entrepreneurs. This system is mainly positioned at the Innovatiepact Friesland (IPF) and is comprised of YnBusiness (for existing entrepreneurs) and Founded in Friesland (for start-ups).



Local Learning Lab 3 (early 2020)

II-2 Need for improvement of the Policy Instrument

We started the ECoC-SME project to improve the way SMEs benefit from large scale events such as the European Capital of Culture or Arcadia 2022. Already at the start of the project, we realized that

the CCI-sector needed to be structurally supported in order for the sector to be able to reap the full benefits of an event such as ECoC or Arcadia 2022. The current entrepreneurial support system and



potential new policy instruments could play an important role in this provided certain adaptations were made, and the CCI sector was particularly taken into account at the design phase of new policy instruments such as the *Beleidsbrief Europa* of the Province of Fryslân.

Until recently, the entrepreneurial support system in Fryslân was not geared towards the CCI sector. The existing support system was focused on generating more as well as more sustainable start-ups. However, start-ups have some particular characteristics that mostly do not match with the characteristics of the CCI sector.

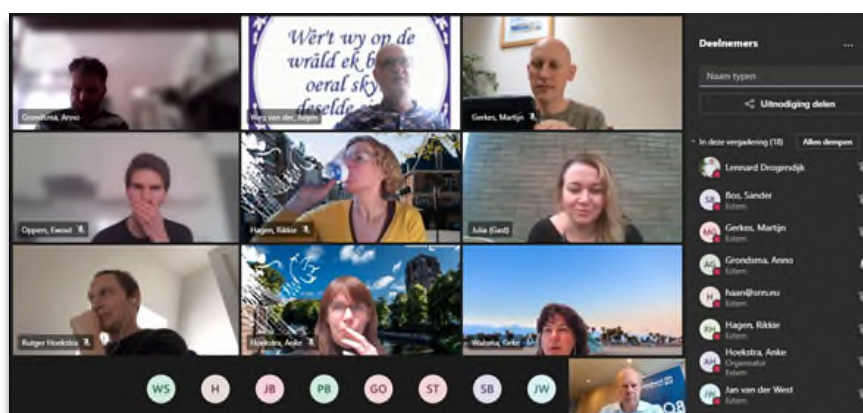
In general, start-ups are new companies with a societal impact that can go through rapid growth, and most importantly, are technology based. The CCI sector in itself does not necessarily have these traits. Moreover, they also do not necessarily have to have these traits in order to thrive as a CCI-business. In essence, Fryslân has the availability of a great start-up ecosystem, which isn't directly applicable to the CCI sector.

To illustrate another difference between start-ups and the CCI sector; the startup-ecosystem in Fryslân is technology focused and often helps with generating business ideas. In the CCI sector generally there is no lack of new, creative ideas, but rather it is the skills of an entrepreneur that are missing.

Thirdly, because they are technology driven, start-ups often have a long way to go before their products are market ready. In the CCI sector the customer or end-user is generally much closer, and

it is not so much about creating a product as it is about creating a valuable experience. Because they have a long time-to-market and face huge (technology) investments, start-ups generally need seed funding. For the CCI sector this isn't necessarily true. However, it is much harder for the CCI sector to come up with sustainable business models.

These differences between traditional start-ups and the CCI sector all influence the tools and instruments a well-functioning CCI-support ecosystem should consist of. The aim of the ECoC-SME project was therefore to influence and adapt the current ecosystem in order to create a system that brings forward more and more successful entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sector. In addition to the support system, it is important that the CCI sector is not overlooked in the development of new policy instruments. Because the sector is generally diverse and consists of many small, micro and single-person businesses, it is often not unified and therefore unable to make its case in new policy development. As such, there is clear room for improvement in the representation of the CCI sector in new policy development.



Local Learning Lab 4 (early 2021)

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

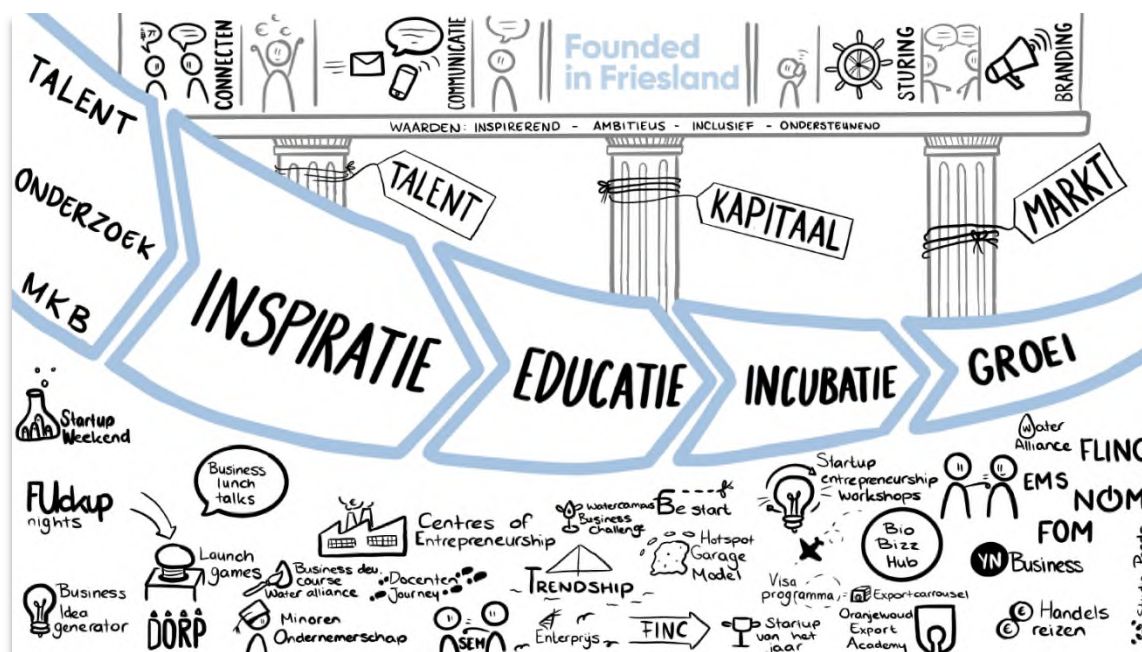
Introduction to the actions

Based on the interregional learning during the ECoC-SME project, we have identified two complementary actions to improve the regional ecosystem for cultural and creative enterprises.

The actions each address a different element in the regional supportive ecosystem for businesses and entrepreneurs. The first action is directed at increasing the number of and quality of cultural and creative entrepreneurs in the region. The second action is directed at giving existing CCI entrepreneurs better access to the funding opportunities available in Europe.

The actions are presented below. Both actions originate from the economic policy of the Province of Friesland. There is a strong relationship with the Policy Instrument *Beleidsbrief Europa/Uitvoeringsagenda Europa*, that was addressed in the previous chapter of this Action Plan. The Frisian Project Machine is part of the *Beleidsbrief/Uitvoeringsagenda* and gets a lot of its funding from the Province of Fryslân. “Founded in Friesland” is presented to Frisian start-ups by Innovation Pact Fryslân (IPF), who also get the main part of their funding from the Province of Fryslân.

III-1. ACTION 1 – CCI Proof “Founded in Friesland”



The “Founded in Friesland”-layout a.k.a. the Friesian startup-ecosystem

Background

During the first Local Learning Lab we learned that our entrepreneurial support ecosystem is

very well developed. However, it is more geared towards other sectors than the CCI



sector. Especially in terms of the start-up support ecosystem, it is very much focused on technology-focused start-ups instead of start-ups focused on culture, creativity or tourism. This led us to believe that we need to develop new instruments to also stimulate and support young entrepreneurs in the CCI sectors in Leeuwarden and Fryslân.

During our project meetings we also learned that other cities are also struggling or interested in improving the accessibility and focus of their start-up ecosystems to make them better suited to stimulate entrepreneurship in the CCI sector. Concrete examples of the projects developed in Rijeka, Kaunas and Timisoara have inspired us to also take a closer look at our own start-up ecosystem.

In Timisoara we got connected to FABER, thanks to the ECoC-SME-meetings. The Faber-community in their “capacity-building” gave us an insight on their private efforts to strengthen the Timisoara creative ecosystem and their willingness to contribute to the ECoC-year in the Romanian city.

Rijeka inspired us to let children play and learn with entrepreneurial skills. Especially in the CCI-sector, it’s important to stress that those skills aren’t necessarily about making lots of money, but on learning to see new opportunities, the creation of new points of view, and on adjusting to new circumstances.

In Kaunas, the development of the Kaunas city ‘Ideas Platform’ and the Festival ‘100 in 1 day’ had inspired us to draw upon the broader context and include citizens, students and organizations from other than the usual actors that are involved in the development of a start-up ecosystem. This also goes for the action ‘More Kaunastic startups’, and we’ve learned during the ECoC-SME project that investments in young entrepreneurs through structured programs can help the

development of the CCI sector in congruence with the ECoC-event.

Within this Action Plan we’ve tried to translate the inspiration and projects that we’ve got to know in the ECoC-SME project to our own local and regional context. We’re proposing a strategy in which we draw upon the existing ecosystem, and add specific instruments, while adapting existing instruments.

The start-up innovation ecosystem in the province of Fryslân is known as *Founded in Friesland*. Founded in Fryslân is part of the Innovation Pact Fryslân (IPF). IPF functions as an economic board for the region and is a network organization formed by triple-helix partners from government, scientific institutes, educational institutes and business. It aims to create a Region of Prosperity and focusses on developing common agendas for themes such as innovation, start-ups, SME effectiveness, and education. IPF consists of several ‘business units’ of which *Founded in Friesland* is one.

Founded in Friesland cooperates closely with Founded in Groningen, the counterpart in the northern province of Groningen. Founded in Fryslân stimulates entrepreneurship and supports startups and scaleups. The *Founded in Friesland* program consists of activities on the following topics:

- Inspiration
- Validation & Acceleration
- Mentoring
- Startup in Residence
- Capital

However the current program is very much technology-oriented and geared towards the economic spearheads set for the region within the IPF. These spearheads are:

- Water technology
- Dairy/Agrifood
- High Tech Systems and Materials
- Maritime Technology
- Circular Plastics



Inqubator Leeuwarden is another element in the start-up ecosystem. Inqubator provides co-working space for start-ups and additional coaching programs for the inqubatees. Inqubator provides personalised programs as much as possible, and currently has no specific CCI expertise or program. Currently, the CCI sector does not feel it is actively supported by Founded in Fryslân and Inqubator Leeuwarden, and structural ties between the start-up ecosystem and the important cultural and creative organizations (including LF2028) and creative professionals and businesses are missing.

The action

Over the course of the past months the following actions have already been undertaken:

- Development of the CCI Launch Game
- Pilot testing of the CCI Launch Game (because of the Corona pandemic we need some more testing)
- Promotion of the CCI Launch Game amongst stakeholders

In the time ahead of us in the next implementation phase of ECoC-SME, we hope to test the Launch Game thoroughly and promote it in Fryslân and in Europe. The Launch Game is a very concrete result of our joining the ECoC-SME-project. From Rijeka and Kaunas, we have learned to start at a young age, so we plan to try-out and use the game in the young CCI-entrepreneurs network of our regional cultural organization *Keunstwurk*.

From Timisoara and Kaunas we have learned to try to involve others then the government by way of using the network, knowledge and the support of entrepreneurs that have proven themselves, then connect them to the young start-ups.

With the launch game we have a very concrete result coming out of ECoC-SME that

still needs some implementation. But we are already convinced that our start-up system *Founded in Friesland* has made a big step towards including the CCI-sector.

Building on this first result, we aim to gear the regional start-up ecosystem *Founded in Fryslân* more towards the starting CCI entrepreneur. The action we propose is directed at including CCI proof instruments in the regular program of Founded in Fryslân. There are two ways in which we believe these instruments could be included: 1) by adding new instruments, and 2) by CCI-proofing existing instruments.

The following actions will be executed in the implementation phase of the ECoC-SME project:

- Setting a regular meeting with the IPF and *Founded in Fryslân* in order to discuss the start of the implementation phase, the progress, and to evaluate the newly incorporated instruments.
- Identifying the primary instruments that need to be transformed so that they are CCI-proof, as far as that has not yet been done during the project.
- Developing and testing the new CCI-proof instruments with test panels and in real life settings.
- Implementing the best evaluated CCI-proof instruments in the regular *Founded in Friesland* program.
- By mid-2022 we would like to have a completely CCI-proofed start-up ecosystem in Fryslân.

If successfully implemented, we believe the CCI-proof start-up program can then be transferred to the provinces of Groningen and Drenthe as well. Additionally, we are planning the promotion of the start-up system in the ECoC-SME network as well.



Photo: Imazzo

The players involved

Innovation Pact Fryslân	IPF is the regional economic board and is the regional triple helix network organization focussed on the economic (and prosperity) development of the region. The start-up program Founded in Fryslân is part of the IPF organization. IPF will provide input for the program, co-develop the instruments, and implement the instruments.
Province of Fryslân	Regional government for the Fryslân province. The province is involved as the main funding organization for IPF and Founded in Fryslân.
Municipality of Leeuwarden	One of the main participants in IPF, and therefore agenda setting in the IPF programs. Also part of the ECoC-legacy organization, the municipality will be stimulating the development of the CCI-proof programs and function as a supporter and lobbyist for the program. In addition, the economic affairs department of the municipality will be involved in the development of the programs.
Inqubator Leeuwarden	Start-up co-working space providing support programs for start-ups. Inqubator Leeuwarden will also be involved with developing and implementing CCI-proof instruments and will CCI-proof their coaching program.
LF2028 (LF2018 ECoC "Legacy" Organisation)	LF2028 and its young makers community will be involved during the development and testing of CCI-proof start-up instruments. The young



	makers community is a particular target audience for the newly developed program.
NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences	NHL Stenden will be involved during the development and testing of CCI-proof start-up instruments. NHL Stenden provides space and students with whom to test.

The timeframe

Q3-4 2021	Identifying the primary start-up ecosystem instruments that need to be transformed so that they are 'CCI-proof'
Q3 2021	Testing the CCI Launch Game with stakeholders
Q4 2021	Testing the CCI Launch Game in a real life setting
Q1-2 2022	Developing 1-2 additional CCI start-up instruments
Q1 2022	Evaluation of the CCI Launch Game
Q2 2022	Development of a project plan of the CCI Instruments in the start-up ecosystem

Costs and funding sources

Development of the Launch Game	€ 5,000
Development of 1 or 2 other CCI-proof instruments in the start-up ecosystem	€ 10,000

Funding will be derived from the regular funds of Innovatiepact Fryslân and additional (in kind) contributions from IPF-partners.



III-2. ACTION 2 – Connect the CCI sector to the Frisian Project Machine

Background

From the Local Learning Labs and the regional meetings within the ECoC-SME project, we've discovered that there is a tremendous value in uniting the cultural, creative and touristic entrepreneurs in the region. Uniting the CCI-sector helps to stimulate and create a better environment for CCI-startups, innovators, and 'normal' entrepreneurs and SMEs to grow, bloom and prosper.

The Local Learning Labs in Leeuwarden that we held with representatives of the creative sector, students and representatives of the start-up ecosystem showed us that the cultural and creative sector felt it was hard to connect to the ECoC-organization LF2018, in the run-up to and throughout 2018. They were either unavailable, no-one was responsible for entrepreneurship, or they had no idea of how to support creative and cultural entrepreneurs whether starting out or experienced. This is not surprising as it proves to be a massive job to organize an ECoC program, and the program management was not initially set up to stimulate entrepreneurship and incorporate entrepreneurs and SMEs into their programming.

At the same time, however, these creative entrepreneurs also weren't directed towards and weren't able to find existing structures for entrepreneurial support, financing, and involvement in policy setting. The CCI sector felt it was underrepresented in agenda setting organizations like Innovatiepact Fryslân (IPF, local economic board), and was inadequately represented in policy making processes, mainly those of the provincial government. This led to an increasing feeling of urgency by all stakeholders to join the CCI-sector in agenda-setting, and to connect the CCI sector to the policy instruments of the city as well as the region.

A third lesson we've learned during our Local Learning Labs was that the CCI-sector isn't that familiar with using the European funding opportunities, and/or hesitant to use the opportunities because of the acquisition process.

Our visit to Matera reinforced our belief that the first step in improving the position and success of cultural and creative SMEs is to form a cluster. The local cluster organization in Matera, Basilicata Creativa, has already made much possible with regards to structuring policy and securing financing. We believe this is an inspiration for our CCI sector. Matera has presented their 'model' during one of our Local Learning Labs, and the stakeholders involved were very enthusiastic about this way of working.

During the project period several developments have already taken place, some of which were at least partly inspired by the Local Learning Labs and the ECoC-SME team.

- So far, the legacy organization of our ECoC year LF2018 has been integrating CCI entrepreneurship in their work on Arcadia 2022, the first triennial in our 2018-legacy. Along with the regionally funded NGO Keunstwurk, they have organised a series of network meetings for young creative and cultural entrepreneurs starting up businesses. Both starting those businesses and finding European partners and funding is part of their network meetings. The network still exists, however, it is less active than it was before because of Covid-19. The LF2018-team is working on a new location for their offices in a now-derelict-area near the train station that will be the biggest inner-city development plan in Leeuwarden for the next twenty years. The LF-team is aiming to make the new spot a breeding-ground for creative start-ups, and is taking some cultural support-organisations with them. Last but not least: in several parts of the cultural program there will be room for young creatives to join in.
- The organization Mooie Dingen Makers (Magnificent Things Makers) was created and has grown to 100+-members, aiming to find



new types of work in times of Covid-19 for self-employed CCI-entrepreneurs.

- The provincial government has provided several support measures for cultural organizations and SMEs in the cultural and hospitality sector, in order to overcome some of the measures taken by the national government in order to combat COVID-19. The City of Leeuwarden is working on a fund for addressing the biggest needs, as well as on a plan for investing in the city for the benefit of the touristic and cultural sectors.

As previously mentioned, the aim of the whole of this Action Plan is to create a better environment for CCI entrepreneurs to grow, bloom and prosper. These environments in which entrepreneurs need to act are mainly shaped and formed by policy instruments. Therefore, in order to improve the environment in which the CCI sector has to function, we focused the action on creating an impact on one of the main policy instruments presently developed in the region: the action plan *Uitvoeringsagenda Europa* of the province of Fryslân, and more specifically the development of the *Frisian Project Machine* as part of the PI as described in chapter II.

During the course of the project, the provincial government developed its policy instrument *Beleidsbrief Europa* and consequently developed the action plan *Uitvoeringsagenda Europa*. Both documents aim at improving the way we profit from the opportunities offered by Europe for cooperation, innovation and financing. One of the main goals is to improve the chances of organizations within the province to apply for and benefit from European funding. In order for the province to achieve these goals, the PI and Action Plan foresaw a *Frisian Europe Covenant* directed at creating a *Frisian Project Machine* (working title).

During the course of the development of the design of the Frisian Project Machine, several actions have already been undertaken, resulting in a better positioning and involvement of the CCI sector in the PI and the affiliated Action Plan. The actions that were undertaken include:

- Uniting the CCI sector by talking to them and challenging them to join forces. Also getting the sector to agree on a common goal, i.e. a better connection to and involvement in the development of the design for the Frisian Project Machine.
- Writing a position paper and making the opinions and interests of the CCI-sector in Leeuwarden and Fryslân known. The position paper was presented to the responsible executives in the provincial government, leading to subsequent meetings.

The result is that the CCI-sector has been chosen by the province of Fryslân and its partners in the Frisian Project Machine as one of the economic sectors that can benefit from the FPM. As a result, the CCI sector now is represented in the 'regiegroep' (steering group) for the development of the Frisian Project Machine.

The action

The additional steps that need to be taken focus on the connection of the broader CCI sector to the Frisian Project Machine, and are aimed to make sure the programs developed and activities that are organized are easily accessible to the CCI sector. In order for us to make sure this happens, the following actions will be undertaken:

- Planning a project writing workshop specifically for the CCI sector during the second half of 2021. Part of the program of the Frisian Project Machine is the organization of specific thematic workshops and project writing ateliers. This action is aimed at making sure the workshops and project writing ateliers will include CCI participants and will be targeted at CCI participants.
- Setting up guidelines for projects in order to receive project writing grants and making sure inclusion of cultural and/or creative parties in project proposals is stimulated/mandatory.
- Evaluating the participation of CCI organizations in the activities of the Frisian Project Machine. The evaluation of the results of the efforts put towards connecting the CCI sector to this particular PI will be important in

deriving lessons learned for other PIs as well, and will of course help adapt the activities and improve the results.

- Writing of at least 3-4 project proposals from the CCI sector that were awarded project development grants from the Frisian Project Machine.



Photo: Bart Lindenhovius

The players involved

Province of Fryslân	Regional government for the region of Fryslân. Initiator of the Frisian Europe Covenant and financing party to the Frisian Project Machine (working title). Also part of the board of the Frisian Project Machine.
Municipality of Leeuwarden	Financing party to the Frisian Project Machine and part of the steering group of the Frisian Project Machine
Other municipalities in Fryslân	Partners in the Frisian Project Machine
Cultural organizations, among which are: Frisian Museum, Film in Friesland, and libraries.	The parties influencing the policy instrument and parties looking for a way to connect to regional policy instruments. Target audience of the Frisian Project Machine.
Cultural, creative and tourism entrepreneurs	The parties influencing the policy instrument and parties looking for a way to connect to regional policy instruments. Target audience of the Frisian Project Machine.
LF2028/Legacy LF2018 (ECoC Legacy Organisation)	Member of the steering group of the Frisian Project Machine. Target audience of the Frisian Project Machine.

The timeframe

The Frisian Project Machine is set to start in the second semester of 2021. In congruence with this planning, the proposed action will start immediately after. Preparations in order for the action to be successful have been undertaken over the course of the ECoC-SME project during 2019-2021.

September 2021	Planning of a project writing workshop specifically for the CCI sector
September 2021	Setting up project guidelines
Q4 2021 – Q2 2022	Writing at least 3-4 project proposals suited for application in European programs
Q2 2022	Evaluating the participation of CCI organizations in the activities of the Frisian Project Machine



Leeuwarden-Fryslân 2018 in the Ridderzaal, Den Haag/The Hague



Costs and funding sources

Project writing workshop	€ 500
Development of guidelines for project writing grants	In-kind
Evaluation of the participation of the CCI sector	In-kind
Writing of 3-4 project proposals	€ 30.000

The actions will be mainly financed through the budget of the Frisian Project Machine that is currently being arranged. For the Frisian Europe Covenant and the Frisian Project Machine, funding will be found from the following parties:

- Province of Fryslân
- All Frisian municipalities (18 in total, amongst which the Municipality of Leeuwarden)
- Institutes of higher education (RUG, NHL Stenden, Van Hal Larenstein)
- Institutes of vocational education (ROC Friese Poort, ROC Friesland College, Nordwin)
- Clusters of businesses (inter alia, EnergieCampus, WaterCampus, DairyCampus, Innovatiecluster Drachten, Nationaal Testcentrum Circulaire Plastics)



Approval Province of Fryslân

Organization: Province of Fryslân
Representative: M.C. Brandsma
Date: 25-8-2021
Place: LEEUWARDEN
Signature: