

JOURNAL

PROJECT

Cluj Future of Work
📍 Cluj-Napoca,
Romania

TOPIC

Jobs and skills in the
local economy

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Cluj Future of Work Journal 4: get the final update about Cluj Napoca project

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UIA expert Simone d'Antonio provides the final updates on the activities carried out in the framework of Cluj Future of Work, such as the final event and the consolidation of the Labs at CREIEC, with an eye on the legacy of the project.

The fourth Journal of Cluj Future of Work outlines the progress of the activities of the UIA project of Cluj-Napoca from January to December 2022. The journal focuses also on the main elements that emerged along the journey and how the elements can be transferred to other local authorities willing to explore the different dimensions of future of work.

The last 12 months of Cluj Future of Work were particularly important for raising the awareness of different sectors of the local community on the topics targeted by the project. While in 2021 most of the activities were focused on reinforcing mutual collaboration among the project partners representing relevant parts of civil society (such as employers, innovators, potential entrepreneurs, representatives of cultural and creative industries), in 2022 future of work was part of a debate involving teachers, students, families and residents at the occasion of a series of activities and events culminated with the final Festival of Creativity, organized in different venues in the city centre from 29th September to 2nd October. Boosting the local conversation on the topic was undoubtedly decisive not only for giving visibility to the activities carried out by the Municipality and the project partners but also for paving the way for the continuation of most of the activities also after the end of Cluj Future of Work.

The content of this fourth Journal is based on the interviews carried out with the project partners at the occasion of the site visits carried out on 29-30 September 2022, and on regular online meetings with the co-management team of the project.

Section 2 of the Journal contains updated information on the most relevant activities implemented in 2022, such as the new edition of the Culturepreneurs program, the outreach activities for the local community and the final event organized in September 2022. The section provides also an overview on how Cluj-Napoca wants to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project at urban level.

Section 3 of the Journal presents the main lessons learned and provides useful recommendations to other urban authorities willing to replicate the innovative solutions tested and implemented by Cluj Napoca in the framework

of Cluj Future of Work.

Section 4 of the Journal provides final reflections on the project and reflects on the legacy that Cluj Future of Work is leaving with the solutions implemented at urban level as well as with the knowledge generated along the journey.

CLUJ FUTURE OF WORK: PROJECT'S PROGRESS

In 2022 Cluj Future of Work focused on making the impact of the project visible to different types of public at local level, creating the conditions for the consolidation of most of the activities and schemes after the end of the project and fostering the transfer of knowledge within local organizations and clusters but also to other Romanian cities.

The full recovery of onsite activities produced a positive impact in terms of visibility for Cluj Future of Work at local level. This aspect was not just fundamental for ensuring a wide participation in the final event, but also for attracting students, start-uppers and potential entrepreneurs to a series of smaller events and activities organized by the project partners with the objective of promoting the use of project's facilities, such as the Labs hosted by CREIC, also after the end of the project.

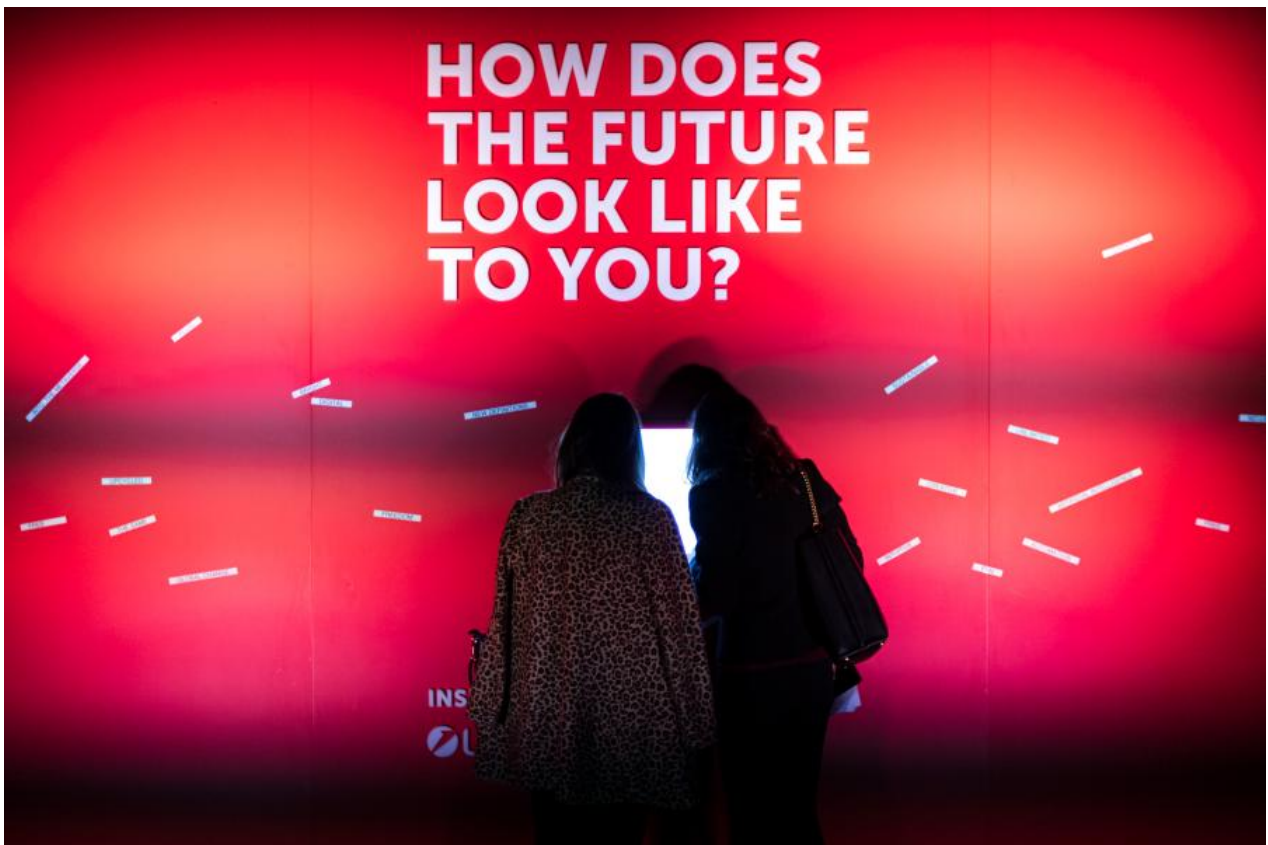
The inclusion of the CREIC's Labs in the innovation ecosystem of the city is undoubtedly one of the main legacies of the project. This was also made possible by the completion of road infrastructures and the activation of a regular bus line connecting the CREIC to the city centre. At the same time, Cluj Napoca is consolidating a series of activities tested in the framework of Cluj Future of Work, such as the Culturepreneurs programme that will continue under new formats and whose modules are progressively included in the curricula of local universities.

On the other side, strengthening the alliance between public sector, academia, cultural organizations and enterprises will make the city more responsive to the rapid changes in the demand of jobs and skills in the cultural and creative sectors, and will foster the debate on the future of work on medium and long term.

The Festival of Creativity

The final event of Cluj Future of Work took place in the form of the 5th edition of the ZAIN Festival of Creativity which took place in Cluj Napoca from 29th September to 2nd October. Launched in 2015 as a design festival and organized by PLAI Association (partner of Cluj Future of Work), the event is a point of reference for creative people, artists and designers, who were the main receivers of the knowledge and the tools produced in the framework of Cluj Future of Work.

Over 30000 visitors crowded the main locations of the event (Unirii Square, TIFF House and the former Municipal House of Culture) and 27 community events spread all over the city. Future of Work was the guiding topic of a festival that combined exhibitions from several fields of the local creative industry (such as furniture products, graphic design, fashion, etc.) to workshops and public talks that involved general public and attracted the attention of local and national media.



“How does the future look like to you?” was the question marked in block letters on the wall at the end of the main exhibition organized in a pavilion installed in the main square of the city (Plata Unirii). The pavilion, whose lateral facades were covered by artworks of three local illustrators based on their artistic vision on the future of work, attracted representatives of the local community of creative people and artists but also different sectors of the local population. The exhibition raised the awareness on the topics at the core of Cluj Future of Work through artistic installations and interactive activities which had the merit of creating a connection between the debate on future of creative work and feelings and aspirations of the people.

The Festival of Creativity gave also visibility to innovative products and solutions of sustainable design created by

the finalists of the Culturepreneurs programme (Velements - Born Again Clothing: Lapage Lepage - Adaptable font creator by Sipos Geza; Catrinel Sabaciag Studio – Customized design bags; Anadora Lupo – Unconventional metal chairs), fostering the national and international promotion of these craft productions which benefitted of the specific support given by the Cluj Future of Work's acceleration programme on marketing and communication.



Presenting Cluj-Napoca as a living laboratory for testing innovative solutions through the active collaboration between public and private sector was one of the major objectives of the event, which shed the light on the vibrancy of the local cultural and creative industries, creating the conditions for future collaborations at local and national level.

[The consolidation of Labs at CREIC, Culturepreneurs and the outreach activities](#)

The Labs and the co-working spaces hosted by CREIC (Regional Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries) are now used at their full potential and are fully included in the local innovation ecosystem. These spaces serve as testing ground for innovative products and services developed by local enterprises and universities, that finalized an agreement with the City of Cluj-Napoca for having access to the CREIC's infrastructures at reduced costs after the end of the project.

The completion of the accreditation process of the CREIC's Design Development Lab as Design, Prototyping and Testing Laboratory made it able for hosting the testing activities in laboratory for determining dimensions and stability for tables, storage furniture and beds, but also for determining resistance and durability of chairs, tables, storage furniture, beds, mattresses and outdoor furniture. This element has incentivized local design factories to use the CREIC's Labs equipment but is also attracting other industries from different regions of Romania. The Transylvanian Furniture Cluster (partner of Cluj Future of Work) is promoting the use of the Design Lab fostering the connection with national and international networks. The Design Lab is giving a boost to the local design productions and can promote new forms of collaboration among local enterprises and with the local creative sector.

The meetings and events organized by the City of Cluj-Napoca and Cluj Future of Work's delivery partners for promoting the infrastructures of CREIC and the equipment installed in the Labs increased the awareness of the local community and are promoting its use by different types of public. The University of Arts and Design (partner of Cluj Future of Work) is going to use the CGI&VFX laboratory in the future, while the laboratory infrastructures for digital design, 3D prototyping and testing of the finished products are used by several design students of Cluj-Napoca.



Attracting local students to be part of the community of innovators sharing the Labs and the co-working space of the CREIC was the objective reached by many initiatives launched by the Transylvania Creative Industries Cluster (partner of Cluj Future of Work). Among these, the Open Innovation. Brand of Cluj-Napoca is making the know-how and the infrastructure generated by Cluj Future of Work visible to local students and other communities of innovators with regular meetings but also ensuring free access to the co-working spaces and guided tours of the Labs, to display the functionality of robots and machineries installed with Cluj Future of Work.

The project's plan for long term sustainability

Ensuring sustainability on the medium and long term to programs and initiatives empowered by the project was a priority since the beginning of Cluj Future of Work. In the final months of the project all the partners were involved in several activities aimed at ensuring the continuation of the schemes carried out at local level, which reached different types of public and raised awareness on the relevance of future of work for the growth of cultural and creative industries but also for contrasting social exclusion (as in the case of the Roma population of Pata Rat, targeted by a set of activities of the project on informal work).

The management of the Labs and the co-working space at CREIC has been successfully transferred from the City of Cluj-Napoca to the Transylvania Creative Industries Cluster, that finalized a scheme for ensuring the profitability of the spaces equipped in the framework of Cluj Future of Work after the end of the project. Private entities can use the Labs and the co-working spaces paying a fee, while a part of the seats available at the co-working space can be used for free by the members of the cultural industries of Cluj-Napoca and by the past and future participants of the Culturepreneurs programme. Students of local universities can also use for free the machinery installed at the Lab, with the possibility of booking equipment and seats through an application.

The acceleration programme developed by Cluj Future of Work will evolve into a new format, following the indications that emerged from previous editions (the third one was organized in a reduced version by the Cluj Cultural Center in five weeks between August and September 2022 with 14 participants in total). The full inclusion of the Business Essentials modules (Marketing, Management, Legal framework, Communication, etc.) into the academic curricula of different local faculties (such as the University of Arts and Design) is stimulating stronger awareness of the necessary connection between disciplines as art and design and the entrepreneurial skills needed for creating the cultural and creative industries of the future.

Even though most of the challenging aspects relieved by the project in terms of access to decent jobs are still not a direct competence of the local authority, the activities on informal work carried out in the framework of Cluj Future of Work contributed to elaborate new policies in favour of deprived groups, such as the Roma community of Pata Rat. The inclusion of the new bus line connecting the informal settlement to the city centre into the

mobility services of the city is an example of how Cluj Future of Work is fostering accessibility to decent jobs with concrete measures, in view of the creation of integrated policies tackling also other relevant challenges related to informal work.

GENERATED KNOWLEDGE - Lessons learned

Cluj Future of Work fostered the interaction among different policies which are complementary for the creation of better jobs and skills at local level. The reflection on the impact of the future of work on the local economy efficaciously involved the cultural and creative sector, ICT clusters, universities, public authorities but also aspiring entrepreneurs, students, and deprived groups.

Involving a variety of actors in an **effective participatory approach for co-implementation** was one of the main lessons learned by all the delivery partners of Cluj Future of Work. The active collaboration with residents and specific target groups was useful for creating a vibrant debate around the topics recalled by the project on future of work and for promoting a series of activities launched by the project, such as the acceleration program Culturepreneurs or in the training for aspiring entrepreneurs of the Pata Rat community, to different types of audiences. The implementation of these innovative schemes was made possible also through **effective actions of communication** with target beneficiaries and users and supported the creation of new entrepreneurial ideas and testing of solutions and products promoted at national and international level.

Ensuring strong political support by the local authority was also crucial in terms of **leadership** and for making the co-management system between the City of Cluj-Napoca and the Cluj Cultural Centre an effective tool for making the project coherent with the long-term vision in terms of urban innovation. At the same time, the active involvement of cultural and creative industries and organizations active at urban level was granted also through the action of mediation played by the Cluj Cultural Centre, creating a mechanism that can be crucial also for ensuring the future sustainability of the model of continuous update and development of competences and skills defined by the project.

The definition of the effective mechanism of coordination put in place by the project was also decisive for improving the process of **public procurement** and for the **organizational arrangements** within the local authority, both challenges whose level of intensity was particularly high in the crucial months of the project implementation. The active collaboration between the delivery partners in charge of implementing specific actions (planning the equipment to be installed at CREIC or empowering the Roma community of Pata Rat) and the public officials in charge of the procurement process was useful to overcome bureaucratic hardships and rapidly respond to changes and needs emerged along the project also because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Recommendations to other urban authorities

The choice of a diversified set of delivery partners and civic stakeholders, able to bring different visions on what is needed for creating better jobs and skills for the future, is necessary for replicating similar schemes on the future of work targeting different categories at local level.

Urban authorities willing to replicate innovative schemes and actions on future of work can make use of different languages and disciplines, such as art and design, for raising awareness on the urgency of the topic among different types of public (including the local population) and on the need of a collaborative action keeping together a variety of actors as done by Cluj-Napoca.

The definition of an effective system of collaboration between those who own thematic expertise (such as representatives of productive clusters or cultural and creative industries active at urban level) and the local authority is fundamental for overcoming obstacles in the public procurement process but also for making the project sustainable on medium and long term. The incorporation of Culturepreneurs' modules in the curricula of local universities is an interesting example that can be replicated by other academic institutions in the context of similar projects on the creation of jobs and skills for the future of work.

Making the infrastructures created in the framework of the project available to different types of beneficiaries after the end of the project is another recommended action that may be easily replicated if supported by the creation of an effective management scheme, possibly with the active participation of partners and institutions which contributed to creating these spaces, such as the Labs at CREIC of Future of Work, during the project.

The connection between innovative actions carried out in the framework of the project and the definition of stable policies and services for targeted categories of residents, such as the creation of new bus lines connecting the informal settlement of Pata Rat to the city centre, can be useful for promoting a better access to work of deprived groups but also for improving welfare policies and public services for all.

CONCLUSIONS

Cluj Future of Work explored how a city can react to the massive changes taking place in the global economy and

in the job market, testing a series of actions aimed at presenting the future of work not as a threat to the local community cohesion but as a source of growth opportunities for all.

The success of the project is testified by the active participation of different target groups in innovative schemes such as Culturepreneurs but also by a renewed sense of mutual trust created by the alliance among cultural and creative industries, NGOs, academia, technology clusters and other local stakeholders involved in the activities of Cluj Future of Work.

As highlighted by the Journal, one of the greatest achievements of Cluj Future of Work was to combine the creation of tangible infrastructures and activities (such as the Labs at CREIC or the training activities to aspiring entrepreneurs or workers to be reskilled) with a cultural action that made future of work part of the local conversation using new languages and artistic expressions understandable by different categories of residents.

Cluj Future of Work also fostered a positive change within the local authority, presenting future of work as a key for reinterpreting different policies in a cross-cutting way but also promoting the creation of new services and policies for specific groups, such as the Roma community residing in the Pata Rat area.

The full integration of the Urban Innovation Unit in the organizational chart of the City of Cluj-Napoca can be considered the main legacy of the project and will contribute to consolidating the importance of future of work among the main topics of the local political agenda in the next few years. The connection with other innovative programs and initiatives carried out by the city and the strong political commitment to urban innovation are important elements for ensuring the continuation of the experimental spirit tested with Urban Innovative Actions on a decisive topic for the future of the local economy.

The creation of training schemes, such as the Culturepreneurs programme, which may be adapted and transferred for example as part of the curricula of local universities, as it is happening in Cluj-Napoca, is a key element not only for the replication in other local contexts but also for boosting the creation of a shared sensitivity towards the education to innovative entrepreneurship.

The connection with other cities in Romania and in Europe, invited also to the final event of Cluj Future of Work, is fundamental for promoting the replication of specific actions, also in the framework of the UIA Transfer Mechanism together with the URBACT programme. The strong potential in terms of replicability of Cluj Future of Work can be exploited also with the consolidation of methodologies and actions that trainers, experts and representatives of project partners will continue to refine also after the end of the project activities.

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