# Support to Professional Networks between Russia and EU in the field of Cultural Cooperation and Creative Industries (by Example of the Project “Creative Compass” Including Establishment of a Network for Actors of Culture and Creative Industries)

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## Institute for Russia and Eastern Europe

The Institute for Russia and Eastern Europe (est. 1947) is a state institution subordinate to the Ministry of Education of Finland. The Institute’s mission is to enhance mutual understanding between European countries by promoting multilateral cultural co-operation between EU countries and Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The Institute operates in cultural field in both Finland and its neighbouring regions, the major ones being the EU, the Northern Dimension zone, and the East Slavic cultural zone.

The Institute is developing networks of cultural organisations and creative industries. It is participating in preparations for a Northern Dimension cultural partnership. One of the most important tasks of the Institute is to promote networking opportunities for organisations and individuals interested in cooperation in the field of culture and creative industries in Finland and Russia.

The Institute maintains a library that specialises in Russian and Eastern European culture and has Finland’s most extensive collection of Russian fiction and non-fiction. The library is open to all, and offers also information services and Russian-language materials on Finnish society and culture.

## Creative Compass Project

The Institute`s Creative Compass project is a Finnish-Russian co-operation project in the field of creative industries. It will run for 28 months during 2009-2011. The first phase of the project was launched in spring 2009. Finland’s Ministry for Foreign Affairs has allocated neighbouring area funds to the project.

The Creative Compass project seeks to identify any parties in Finland and in North West Russia interested in common projects in the field of creative industries. In the framework of the project seminars and practical workshop in both countries are organised. During the project different issues are examined, such as the significance of the creative industries for well-being and employment as well as the matters of education and training of art management and entrepreneurship. The project produces information materials and surveys. Finally it is aiming at promotion of mutual learning and the exchange of experiences.

In November 2009 in cooperation with Center for Markets in Transition (CEMAT) of Helsinki School of Economics and Cultural Policy Institute in Moscow the project started a survey in the framework of the Creative Compass Project. The survey analysed functions of creative clusters in Moscow and include to the sphere of research questions like ownership and financing of clusters / Commercial/Non-commercial / Public/Private financing; Fields of cultural activities of clusters; history of life: establishment, changes in functions; influential factors; external factors influencing on function of clusters: legislation, general economic situation; rise of competing clusters. Also model making and characteristics of clusters, ecosystem of the working model and relationship with other actors of the cultural sector were studied.

In December 2009, four creative clusters named Proekt Fabrika, Flacon Design Factory, Winzavod and Design Centre ArtPlay were visited in order to get information on their operation and environment. In addition, the British Higher School of Art and Design was visited. Altogether five in depth interviews were conducted during the trip. The interviews addressed issues concerning the possession, foundation and financing of the clusters, the cluster tenants, their premises and public relations etc. Due to the fact that the clusters were quite different from each other and all of them had a different way of operating, a wide range of issues were covered affecting clusters’ operations. Some of them were more business orientated than others, but all of them were private initiatives. In addition, to the interviews with cluster representatives the interview with the general director of the British Higher School of Art and Design gave a good overall picture of the design and art education in Russia.

To summarize, the customer interest towards creative clusters is growing in Russia, and their future development seems positive even though the Moscow city shows no interest towards them. Despite many difficulties in operating the clusters, the interviewees were quite optimistic and eager to cooperate on international level.

## Networking, Networking Lists, Websites and Social Media

Practical work has shown that a functioning network is absolutely necessary to support creative organisations and business to find partners, exchange experience and information. This concerns also the actors of creative industries, professionals, artists and entrepreneurs as well as educating and training organisations.

It is always possible just to collect and list the basic information according to the field of activity, try to keep the information updated and use for all this special data base programmes. A huge amount of contact information is often too difficult to keep in good shape, but the data base definitely serves as a source for contact information and finally can be used also as part of the material for website establishment.

Most often the organisation websites publish lists of Internet links for their users. This is of course a solution, which helps to find information, but can also be useless in case that the links are not updated. Networking should be something more active and interesting. A well-working website includes lists of individuals and organisations working in creative industries, their contact information and presentation of their works of art. Listings contain information about creative industry events and activities, such as trade fairs, exhibitions, performances, conferences and seminars. Support provides information about training, networking and funding opportunities for individuals and organisations. Usually part of the information is available for anybody visiting the site, and only registered as website members are given the possibility to reach specified information. Blogs and photo galleries are open for the registered members, too.

he establishment and maintenance of a functional website or portal is a very demanding task and especially challenging for small organisations lacking funds and human resources. Social media could offer good opportunities for creative people and organisations. It is already now quite common that bands, musicians and performing groups and artists have their own profile in Facebook and Twitter, own videos in YouTube etc. Social networking is fast, interactive and immediate. In many countries even the considered conservative church and state organisations as well as museums have created their social media profiles to be able to serve their clients, partners and members and listen to their opinions and needs.