CYANOTYPES



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE STRATEGIC ROLE of the Arts and the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries in Europe's Competitiveness, Research and Democratic Future

Table of Contents

CYANOTYPES POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS 2
1. Make competence-based approaches instruments for change 4
2. Build lifelong learning around how creative work happens 5
3. Make practice-based learning visible and recognisable 7
4. Invest in learning ecosystems across education, professional practice and policy 8
5. Put creative competences at the centre of the transition agendas 10
6. Fund experimentation as policy-learning and learning infrastructure 12
7. Make policy more connected, adaptive and capable of recognising value 14
8. Insights from the CYANOTYPES pilots 15
9. From recommendations to action 16
10. A policy shift for the CCSI 17
Further References 18
Imprint & Disclaimer 19

CYANOTYPES POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating the conditions for future-oriented competence development in the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries

Why this matters

The Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI) are experiencing technological, environmental, economic and social change. These transformations affect not only business models and societal expectations, but also how people work, how learning takes place, how professional competences develop, and how value is conceived and created.

The CCSI's complex and diverse nature makes it a valuable lens through which to examine wider societal and economic change. Multiple roles, portfolio careers, project-based work and rapidly changing professional profiles are already common across the sector and are increasingly relevant to other industries and policy areas.

These changes are also reshaping how people learn. Competences are increasingly developed through professional practice, projects, collaboration, mentoring, experimentation and transitions between education and work — not only through formal courses.

The policy challenge is therefore broader than increasing the supply of training. **Future competence development depends on the conditions that connect practice, learning, organisations, ecosystems and policy.**

Policy can help create these conditions by making competence development more visible and usable, connecting learning to professional realities, curriculum development at all levels, strengthening the infrastructures around learning and experimentation, and enabling policy itself to learn and adapt.

The following recommendations bring together the cross-cutting policy implications emerging from four years of the CYANOTYPES project, policy consultation processes and the experience of the CYANOTYPES pilots. The pilots explored and tested in various contexts how a competence framework can support creative professionals and individuals, organisations and businesses, sector networks, higher education, VET and policymakers.

These recommendations are not intended as a generic skills agenda, but provide a common direction for future-oriented competence development while recognising that implementation must remain contextual. This policy document is intended for policymakers and public authorities at European, national, regional and local levels, as well as for intermediary bodies (such as sector organisations, networks, education and training providers, and other organisations that connect policymakers, professionals and learning ecosystems) and funding organisations that influence the conditions for learning and professional development. These recommendations can inform policy design, programme development, funding, related implementation and evaluation criteria.

The CYANOTYPES Competence Framework provides, among other things, a shared language for exploring change through competence development. Its digital Toolkit provides tools for setting up structured experimentation and innovative learning. The Internal Quality Assurance Framework (IQAF) to maintain the quality and ensure recognition for the learning across both the educational and CCSI sectors. The CYANOTYPES pilots explored and tested different ways of applying the Framework and provide useful reference cases in various contexts.

CYANOTYPES developed six Implementation Pathways that translate the Framework into strategies and practical approaches for different stakeholders in the CCSI, including policymakers, higher education, VET, creative sectors & networks, creative professionals & individuals and creative organisations & businesses. The pathways offer possible routes fitting the multiplicity of actors in the CCSI, while this document brings the shared policy implications together in one set of recommendations.

1. Make competence-based approaches instruments for change

Competence frameworks are useful tools to help people and organisations make better decisions and should not remain descriptive models.

CYANOTYPES shows how a shared competence language can connect policy objectives with professional practice, curriculum development, organisational change and sector collaboration. It can also help reveal when a policy challenge is being treated as a training problem, although the underlying issue may concern access, coordination, recognition, infrastructure or organisational conditions.

A competence-based approach can connect questions that are often separated between departments, sectors and disciplines. Instead of treating culture, skills, education, innovation, employment and regional development as entirely distinct areas, it provides a shared language for examining what people and organisations need to do in changing contexts.

Policy recommendation

Use competence-based approaches as practical instruments for policy design, implementation and review.

Support their use to:

- connect policy objectives with changing professional and organisational realities;
- inform curriculum, learning and workforce development;
- strengthen cooperation between culture, education, skills, employment quality management, innovation and regional policy;
- identify the conditions needed for competences to be developed and applied;
- translate emerging evidence into practical policy responses.

The objective should be to make existing policy approaches more connected, usable and responsive, rather than to create additional frameworks or checklists.

2. Build lifelong learning around how creative work happens

Creative careers are often non-linear, project-based and portfolio-based. For freelancers, micro-enterprises and professionals moving between roles, conventional training provision may not fit the realities of time, income, location or work organisation.

Learning can take place through projects, workplace activity, mentoring, peer exchange, experimentation and self-directed development, alongside formal education and training. Policy should therefore address not only the availability of learning, but also whether people can access and use it within the realities of their working lives.

Policy recommendation

Support flexible lifelong learning pathways that connect formal, non-formal and informal learning with professional practice.

This means supporting learning that is:

- flexible enough to fit different professional realities;
- connected to real work and emerging practice;
- accessible to freelancers, micro-enterprises and people moving between sectors or roles;
- supported by appropriate trainers, mentors, facilitators and workplace partners;
- informed by competence frameworks that help identify what is already being developed, what is changing and where further learning may be useful;
- connected, where useful, to funding, access and recognition mechanisms.

Where appropriate, access to mechanisms such as Individual Learning Accounts[1] can help make learning financially and practically accessible, including for people in non-standard or changing forms of work.

[1] https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/advancing-adult-skills-through-individual-learning-accounts_08e1bdaf-en/full-report.html



The objective is to make continuous development possible within the realities of creative work. Competence frameworks can help people and organisations understand and navigate that development, but cannot replace the learning relationships, resources and conditions that make it possible.

3. Make practice-based learning visible and recognisable

A significant amount of competence development in the CCSI happens through professional practice but remains difficult to see within conventional learning, recognised qualification and progression systems.

Profiles, portfolios, validation, learning records and appropriate credentials can help connect professional experience with further learning, mobility and progression. These mechanisms should not develop as parallel systems. Approaches to vocational education, non-formal and informal learning and micro-credentials should connect, where applicable, with existing quality assurance, recognition and progression arrangements in formal education and at national and international levels.

Policy recommendation

Strengthen coherent and accessible ways of validating and recognising competences developed through professional practice and other non-formal and informal learning.

Existing European instruments such as micro-credentials, validation arrangements and European Digital Credentials can contribute to this when they are connected around real learning and professional pathways and aligned, where relevant, with existing national and institutional requirements.

Quality assurance should support trust, confidence, comparability and progression without imposing standardisation that is inappropriate for diverse creative careers. Recognition should increase visibility and opportunity without reducing professional experience to standardised checklists or overly complex accreditation processes.

A more coherent approach should enable competences developed in different learning contexts to become visible, meaningful and recognised across education, employment and professional development pathways.

It should support mobility and progression while avoiding unnecessary administrative burdens for individuals and small organisations.

4. Invest in learning ecosystems across education, professional practice and policy

Competence development does not take place within one part of the education or skills system. In the CCSI, people move between higher education, VET, professional practice, continuing learning, peer networks, mentoring, projects and self-directed development throughout their careers.

Yet these forms of learning are often organised and recognised separately. Connections between higher education and VET, education and professional practice, formal and non-formal learning, and learning providers and sector ecosystems can remain weak. This can make it harder for emerging competence needs to travel within the system and for people to move between different learning opportunities.

Policy recommendation

Strengthen the connections and permeability between different parts of the lifelong-learning ecosystem, from education and vocational learning to professional practice, continuing development and sector-based learning.

This means supporting stronger relationships between:

- higher education and VET, including transitions, shared approaches to competences and learning outcomes, opportunities for mutual learning, and stronger connections with R&D and the labour market;
- learning organisations and creative professionals, organisations and employers, so that professional realities, as well as labour market skills needs and gaps, inform educational development;
- formal education and practice-based, non-formal and informal learning;
- sector networks, creative hubs and other intermediaries and learning providers, so that emerging needs and professional intelligence can circulate;

- learning systems and policymakers, so that evidence from practice and education can inform policy development.

Policy support should also recognise the connective capacities needed to make these relationships work, including:

- skills intelligence and early identification of emerging needs;
- facilitation and partnership-building;
- communities of practice and peer learning;
- translation between professional practice, learning and policy;
- coordination across organisations and policy domains;
- stronger alignment in quality assurance, enhancement and accreditation policy and practices;
- support for organisational learning and adaptation.

These capacities are not the responsibility of intermediaries alone. They are shared across the learning ecosystem and require cooperation between learning organisations, professionals, organisations, sector networks, intermediaries and public authorities.

The objective is to build a more coherent lifelong learning ecosystem in which different forms of learning can complement one another, connect more easily and respond to changing professional realities.

CYANOTYPES can provide a shared competence language for making these connections more visible without creating a parallel education system, or flatten the educational offer.

5. Put creative competences at the centre of the transition agendas

Digital, AI, green and social transitions are changing creative practice. The Pact for Skills Annual Report 2025 provides evidence on evolving skills needs across industrial ecosystems and identifies transversal skills as particularly important in the Cultural and Creative Industries.

As technologies increasingly perform tasks that were previously associated with human expertise, the policy question cannot be reduced to whether people have sufficient technical skills to use the next generation of tools. The capacity to **interpret complexity, question assumptions, exercise judgement, imagine alternatives, collaborate, reflect, experiment and act with agency** becomes increasingly important.

The CCSI already works in conditions of ambiguity, rapid change, interdisciplinary collaboration and experimentation. Its experience therefore offers a wider lesson: future competence policy should not only prepare people to adapt to change, but strengthen their capacity **to understand, shape and question the changes around them**.

Policy recommendation

Put creative and transversal competences at the centre of digital, AI, green and social transition policies — not at the margins of them.

This means recognising that technical capabilities need to be accompanied by broader competences, including creative and transversal ones, that enable people and organisations to understand complex situations, connect different perspectives, make informed judgements and act responsibly.

The CYANOTYPES Competence Framework can contribute as a shared lens for this work by making these broader dimensions of capability visible across different contexts. Its value is not to provide another list of skills to add to transition programmes, but to help examine what kinds of capability are needed, how they are developed, and what conditions allow people to exercise them.

For digital and AI transformation, which the project examined in more detail as one of its focus areas, policy should combine supporting, enabling, and leveraging opportunities for experimentation and learning with:

- critical understanding of how technologies affect creative work, value, rights and professional identity;
- opportunities to develop judgement about when, why and how technologies should be used;
- transparency and appropriate safeguards;
- attention to copyright, attribution, data use and remuneration;
- fair working conditions;
- accessible technical, legal and professional support;
- collective capacity to participate in decisions about how technologies are introduced and used.

The responsibility for navigating technological change should not be placed on individuals alone.

Collective agency matters. Creative professionals, organisations, educators, sector bodies and public authorities need conditions that allow them to question technological choices, negotiate their implications and participate in shaping how change happens.

Creative professionals and organisations should therefore not only be expected to adapt to technological change. Their knowledge, judgement and experience should contribute to shaping the transition itself.

6. Fund experimentation as policy-learning and learning infrastructure

The CYANOTYPES pilots demonstrate that experimentation can reveal more than whether a particular activity works. It can show where barriers arise, which actors need to be involved, how an approach needs to be adapted and what conditions are required for wider use.

Experimentation is also a learning process. Learning does not come only from successful outcomes. Trying, making mistakes, reflecting, receiving feedback and revising an approach can be essential to developing competence and understanding a complex situation.

This is particularly relevant in contexts shaped by AI and rapid technological change. As technologies make it increasingly easy to produce immediate outputs, policy should not confuse speed of production with learning. **The process of exploration, reflection and productive failure remains fundamental to developing judgement and capability.**

Policy recommendation

Fund experimentation as a form of learning — for people, organisations and policy systems — with explicit space for reflection, evidence and adaptation.

Small-scale pilots, regional initiatives, sector experiments and other forms of policy experimentation can help test:

- whether an intervention fits actual professional realities;
- who participates and who remains excluded;
- which organisational or ecosystem conditions matter;
- what needs to change before wider implementation;
- what people and organisations learn through the process;
- what should be adapted, connected or discontinued.

Funding and programme design at all level should therefore allow sufficient time and space for exploration, iteration and reflection, rather than rewarding only predictable outputs or immediate results.

The transition from pilot to wider implementation should be based on learning and adaptation, rather than on the assumption that a successful pilot can simply be reproduced elsewhere.

Where longer-term impact depends on organisational change, policy should also consider the capacity and resources needed to move from pilot insight to institutional embedding.

7. Make policy more connected, adaptive and capable of recognising value

Competence development cuts across culture, education, skills, employment, innovation, regional development, digitalisation and sustainability. These areas often operate through separate objectives, instruments, funding mechanisms and indicators.

At the same time, the value generated by cultural and creative activity is not only economic. Creative practice contributes to cultural, social, environmental, civic, place-based and wellbeing objectives. If these contributions are part of policy ambition, they need to be reflected more effectively in how policy priorities are decided, resources are allocated and outcomes are understood.

Policy recommendation

Connect policy domains around real competence and ecosystem challenges, while strengthening feedback, adaptation and recognition of wider value.

This means:

- using competence language to connect otherwise separate policy areas;
- creating feedback loops between implementation, evidence and policy development;
- allowing regional, subsectoral and organisational responses to adapt to context;
- avoiding one-size-fits-all scaling;
- considering cultural, social, environmental and wellbeing value alongside economic outcomes where relevant;
- reviewing whether funding and evaluation mechanisms support the conditions required for competence development and longer-term adaptation.

The objective is to make the connections between existing systems more visible and workable.

8. Insights from the CYANOTYPES pilots

The CYANOTYPES policy recommendations are grounded in practical experiences gathered across 59 pilots that took place across different CCSI context. These experiences do not point to a single implementation or policy model to reproduce. They point towards the need for a policy environment that is connected enough to recognise change, flexible enough to respond to different contexts and capable of learning from implementation.

The pilots reveal several recurring patterns:

- competence development can be embedded in professional projects and practice rather than separated from work;
- competence frameworks become more useful when translated into tools, processes and decisions;
- flexible learning needs to be connected to professional realities rather than offered as a separate activity;
- competences developed through practice need appropriate mechanisms for documentation, validation, recognition and progression;
- learning pathways and recognition mechanisms should connect without becoming parallel systems or imposing inappropriate standardisation;
- creative hubs, networks and intermediaries can provide important connective infrastructure;
- sector networks, professional communities and international encounters can provide early signals of emerging competence needs;
- digital and AI transformation raises questions of judgement, agency, professional identity, rights and working conditions alongside technical capability;
- regional, local and cross-border relationships influence how competence development can take place;
- organisational capacity matters: new competences create sustained change only when organisations can adapt roles, practices, curricula, partnerships and priorities;
- a quality framework should be embedded within the participating organisations to ensure the level, standard and recognition of the competences and learning experience;
- small-scale experimentation can generate useful policy knowledge before decisions about wider implementation are taken.

9. From recommendations to action

The recommendations provided in this document offer policy direction. The CYANOTYPES Implementation Pathways provide possible routes for action from six connected perspectives:

1. Creative Professionals & Individuals
2. Creative Organisations & Businesses
3. Creative Sectors & Networks
4. Learning Organisations — Higher Education
5. Learning Organisations — VET
6. Policymakers

The pathways are not six separate strategies or fixed implementation plans. They are connected entry points into the same wider ecosystem and can be adapted to different professional, organisational, regional and policy contexts.

A shared CYANOTYPES approach is:

Start with a real situation. Explore what is actually needed. Make competences, assumptions and existing strengths more visible. Choose an area for exploration or experimentation. Develop or adapt a response. Reflect on what has been learned before deciding what should happen next.

This also means questioning the starting point. What appears to be a skills gap may sometimes reveal an organisational barrier, a problem of access or recognition, a missing connection between actors or a different understanding of the challenge.

The pathways therefore support **structured but situated action**: enough structure to make change possible, and enough flexibility for context and experience to shape what happens next.

10. A policy shift for the CCSI

The case emerging from CYANOTYPES is not for more training as an end in itself. It is for a stronger connection between **competence development, professional practice, organisational capacity, ecosystem infrastructure and policy learning.**

Creative professionals need opportunities to keep developing. Organisations need conditions that allow them to learn and adapt. Sectors and networks need ways to recognise emerging change. Learning organisations need stronger connections with professional realities. Policymakers need mechanisms that turn experience into evidence and evidence into better policy.

The practical shift is therefore:

From funding training in isolation to creating the conditions in which people and organisations can learn, apply, adapt and shape change.

This is where competence-based policy can become more than a language for describing skills. It can become a way of connecting policy ambition with the realities of creative work — and of building the capacity of the CCSI to navigate, question and shape what comes next.

Further References

1. **Council of the European Union (2022)**, *Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability*, 2022/C 243/02. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_2022_243_R_0002
2. **OECD (2025)**, Advancing Adult Skills through Individual Learning Accounts. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/advancing-adult-skills-through-individual-learning-accounts_08e1bdaf-en/full-report.html
3. **Council of the European Union (2022),** *Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on Individual Learning Accounts to boost training of working-age adults*, 2022/C 243/03. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_2022_243_R_0003
4. **European Commission / European Education Area**, *Validation of non-formal and informal learning*. https://education.ec.europa.eu/node/2076
5. **European Commission / Europass**, *European Digital Credentials for Learning*. https://europass.europa.eu/en/european-digital-credentials
6. **European Parliament (2023)**, *European Parliament resolution of 21 November 2023 with recommendations to the Commission on an EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors (2023/2051(INL)).* https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/4208/oj/eng
7. **European Commission (2025),** *Culture Compass for Europe*. https://culture.ec.europa.eu/policies/culture-compass
8. **European Commission**, *Creative and Cultural Industries — Pact for Skills*. https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/about/industrial-ecosystems-and-partnerships/creative-and-cultural-industries_en
9. **European Commission (2025)**, *Pact for Skills Annual Report 2025*. https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/document/download/84378a3e-3380-488f-b35a-9bd97a024ab1_en?filename=Annual%20Report%202025_FINAL.pdf
10. **CYANOTYPES (2026),** *Implementation Pathways*. https://cyanotypes.website/publications/
11. **CYANOTYPES**, *Creative Agency Competence Framework*. https://cyanotypes.website/framework/
12. **CYANOTYPES**, Train-the-Trainer Toolkit. https://toolkit.cyanotypes.website/
13. **CYANOTYPES**, Pilots. https://cyanotypes.website/cyanotypes-pilots/

Imprint & Disclaimer

CYANOTYPES (Project no. 101056314)

Part of the **Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills**, funded by the European Union under the **Erasmus+ Programme**.

Lead author: Barbara Revelli (ELIA)
Contributors and reviewers: CYANOTYPES partners, Supervisory Board and external reviewers
Special thanks to the following contributors: John Butler (EQ-Arts), David Crombie (HKU – Utrecht University of the Arts), Gerin Trautenberger (CreativeFed), Susana Nogueira (EfVET), Christoph Weckerle (ELIA Board, ZHdK Zurich University of the Arts)
Project Management: Gitta Nyolczas (ELIA)
Design: Max Niederschick

Project Coordinator: HKU (University of the Arts Utrecht)

Partners: ALL DIGITAL • CIKE (Creative Industry Košice) • Creative FED (European Federation for Creative Economy) • ECHN (European Creative Hub Network) • EfVET (European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training) • ELIA (Globally connected European network for higher arts education) • EQ-Arts • Fashion Innovation Centre (FIC) • Lusófona University • Materahub • Mediarte • MyData Global • Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) • Saar University of Fine Arts (HBKS) • Screen Skills Committee Sweden (YNFT) • The Swedish Games Industry (SGI) • UAAV (University of Applied Arts Vienna) WIFI International (Austria's Economic Chamber (WKO)) • WRS (Economic Development Agency Region Stuttgart)

Special thanks to all those people and organisations who participated in the Open Pilots

Contact & further information: https://cyanotypes.website • info@cyanotypes.website

Funding Disclaimer

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Co-funded by the European Union

Copyright & Licensing

© CYANOTYPES consortium, 2022-2026.

This document contains material, which is the copyright of CYANOTYPES consortium members and the European Commission, and may not be reproduced or copied without permission, except as mandated by the European Commission Grant Agreement no.101056314 for reviewing and dissemination purposes.

This work is openly licensed via CC BY 4.0