

NEWS

PROJECT

Cluj Future of Work  
Cluj-Napoca,  
Romania

TOPIC

Jobs and skills in the  
local economy

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## Skills development as opportunity for local growth: a new approach with Culturepreneurs in Cluj-Napoca

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The kick-off of the entrepreneurial educational programme of Cluj Future of Work paves the way to the promotion of a collaborative approach towards the creation of new skills for the local labour market, connecting Cluj-Napoca to the European and global debate on skills development and entrepreneurship in cultural and creative industries, with an eye to the post-pandemic recovery

Investing on creating new skills at local level is one of the main priorities for the future of work. According to the new report of the World Economic Forum on the Future of Jobs, the combination of technological and human skills, such as self-management, active learning, resilience and critical thinking, will be decisive to overcome the effects of a “double-disruption” scenario, created by Covid-19 and automation, on young workers and potential entrepreneurs.

A need for a strong investment in skills by public and private organizations is highlighted also by the European Commission, which launched its Pact for Skills in November 2020 with the objective of creating a shared management model for skills development in Europe. The creation of strong skills partnerships and the anticipation of skills needs are among the key principles that public and private entities can share through the adherence to the Pact, which engages them in upskilling and reskilling activities.

The selection of the skills on which a collaborative investment of knowledge and resources is needed, in particular at local level, is a challenge shared by many local and cross-sectorial partnerships. This topic is crucial also in Cluj-Napoca, and strongly emerged in the framework of the preparatory activities of the third edition of Culturepreneurs, one of the main layers of Cluj Future of Work officially launched in September 2020.

### How to select the skills needed for potential entrepreneurs in cultural and creative industries?

The definition of the training modules' curricula for the entrepreneurial educational programme for the cultural and creative sector involved some of Cluj Future of Work's delivery partners. The objective of this collaboration was not only to offer an effective scheme of participatory governance for the learning activities but to strongly connect them to the most dynamic sectors and enterprise clusters of the city. This element is particularly crucial for the acceleration of the business ideas and projects to be developed by each of the 65 participants to Culturepreneurs, selected in July among 109 applicants.



All the partners of Cluj Future of Work contributed to the promotion of the Programme

From the end of September to mid-December 2020, the modules on business essentials were delivered with online classes. The topics and the contents of the modules (Management & Strategy; Marketing & Communication; Finance & Legal; System thinking & Open Innovation; Digitalisation; Artistic Thinking) were designed by the Cluj Cultural Centre and some of the delivery partners, such as the ARIES Transylvania IT Cluster and the Arts and Design University, bearing in mind traditional and innovative skills that potential entrepreneurs need to possess in order to succeed in the evolving landscape of cultural and creative industries. The dialogue among people with different backgrounds and mindsets offered a fruitful opportunity to discuss how the evolution of skills development can be crucial for influencing the future of work at local scale.

The combination between hard and soft skills is a characteristic element of the business essential modules delivered by the Culturepreneurs programme, that aims at creating a widespread culture of education to entrepreneurship in the city, that is going to settle as legacy of the project in Cluj-Napoca and stimulate new connection with the local universities.

“Knowledge transfer is already on the roll – says Mara Rațiu, vice-rector at the Arts and Design University and one of the tutors of the Culturepreneurs programme – We have already introduced in my university some elements on cultural and creative industries in my university and the objective is to give access to our masters students to the modules of the entrepreneurial programme”.

In the framework of the Culturepreneurs programme, Mara Rațiu is taking care of the module on artistic thinking, one of the soft skills that are qualifying the offer of the educational programme since it is creating bridges among different disciplines and promote lateral and creative thinking among the participants.

“We managed to stimulate the participants showing them how artistic thinking can improve the way they do business - says professor Ratiu - For instance, we asked them how they would behave like an artist to present their products or they would use artistic skills to make their products desirable. We focused on emotions, included the emotions connected to mistakes and failures. I talked them about the capacity to change and how to be resilient in order to deal with unexpected contexts. These elements coming from an artistic thinking approach help a lot”.

### Managing the unexpected: creating effective online modules from scratch

Turning modules originally planned to be delivered in class into online courses was particularly laborious but rewarding for the managing team of the Culturepreneurs. An external facilitator worked with all the delivery partners involved in the programme to explore the learning needs and address some of the most critical issues, such as ensuring a satisfactory interaction among the participants. “When you work on arts and cultural and creative industries, contamination among students and with the professors is fundamental: this element doesn’t clearly show up during online classes. You can learn the notions but is hard to recreate that kind of interaction among students generated during the coffee breaks or after the courses” says Ileana Toscano, urban planner who co-curated as URBACT expert a guide to online facilitation with hints and tips for practitioners. The creation of virtual networks on digital platforms, initially animated by the modules’ tutors and then left entirely to the collaborative management of the participants, was one of the solutions adopted by the module coordinators and actually tested by the students.

Following methodologies inspired by participatory schemes, the format of the lessons was completely redesigned in order to foster team work and interactive exercises to assess the skills learned.



The Culturepreneurs Class 20/21 working online

The reorganization of the modules' contents for the online sessions was quite challenging too, in particular for the project partners who were more used to use traditional teaching techniques, such as frontal lessons. Nevertheless, the adoption of the new system opened unexpected opportunities for professors and students. "Though the adaptation of the resources to an online environment initially posed a challenge, we turned it into an opportunity regarding the interactions with participants and highlighted the importance of digitalization" says Bianca Muntean, manager of Transilvania IT Cluster, project partner that contributed to the development of the digitalization module. "The pandemic created a context for greater flexibility in delivering the courses and the outcome of the e-learning process resulted in having receptive and involved participants. One of the opportunities for the participants was about their availability within different timeframes, thus more entrepreneurs were able to attend than they would have if the meetings were to be held offline. The online environment facilitated the interaction between participants as well as the exchange of ideas". A series of online seminars developed by professionals in the film industry, design, ITC, entrepreneurship, cultural policy and social innovation was organised entirely online with the participation of international speakers, reinforcing that wealth of connections and contacts with universities and business incubators that is particularly precious to potential entrepreneurs in cultural and creative industries.

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### Designing a long-term collaborative effort for better skills in Cluj-Napoca

At the presentation of the [MIT Report on Future of Work](#), held last month online, the president of the University of Maryland at Baltimore County Freeman Hrabowski noted that "one of the most important skills or approaches that we need to talk about is how to make sure that people know how to think, how to learn, how to adapt". On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, the Culturepreneurs programme is providing an effective model to change the mind-set of potential entrepreneurs as well as of all the stakeholders involved in skills development at local level. The debate stimulated by the need of adapting the programme to the situation emerged after the pandemic emergency contributed not only to raise the expectations on Culturepreneurs but also to make several organizations active in different fields at local level (such as universities, IT clusters or organizers of events and film festivals) aware of the new challenges connected to skills development, and its impact on the relation between educational system and future of work at local level.



The Culturepreneurs class 2019 (Credits: Cluj Cultural Centre)

It was exactly the purpose of Cluj Future of Work to enable a testing mindset that could provide both context and resources for key local stakeholders to tackle systematic gaps on how we view skills development in culture and creative industries. While Culturepreneurs is still ongoing, we look forward to contributing with emerging evidence from our experience to jobs and skills projects financed through the Urban Innovative Actions programme, explains **Anamaria Vrabie** co-manager of FoW and director of Cluj-Napoca Urban Innovation Unit within Cluj Cultural Centre.

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