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SACCORD
SKILL ACCORD

D5.2 Policy Action Plan and Recommendation

Agreement number:	101132841
Project Acronym:	SACCORD
Work Package number:	WP5
Deliverable name:	Policy Action Plan and Recommendation
Deliverable number:	5.2
Distribution level:	Public
Contractual month of submission (of 1st version):	M24
Responsible project partner:	BEDA
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Revision History:

Version	Date	Summary of Changes	Pages	Initials	Changes Marked
V0.1	25/11/2025	Draft document	25		
V0.2	08/12/2025	Version with updated texts	34		
V0.3	17/12/2025	Version with updated texts	39		
V0.4	19/12/2025	Final Draft after review from FCI	40		
V1.0	19/12/2025	Final Version	41		

SACCORD Consortium Members:



Policy Action Plan and Recommendation

Abstract:

The SACCORD project has played a pivotal role in strengthening Europe’s capacity to anticipate and address skills needs within the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs). Operating under the framework of the Pact for Skills and the European Skills Agenda, SACCORD has reinforced the sector’s governance ecosystem by consolidating the **Large-Scale Partnership for the Cultural and Creative Industries (LSP CCI)**, advancing regional learning ecosystems, and promoting flexible learning pathways, particularly through micro-credentials and stronger higher-education engagement. Together, these achievements contribute to building a more coordinated, evidence-informed, and future-oriented skills architecture in Europe.

A core outcome of SACCORD has been the evolution of the **LSP CCI** into a structured and increasingly strategic coordination mechanism. The partnership now brings together more than 230 organisations across Europe, supported by a dedicated Secretariat. It has revitalised thematic Working Groups, a recognised event like Creative Skills Week, and a modernised digital collaboration infrastructure. Through these mechanisms, the LSP has shifted from a manifesto-driven community into a **functioning European intelligence and coordination hub**, capable of supporting policy alignment, facilitating collaboration, and generating insights for decision-makers at all governance levels. The EC recognises the LSP CCI as one of the most active LSPs across Europe.

In parallel, SACCORD’s work on **Local Ecosystem Partnerships (LEPs)** has deepened understanding of how regional and local actors can translate European ambitions into place-based action. Pilots conducted in Amsterdam, Prague, Vienna, and Upper Austria revealed that regional ecosystems -when supported by facilitation, political anchoring, and stakeholder mobilisation- can diagnose skills needs, pilot innovative approaches, and integrate creative skills into Smart Specialisation and innovation strategies. These findings highlight the essential role of **territorial governance** in delivering relevant and sustainable skills interventions.

The project has also advanced the debate on **micro-credentials**, offering insights into how flexible and modular learning pathways can address the realities of creative labour markets, which are distinguished by freelance work, hybrid practices, and continuous reskilling. SACCORD’s work confirms the importance of integrating micro-credentials into national qualification and digital credentialing systems, while emphasising the need for cross-sectoral alignment to ensure recognition and mobility across Europe.

At the level of **Education**, SACCORD has reinforced collaborations between higher and vocational education and contributed to a closer alignment between creative curricula, research activities, and

industry needs. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a central role in equipping creative professionals with transversal and future-oriented skills, from digital and green competences to entrepreneurial and cross-disciplinary capabilities. Strengthening connections between HEIs, VET providers, cultural organisations, and regional ecosystems remains critical for a coherent learning pathway.

Across its activities, SACCORD has demonstrated the importance of **structured policy dialogue** for maintaining the CCIs' visibility in European skills policy. Through its interactions with the European Commission and its support services, Creative Skills Week, thematic Working Groups, and LSP plenaries, the project has shown that continuous and coordinated dialogue is essential for ensuring that creative skills inform EU initiatives such as the Digital Decade, the Green Deal, the New European Bauhaus, and the emerging Union of Skills.

Building on these insights, this deliverable proposes a **Policy Action Plan** organised around governance levels -European, national, and regional/local- and articulates short-, medium-, and long-term priorities for sustaining and scaling SACCORD's results. Recommendations include the **institutionalisation of the LSP** as a long-term coordination mechanism, **stronger regional implementation capacity through LEPs**, **enhanced recognition of creative learning via micro-credentials**, and the establishment of **permanent strategic policy dialogue spaces**.

In conclusion, SACCORD has demonstrated that creativity is not only a sectoral asset but a **strategic capability** essential for Europe's competitiveness, sustainability, and resilience. By reinforcing coordination structures, strengthening territorial ecosystems, and advancing flexible and future-ready learning pathways, the project has laid the groundwork for a more coherent European skills architecture. Ensuring that these foundations are embedded in long-term policies, funding instruments, and governance mechanisms will be key to maintaining momentum and supporting a thriving creative workforce able to meet the demands of Europe's green, social and digital transitions.

Deviations from the original planning / Grant Agreement (if applicable): Not applicable

Other remarks (if applicable): None.

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.

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List of Abbreviations

CCIs	Cultural and Creative Industries
CCSI	Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries
CSW	Creative Skills Week
EC	European Commission
EQF	European Qualification Framework
ESCO	European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
HEI / HAEI	Higher Education Institutions / Higher Arts Education Institutions
LSP	Large-scale Skills Partnership (in the framework of this document, LSP refers to LSP CCI [see below])
LSP CCI	Large-Scale Skills Partnership for the Cultural and Creative Industries Alternatively: Creative Pact for Skills
LEP / RSP	Local Ecosystem Partnerships/Regional Skills Partnerships
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
PfS	Pact for Skills
WGs	Working Groups

1. Introduction

Skills development has become a defining priority for Europe’s Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), a sector that is both highly dynamic and uniquely sensitive to technological, economic, and societal transformations. The accelerating pace of digitalisation, the rising demand for green and sustainable practices, and shifts in creative labour markets require a strategic and coordinated approach to continuous professional development. Against this backdrop, the SACCORD project was launched to strengthen the conditions under which creative professionals, organisations, and ecosystems can reskill and upskill effectively. It does so by connecting European-level coordination structures with territorial experimentation, innovative learning models, and cross-sector dialogue.

This Policy Action Plan and Recommendation document (Deliverable 5.2) translates SACCORD’s learning into a forward-looking strategic framework intended to inform policy development at European, national, and regional levels. It builds on the project’s multi-layered activities—ranging from the work of the Large-Scale Partnership for the Cultural and Creative Industries to regional skills partnerships and local pilot initiatives, micro-credentials and higher education engagement, and the dialogues taking place through Creative Skills Week and beyond. Rather than providing an exhaustive account of all activities, the deliverable distils the insights that carry the greatest policy relevance and strategic value for strengthening skills ecosystems in the CCIs.

This Policy Action Plan and Recommendation deliverable has been conceived from the outset as a living document. As the LSP CCI continues to generate new intelligence, test methodologies, and refine its governance structures, this document will evolve to incorporate updated evidence and emerging priorities. This iterative approach ensures that the Action Plan remains responsive to the changing needs of the creative workforce and the evolving policy landscape in Europe.

The analysis presented in this deliverable rests on evidence gathered across SACCORD’s core components. European-level coordination has provided insights into cross-border collaboration, governance models, and the needs of a diverse partnership operating at scale. Territorial experimentation in regional and local ecosystems has revealed the specificities, barriers, and opportunities that arise when skills policies are applied in practice. Work on micro-credentials and flexible learning pathways has highlighted systemic gaps and potential solutions within the European learning architecture, while engagement with vocational and higher education has shed light on how institutions can better align training provision with labour-market realities. Complementing this evidence base, the project’s strategic dialogues have offered a broad view of stakeholder expectations, sectoral trends, and emerging policy concerns.

Taken together, these sources create a comprehensive foundation from which policy directions can be drawn. The deliverable therefore moves from a contextual understanding of Europe’s skills agenda, to an analysis of SACCORD’s operational and territorial insights, and finally to a set of proposed actions designed to support more coherent, inclusive, and future-oriented skills ecosystems for the CCIs. Its purpose is not only to reflect on what has been achieved within the project, but also to outline how the Creative Pact for Skills can continue to evolve as a strategic instrument for Europe’s cultural and creative workforce.

2. Policy Context

2.1. The European Policy Landscape for Skills and Lifelong Learning

Over the past decade, the European Union has intensified its commitment to building a **resilient and future-oriented skills ecosystem** capable of supporting **competitiveness**, and the **social, green, and digital transitions**. This evolution began with the **New Skills Agenda for Europe (2016)**, which placed renewed emphasis on **coordinated upskilling and reskilling**, improved **recognition of qualifications**, and strengthened cooperation between **education systems, labour markets, and public authorities**. The **European Skills Agenda (2020)** expanded this ambition by establishing a **comprehensive framework** designed to equip individuals with the skills required in a rapidly changing labour market. It promotes **lifelong learning, modernised education and training systems, stronger skills intelligence**, and **inclusive access** to learning opportunities, and is operationalised through **twelve flagship actions** that support Europe's long-term competitiveness and sustainability.

Within this landscape, the **Pact for Skills** emerged as the **central cooperation instrument** for mobilising collective efforts across **strategic industrial ecosystems**. By late **2025**, **3,200 organisations** had joined the Pact, demonstrating its role as a **major driver of shared commitments** and targeted investments in **upskilling and reskilling** across Europe. Through these engagements, the Pact fosters **joint action** between **Member States, businesses, social partners, civil society, and education providers** -strengthening **shared responsibility** for Europe's skills transformation.

2.2. The Cultural and Creative Industries in the European Skills Framework

The **Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs)** have been formally recognised as one of the EU's **fourteen industrial ecosystems** under the updated **EU Industrial Strategy (2021)**. The CCI ecosystem encompasses a wide array of sub-sectors, including **design, architecture, cultural heritage, audiovisual media, performing arts, publishing, and digitally enabled creative practices**. Together, they account for an estimated **4.4 % of EU GDP** and generate employment for **more than 7 million people**, many of whom work as **freelancers, micro-entrepreneurs**, or in highly **project-based environments**.

Despite their significant economic and cultural contribution, CCIs face **longstanding barriers to skills development**. These include **fragmented learning pathways, uneven access to training, limited uptake of continuing professional development, low recognition** of informal and non-formal learning, and persistent **skills mismatches** accelerated by technological and societal change.

The rapid evolution of **artificial intelligence, immersive and interactive media, sustainable design practices, and platform-driven creative work** intensifies the need for **new skill sets** that are not yet fully embedded in mainstream education and training systems.

Reflecting these challenges, several EU initiatives -such as the **New European Bauhaus, Creative Europe, the Council Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026, the Digital Decade Policy Programme,**

and the **European Education Area**- emphasise **skills, capacity-building, and innovation** as essential elements of cultural and creative sector development. These frameworks increasingly acknowledge the **unique role of creativity, design, and cultural expression** in supporting Europe's wider **green, digital, and social transitions**.

2.3. The Pact for Skills and the Large-Scale Partnership for CCIs

Within the Pact for Skills, the **Large-Scale Partnership for the Cultural and Creative Industries** -also known as the **Creative Pact for Skills**- was launched in April 2022 as the main coordination platform underpinning Europe's ambitions for CCI workforce development. Bringing together more than **230 member organisations** by December 2025, the partnership integrates **higher education institutions, VET providers, creative businesses, intermediary organisations, public authorities, and ecosystem stakeholders** into a shared framework for collaboration.

The LSP aims to **identify emerging and persistent skills gaps**, strengthen **cooperation** between education providers and industry actors, enhance **regional ecosystem partnerships**, foster **flexible and modular learning pathways**, and support the development of **sector-responsive lifelong learning systems**. As a **community-driven structure**, it promotes **shared learning, experimentation, and the translation of policy objectives** into tangible actions. The SACCORD project reinforces this architecture by providing the analytical, organisational, and operational foundations needed for the LSP to evolve into a **sustainable, intelligence-driven policy support mechanism**.

2.4. SACCORD's contribution to the European Skills Agenda

The **SACCORD project (2024–2025)** is conceived as a strategic enabler within the Pact for Skills ecosystem, strengthening Europe's capacity to anticipate, adapt to, and respond to skills needs across the CCIs. Its activities are closely aligned with three overarching EU policy imperatives.

First, SACCORD contributes to building a **coherent European skills ecosystem** by enhancing cooperation between **education, training, and labour market actors** through both the LSP and territorial partnerships. It supports the institutional capacity of the CCIs to **act collectively, share intelligence, and design targeted skills interventions**.

Second, the project advances the **green and digital transitions** by focusing on **new and emerging skill sets** -such as **green transition, digital transformation, creative entrepreneurship, and technologically enabled creative production**- thereby supporting the implementation of the **European Green Deal, the Digital Education Action Plan, and the EU Industrial Strategy**.

Third, SACCORD promotes **social inclusion, resilience, and innovation** by fostering learning ecosystems that prioritise **accessibility, diversity, and lifelong learning**. Through its **Local Ecosystem Partnerships/Regional Skills Partnerships**, the project demonstrates how **localized experimentation** can reinforce Europe-wide policy frameworks and ensure that high-level strategies translate into **actionable outcomes** for creative workers and organisations.

2.5. Cross-sectoral relevance and strategic alignment

The relevance of SACCORD extends beyond the creative sectors. Its focus on **flexible, modular, and transferable learning pathways** aligns closely with broader European policy developments, including the **Council Recommendation on Micro-credentials for Lifelong Learning and Employability (2022)**, the **European Universities Initiative**, and the **European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan**, which sets a target for **60 % of adults** to participate in training every year by **2030**.

Furthermore, the project contributes to the emerging vision of a **more integrated European skills architecture** -often described as a “**Union of Skills**”- that seeks to **harmonise skills intelligence**, strengthen **cooperation across sectors**, and reinforce the **long-term sustainability** of Europe’s human capital strategies.

By generating evidence on skills needs, ecosystem coordination, innovative learning models, and the role of territorial partnerships, SACCORD supports the **legacy of the European Year of Skills** and provides valuable inputs for **future policy development**, especially in relation to the **recognition of learning, digital transformation, and inclusive participation**.

2.6. A policy window for Creative Skills

The convergence of major EU policy agendas—ranging from the **European Skills Agenda** and the **European Education Area** to the **Green Deal, Digital Decade**, and **cultural policy frameworks**-has created an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen creative skills as a strategic asset for Europe. Creative professionals offer transversal competences such as critical thinking, design methodologies, systems thinking, and problem-solving skills increasingly required across all sectors undergoing transformation.

By reinforcing the **governance, coordination, and intelligence functions** of the Creative Pact for Skills, SACCORD helps ensure that the CCIs are fully integrated into the EU’s long-term vision for **skills, competitiveness, and cultural vitality**. This deliverable therefore positions SACCORD as a **key policy intermediary**, connecting **practical insights** with the development of **coherent policies** at European, national, and regional levels. In doing so, the project strengthens the conditions under which **creative skills** can thrive and contribute meaningfully to Europe’s **social, cultural, and economic future**.

3. Thematic insights and policy recommendations

Throughout its implementation, SACCORD has provided valuable insights into how the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) can strengthen their ability to adapt to the evolving demands of Europe's skills landscape. This chapter brings together the project's main findings and lessons learned, structured around **five thematic pillars** that together form the backbone of a multi-level model for skills governance in the sector.

The first pillar focuses on the **Large-Scale Partnership for the Cultural and Creative Industries (LSP CCI)** and its role as a European coordination structure. It explores how the LSP has evolved from a network of committed organisations into a structured mechanism that supports collaboration, policy alignment, and intelligence-sharing across Europe. The second pillar examines the importance of **Local Ecosystem Partnerships (LEPs)** as enablers of bottom-up innovation and as interfaces between European ambitions and regional realities. The third addresses the growing relevance of **micro-credentials** in creating flexible, modular learning pathways that recognise the diverse forms of knowledge production within the CCIs. The fourth looks at the role of **Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)** in continuing to embed creative, green, and digital skills within curricula and to keep on bridging the gap between academia and industry. Finally, the fifth pillar highlights the need for an ongoing **strategic policy dialogue**, ensuring that the results of SACCORD and its partners feed continuously into European policymaking.

Taken together, these five dimensions outline a comprehensive approach to fostering skills development in the CCIs. The LSP operates as the European coordination and intelligence layer; the RSPs and LEPs translate these principles into regional and local practice; micro-credentials and higher education modernise the learning offer; and the policy dialogue mechanism ensures strategic alignment with the European Skills Agenda the Union of Skills, the Pact for Skills, and other EU frameworks. The following sections present detailed analyses of each of these pillars, identifying the key evidence gathered through SACCORD, the emerging lessons, and concrete recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders.

3.1 The LSP CCI: Strengthening coordination, intelligence, and collective action for skills development

3.1.1 The role and evolution of the LSP CCI

The **Large-Scale Partnership for the Cultural and Creative Industries (LSP CCI)** was established under the **European Commission's Pact for Skills** as a structured mechanism to strengthen cooperation among stakeholders engaged in skills development across the creative ecosystem. Jointly coordinated by BEDA, CreativeFED, and UNI Europa, and supported by the European Commission, the LSP serves as the **official skills partnership for the CCI ecosystem** - one of the fourteen industrial ecosystems identified under the **EU Industrial Strategy**.

Throughout its development within **SACCORD**, the LSP evolved from a community of manifesto signatories into a **coordinated and intelligence-driven structure** capable of supporting meaningful collaboration and policymaking. It now connects **more than 230 organisations across Europe**, including higher education institutions, training providers, cultural enterprises, sectoral networks, and public authorities. This expansion -representing a **55% growth in membership between January**

2024 and December 2025- demonstrates both the growing relevance of skills development in the creative sectors and the perceived value of the LSP as a trusted platform for collective engagement.

Operationally, SACCORD has been instrumental in enabling the LSP to establish a **robust organisational backbone**. The creation of a structured digital infrastructure -comprising an upgraded Slack workspace, thematic Working Groups, the highly-visible Creative Skills Week, and a shared Drive environment- has transformed communication and knowledge exchange within the partnership. A **central Secretariat** now provides coordination and administrative support, enabling members to engage effectively, share resources, and align efforts across members. The enhancement of the Working Group leaders with collaboration tools led to greater activation of their respective thematic groups -focusing on digital skills, green transformation, entrepreneurial development, micro-credentials, regional partnerships, and cross-sectoral innovation- leading to strengthened governance and internal coherence.

These developments have collectively positioned the LSP as a **self-organising European coordination mechanism**, capable of generating shared intelligence, mobilising communities of practice, and contributing actively to the policy conversation on creative skills. Several of these structural advances are also reflected in the LSP's **Forward-Looking Model**, developed under SACCORD to guide long-term governance, engagement, and monitoring practices.

3.1.2 The Strategic value of the LSP as a coordination mechanism

The LSP CCI represents a **unique multi-level coordination model** that bridges the gap between European policy frameworks and the operational realities of the creative sector. Its strategic value rests on its capacity to integrate **coordination, intelligence-building, and collective action** into a single, adaptive structure.

As a coordination platform, the LSP provides a common framework through which diverse actors—ranging from EU-funded projects and sectoral networks to higher education institutions and SMEs—can align their efforts and avoid duplication. In such a diverse network of organisations, the connectors' role of the LSP and the alignment of its members is of crucial importance. This alignment ensures that initiatives targeting skills development across the CCIs are guided by shared objectives and policy priorities, particularly those articulated under the **European Skills Agenda** and the **Pact for Skills**. In this sense, the LSP functions as a **bridge between bottom-up experimentation and top-down strategic direction**, helping to ensure that local innovation and European policymaking reinforce one another.

The LSP also plays a central role in generating **skills intelligence**. Through its Working Groups, thematic exchanges and regular interactions with its members, it continuously gathers insights on skills needs, training gaps, learning innovations, and emerging trends across Europe. Additionally, the LSP frequently invite its members to sign the Pact for Skills -if they have not done already-, in order to establish direct link between EC and its support services, and the related stakeholders. This collective intelligence supports **evidence-based policymaking**, responding directly to the European Commission's ambition to strengthen sectoral observatories and skills monitoring systems. The digital collaboration tools deployed during SACCORD (such as the updated onboarding process and related data gathering) have significantly enhanced these processes, transforming the LSP from a static network into an evolving knowledge ecosystem.

Furthermore, the LSP serves as a **catalyst for collective action**. By organising knowledge exchanges, workshops, and community-driven initiatives -including its strategic contributions to **Creative Skills Week** and the **Forward-Looking Plan workshops**- the partnership creates a shared arena for testing ideas, sharing practices, and scaling successful approaches. This collaborative dimension strengthens

not only the capacity of individual organisations but also the systemic resilience of the broader CCI skills ecosystem.

3.1.3 Achievements and emerging lessons

The progress achieved within the LSP during the SACCORD implementation period has been substantial. The partnership has grown in both **scale** and **maturity**, with increases both in membership and in the depth of engagement across the Working Groups. More than **120 active contributors** now participate in thematic working groups, generating a continuous flow of insights and resources that inform the LSP's strategic direction, on a bottom-up approach.

The Slack workspace -tested during the last 6 months of the project- is becoming the primary daily collaboration hub, while the shared Drive environment supports transparent access to documentation and resources. The Secretariat ensures continuity, facilitates onboarding, and coordinates communication, enabling the LSP to operate effectively as a distributed organisation.

The CCI LSP was represented at the Skills Forum in Brussels in 2024, taking part in a round table discussion dedicated to exploring specific issues faced by SMEs. The CCI LSP is also often active in the LSP coordinators meetings organised by the Commission, and the New Members events. This shows the transversal role of the CCI with the other sectors. This expansion has been accompanied by a growing sense of **ownership** among members, who increasingly view the LSP as a collective enterprise advancing shared objectives. Members consistently highlight the value of having a **neutral coordination body** that provides legitimacy, structure, and visibility to sectoral skills efforts. The inclusive governance model has enabled organisations of all sizes and from diverse European regions to contribute meaningfully to shaping the LSP's priorities.

However, the experience of the past year has also revealed structural challenges. Maintaining an active pan-European partnership requires **stable operational resources**, which cannot be sustained solely through *voluntary contributions*, or *fragmentary funding through projects*. While community-driven engagement has proven effective, it now needs to be complemented by *dedicated funding* to ensure *continuity, consistency and scalability*. Moreover, ongoing efforts are needed to ensure **balanced geographic, sectoral and organisational type representation**, avoiding concentration of activity in well-established clusters. Addressing these challenges will be essential to consolidating the LSP's **long-term sustainability** and **policy relevance**.

3.1.4 Policy implications and recommendations

The evolution of the LSP CCI within SACCORD offers important insights for European skills governance. At EU level, the LSP demonstrates the effectiveness of structured partnerships in operationalising the principles of the **Pact for Skills**. Its development highlights the need for the European Commission to recognise such partnerships not only as project-based initiatives but as **strategic coordination infrastructures** that require ongoing support. Embedding LSPs into long-term EU policy frameworks -including the forthcoming **Union of Skills**- would ensure continuity, visibility, and closer alignment between policy design and implementation.

A key lesson is that large-scale partnerships are most effective when they combine **coordination** with **intelligence-building**. The LSP has shown that, when properly resourced, such structures can function as **permanent observatories** of sectoral skills dynamics. Policymakers should therefore consider establishing dedicated funding instruments -potentially under **Erasmus+**, **Creative Europe**, or **Horizon Europe**- to sustain the operational capacity of sectoral partnerships beyond project

cycles. This would prevent the fragmentation of networks created through EU initiatives and strengthen their contribution to Europe's long-term skills architecture.

At national and regional levels, governments should engage more systematically with the LSP, using it as an interface for **consultation**, **co-creation**, and **strategic alignment**. National skills strategies, particularly those linked to recovery and resilience mechanisms, should explicitly recognise the **Cultural and Creative Industries** as a priority ecosystem and draw on the LSP's evidence base to inform programmes and investments. Regional authorities can leverage the LSP's Working Groups to identify local skills needs, pilot new solutions, and exchange practices across Europe.

For the creative sector, the LSP provides a model for **collective governance** and **mutual support**. Sectoral organisations, training providers, and professional bodies are encouraged to continue contributing data, practices, and insights to the partnership. Over time, the LSP can evolve from a coordination platform into a **framework-development entity** capable of producing shared methodologies, policy briefs, and standards that guide national and regional implementation.

3.1.5 Outlook for the future development of the LSP CCI

The LSP CCI now stands at a decisive moment. Having consolidated its organisational structure and established an engaged community, it must transition from early consolidation toward **long-term sustainability**. This next phase will require formalising governance, strengthening analytical capacities, and securing financial and institutional support. Continued dialogue with the European Commission will be essential to position the LSP as a recognised interlocutor within Europe's skills governance landscape.

In parallel, the LSP should pursue deeper integration with complementary EU initiatives and funding programmes, ensuring that its coordination capacities are leveraged to create stronger links between **projects**, **partnerships**, and **policy processes**. Continued investment in digital tools and knowledge-management systems will support its evolution into a **European intelligence hub**, capable of generating valuable evidence and recommendations that inform decision-making at all governance levels.

By advancing these priorities, the LSP CCI can evolve into a **permanent, self-sustaining coordination mechanism** -one that not only serves the needs of the Cultural and Creative Industries but also contributes meaningfully to Europe's broader ambition to build a **cohesive, resilient, and future-oriented skills ecosystem**.

3.2 Local Ecosystem Partnerships: Territorial mechanisms for creative skills development

3.2.1 Role and evolution of LEPs as territorial skills ecosystem structures

Local Ecosystem Partnerships (LEPs) play a decisive role in translating European ambitions for skills development into **concrete, place-based action**. Within the Cultural and Creative Industries, local ecosystems often consist of a diverse yet fragmented mix of **cultural institutions**, **creative enterprises**, **municipal authorities**, **universities**, and **intermediary organisations**. Through SACCORD, HKU and CreativeFED led the establishment and strengthening of LEPs as essential

bridges between the **European coordination framework** provided by the LSP and the **realities of local creative economies**.

LEPs operate as **territorial governance structures**, aligning local priorities with European policy objectives and enabling collective responses to emerging skills needs. They help identify **territorial skills gaps**, consolidate local intelligence, stimulate cooperation among stakeholders, and adapt EU initiatives to regional contexts. Their evolution reflects the broader governance model outlined in SACCORD's Forward-Looking Model, embedding **coordination, intelligence-gathering, and community engagement** at local scale.

3.2.2 Strategic value of LEPs in the multi-level skills ecosystem

The strategic value of LEPs lies in their capacity to translate **European policy frameworks** into **locally tailored actions**, making them a critical component of a multi-level skills ecosystem. While the LSP provides shared principles and Europe-wide objectives, LEPs ensure that these are **contextualised, implemented, and sustained** through local policy, institutional networks, and labour-market dynamics.

LEPs strengthen **territorial skills intelligence**, capturing insights that seldom reach national or European monitoring frameworks. Their proximity to employers, cultural organisations, creative professionals, and municipal authorities enables them to identify emerging needs in areas such as **digital and societal transformation, green transition, AI-enabled practices, and entrepreneurial competences**.

Moreover, LEPs act as **territorial amplifiers**, embedding skills development within broader policy agendas such as **Regional Innovation Strategies, cultural development plans, and local economic development frameworks**. They also translate complex EU frameworks -including those related to the Green Deal, Digital Decade, or micro-credentials- into **actionable local priorities** that resonate with regional policy cultures.

3.2.3 Achievements and lessons learned through SACCORD

Under SACCORD, several LEPs were initiated or further developed, notably in **Amsterdam, Prague, Vienna, and Upper Austria**, offering a substantive evidence base on how territorial ecosystems operate in practice. Despite distinct local contexts, recurring challenges emerged across all four LEPs: fragmented stakeholder landscapes, limited awareness of EU-level skills agendas, and uneven readiness among education and training institutions to respond to emerging skills demands.

Each LEP provided unique insights:

- **Upper Austria** demonstrated the importance of beginning with a committed “**club of the willing**,” securing early buy-in before expanding collaboration more broadly.
- **Amsterdam** highlighted the need to rethink regional talent strategies in response to rapid technological transformation, particularly concerning **AI-enabled creative work** and its implications for future job profiles.
- **Prague** revealed structural challenges in **micro-credential recognition**, emphasising the need for a national framework to support adoption, validation, and institutional alignment.
- **Vienna** underscored the relevance of **cross-sectoral collaboration** and the potential of creative skills in driving regional innovation, while also exposing gaps in coordination between cultural stakeholders and formal education providers. Vienna's experience showed how strong municipal engagement can accelerate skills ecosystem development when paired with targeted facilitation.

Across all regions, stakeholders emphasised the importance of **translating European narratives into local policy language**, reinforcing the intermediary role needed to adapt EU frameworks to local realities.

These experiences illustrate that successful LEPs require **political endorsement, institutional anchoring, and operational support**. Where cultural, economic, and educational authorities collaborated effectively, LEPs became fertile grounds for experimentation. Conversely, where institutional support was limited, maintaining momentum proved more difficult, demonstrating the need for **ongoing facilitation and capacity-building**.

3.2.4. Regional LEP Cases

Upper Austria: Incremental Ecosystem Building through a “Club of the Willing”

The Upper Austrian LEP illustrates how incremental ecosystem formation can succeed in regions with strong institutional capacity but fragmented representation of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs). During the SACCORD stakeholder mapping, 33 key actors were identified across the quadruple helix, with a strong presence of training providers (5), higher education institutions (4), and network organisations (4), but a notable absence of formally organised CCI enterprises in the early phase.

Quantitative survey data revealed a high level of consensus on future-oriented skills needs. Statements related to systems thinking, entrepreneurial competences, sustainability, and personalised learning pathways consistently scored 5/5, while satisfaction with existing higher education provision was significantly lower (2/5). This clearly indicates a structural mismatch between institutional education offers and the transversal skills demanded by the CCI ecosystem.

Qualitatively, the LEP deliberately began with a small, committed core group (“club of the willing”), allowing trust-building, shared language development, and initial experimentation before expanding cooperation and policy engagement. This approach reduced coordination costs and enabled targeted activities such as soft-skills mapping and ecosystem dialogues. The case demonstrates that depth of engagement can be more critical than breadth in early LEP phases, particularly in industrialised regions where CCIs are embedded across multiple sectors rather than organised as a single cluster.

Policy challenge identified

Despite strong stakeholder commitment and shared understanding of future skills needs, Upper Austria faces a persistent gap between institutional education provision and transversal, CCI-relevant competences. Without formal anchoring, the LEP risks remaining dependent on project-based funding and informal coordination.

Policy recommendations

- Formalise LEPs as recognised components of regional skills governance, embedded within Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) and regional innovation frameworks.
- Introduce dedicated regional funding lines (e.g. ERDF–ESF+ synergies) for transversal and cross-sectoral CCI skills beyond traditional VET and HE structures.

Support LEPs as permanent territorial skills observatories, mandated to generate qualitative skills intelligence feeding into regional and national planning cycles.

Enable multi-annual operational funding (3–5 years) for intermediary organisations coordinating LEPs, recognising facilitation and coordination as public goods.

Strategic implication

Upper Austria demonstrates how LEPs can evolve from project-based collaboration into durable governance infrastructure, provided policy frameworks explicitly recognise coordination, intelligence-gathering, and ecosystem facilitation as eligible outcomes.

Amsterdam: Responding to Scale and Technological Acceleration

Amsterdam represents a high-density, high-maturity creative ecosystem, with 47 mapped stakeholders and a quantitatively dominant CCI labour market comprising 44,910 enterprises and 71,805 jobs (2023). Despite this scale, SACCORD evidence highlights governance fragmentation and rapid technological change—particularly AI adoption—as central challenges.

Survey data shows strong alignment on the urgency of skills transformation: nearly all future-skills dimensions (digital, meta-cognitive, green, entrepreneurial) scored 5/5, while satisfaction with higher education provision was only moderate (3/5). This indicates that even advanced ecosystems experience a structural lag between innovation dynamics and formal education systems.

Qualitatively, the Amsterdam LEP underlined the strategic role of LEPs as sense-making and coordination mechanisms, rather than capacity builders or training providers. Stakeholders emphasised the need to rethink talent pipelines, emerging occupational profiles, and ethical frameworks for AI-enabled creative work. The LEP functioned as a platform linking creative enterprises, training providers, and European-level debates (via the LSP), translating abstract policy narratives into actionable regional strategies.

Policy challenge identified

Amsterdam's experience shows that skills needs in AI-enabled creative work evolve faster than formal qualification and accreditation systems can respond, risking misalignment even in advanced ecosystems.

Policy recommendations

- Position LEPs as territorial foresight and experimentation hubs, explicitly tasked with identifying emerging occupational profiles linked to AI, automation, and hybrid creative-tech roles.
- Support regional regulatory sandboxes, enabling experimental micro-credentials and modular learning offers to be tested prior to national rollout.
- Strengthen connections between LEPs and European AI, Digital Decade, and ethical innovation frameworks, ensuring creative sectors are fully represented.
- Fund LEP-led co-design platforms bringing together creative enterprises, educators, and policymakers to continuously recalibrate skills strategies.

Strategic implication

Amsterdam illustrates that in advanced ecosystems, LEPs add value less through delivery and more through anticipation, coordination, and strategic alignment—functions that should be explicitly recognised in EU and national funding schemes.

Prague: Structural Barriers and the Micro-credential Challenge

The Prague LEP demonstrates how institutional and regulatory constraints can limit ecosystem effectiveness even where stakeholder interest is high. A total of 31 stakeholders were mapped, but only 2 actors were assessed as having direct regional influence, pointing to a weak governance core.

Quantitative evidence shows low satisfaction with both higher education and VET provision (2/5), combined with strong agreement (5/5) on the need for personalised learning pathways, lifelong learning models, and entrepreneurial skills. Recognition of emerging occupational profiles and socio-technical competences scored mid-range (3–4/5), indicating awareness without systematic uptake.

Qualitatively, Prague exposed a structural bottleneck around micro-credentials. While stakeholders acknowledged their relevance, the absence of a national validation and recognition framework prevented wider institutional adoption. Consequently, the LEP evolved into a translation and advocacy mechanism, articulating local needs upward to national and European levels rather than focusing on implementation.

Policy challenge identified

The Prague case reveals a mismatch between stakeholder readiness and national regulatory capacity, particularly regarding micro-credential recognition and validation.

Policy recommendations

- Prioritise national micro-credential frameworks aligned with European standards, enabling local experimentation to scale.
- Use LEPs as formal policy feedback mechanisms, integrating their evidence into national education and labour-market reforms.
- Provide targeted funding for institutional capacity building within education providers to adopt modular, flexible learning models.
- Support multi-level governance pilots, enabling LEPs to collaborate directly with ministries and accreditation bodies under EU-backed initiatives.

Strategic implication

Prague demonstrates that LEPs are essential not only for implementation, but also for revealing structural bottlenecks, making them indispensable instruments for evidence-based policy reform.

Matera / Basilicata: LEPs as Capacity Builders in Peripheral Regions

- Matera/Basilicata represents a less formalised but politically engaged ecosystem, with 23 stakeholders identified, including a relatively high share of policymakers (6) and CCI enterprises (10), but almost no independent training providers.
- Survey results show very low satisfaction with VET provision (1/5), contrasted with strong recognition (5/5) of the need for lifelong learning pathways, personalised training, and transversal competences. This indicates a capacity gap rather than an awareness gap.
- Qualitatively, the Matera LEP functioned as foundational ecosystem infrastructure, bringing together actors who had rarely collaborated systematically before. Strong municipal engagement—partly rooted in Matera’s legacy as European Capital of Culture—enabled skills development to be aligned with broader regional development and cohesion agendas. In this context, the LEP acted primarily as a capacity- and trust-building mechanism, rather than a fully-fledged governance structure, and has subsequently moved towards applying for recognition as a Regional Skills Partnership.

Matera/Basilicata faced limited training infrastructure but strong political engagement and CCI interest, requiring long-term capacity building rather than short-term skills delivery.

Policy recommendations

- Recognise LEPs in peripheral regions as cohesion instruments, eligible for territorial development and cultural policy funding beyond skills-specific programmes.
- Support place-based facilitation roles and community managers as long-term investments.
- Align LEP continuation with regional development, cultural heritage, and social innovation policies, not solely education budgets.
- Ensure simplified access to EU funding for smaller regions, reducing administrative barriers for less institutionalised ecosystems.
- Recognise the need to upskill Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) as resilience enablers, ensuring they have the capacities to steer long-term coordination, adapt to shocks, and sustain the LEP process beyond project-based cycles.

Strategic implication

Matera demonstrates that LEPs can act as foundational infrastructure for regional development, particularly when skills policy is integrated with cultural and territorial strategies, leading to formalised Regional Skills Partnerships.

Cross-Case Insights and Post-SACCORD Policy Orientation

Across all four regions, the evidence confirms that LEPs:

- Generate territorial skills intelligence not captured by national or EU monitoring systems.
- Function as intermediary translation layers, adapting European skills agendas to local policy and institutional contexts.
- Require institutional anchoring and sustained facilitation to move beyond experimentation.

Where political support, intermediary capacity, and education providers aligned (Upper Austria, Amsterdam), LEPs progressed more rapidly. Where regulatory or capacity constraints dominated (Prague, Matera/Basilicata), LEPs played a diagnostic and mobilisation role. Together, these cases substantiate the strategic importance of LEPs as adaptive, place-based governance structures within Europe's multi-level skills ecosystem.

Policy Recommendations for post-SACCORD continuation and upscaling

The SACCORD LEP demonstrators provide strong empirical evidence that Local Ecosystem Partnerships require differentiated policy support depending on territorial maturity, governance capacity, and regulatory context. Rather than a one-size-fits-all continuation model, post-SACCORD policies should enable tailored follow-up mechanisms.

Based on all four cases, SACCORD highlights the need for:

- Dedicated follow-up funding instruments for LEP continuation, consolidation, and replication.
- Explicit recognition of intermediary and coordination functions as legitimate, fundable outcomes.
- Stronger alignment between Pact for Skills, Erasmus+, ESF+, ERDF, and RIS3 instruments.
- Multi-annual support cycles reflecting the long-term nature of ecosystem building.

Without such mechanisms, SACCORD LEPs risk remaining successful pilots without systemic legacy—a missed opportunity given their demonstrated impact and strategic relevance.

3.2.5 Policy implications and recommendations for strengthening LEPs

The LEP pilots confirm that **territorial governance** is indispensable to the European creative skills ecosystem. While European structures such as the LSP define common objectives, meaningful transformation occurs when local actors translate these into **place-based actions**.

To consolidate progress, policymakers should ensure that LEPs have access to **dedicated funding, technical assistance, and peer-learning opportunities**. The European Commission could encourage Member States to formally recognise LEPs as **intermediaries in skills governance**, connecting local realities with national and European policy processes. Regions, in turn, should explicitly integrate the **CCI ecosystem** into their skills strategies, ensuring alignment across cultural, innovation, and employment policies.

The LEP experience underscores several broader policy implications:

- Effective territorial skills governance requires structured **involvement of demand-side actors**, including creative professionals and cultural organisations.
- Bottom-up governance models perform better than hierarchical structures, as they provide **ownership** and agency to local actors.
- Long-term sustainability depends on stable **institutional embedding**, ensuring that LEPs endure beyond project cycles and continue adapting to changing regional conditions.

These insights highlight that **locally driven skills ecosystems** are essential complements to European-level coordination, especially in sectors as diverse and rapidly evolving as the CCIs.

3.2.6 Outlook for the future development of LEPs

The LEPs developed under SACCORD represent a significant advance in building a **territorially grounded skills architecture** for the Cultural and Creative Industries. Having demonstrated their value, the next phase must focus on **institutionalising these partnerships**, strengthening cooperation with regional authorities, and integrating LEPs more firmly into **regional development strategies, innovation agendas, and national skills frameworks**.

Over time, LEPs can evolve into **permanent nodes within the broader European skills ecosystem**, complementing the intelligence and coordination functions of the LSP. By deepening their links with EU initiatives and reinforcing their territorial anchoring, LEPs will help build a **resilient, place-based skills system** capable of addressing technological change, labour-market shifts, and cultural transformation.

Their continued evolution will be essential for ensuring that Europe’s creative sectors remain dynamic, competitive, and capable of sustaining long-term cultural and economic value.

3.3 Micro-credentials: Toward flexible, modular learning pathways for the CCIs

3.3.1 Role and evolution of Micro-credentials within creative skills development

Micro-credentials have emerged as a key policy instrument within the European skills agenda, offering **flexible, modular learning pathways** that respond to rapidly evolving labour-market needs. Within the Cultural and Creative Industries, where careers are often **project-based, interdisciplinary**, and marked by continuous technological change, micro-credentials offer a particularly suitable learning format. They enable creative professionals to acquire targeted competences in areas such as **digital production, green creative practices, AI and data literacy, entrepreneurship**, and **cross-sectoral collaboration**, without the time and cost constraints of traditional degree programmes.

Under SACCORD, MateraHub provided leadership on this topic by analysing how micro-credentials can strengthen learning ecosystems across CCI in Europe and support alignment between **education providers, industry actors, and policy frameworks**. The project's work builds on the **Council Recommendation on Micro-credentials (2022)** and on emerging European developments such as the **European Digital Credentials for Learning**, and CEDEFOP's **Exploring the emergence of micro-credentials in vocational education and training (VET)** working paper, contributing to the broader effort to systematise recognition, transparency, and portability of short learning units.

Micro-credentials also offer a mechanism for recognising **non-formal and informal learning**, which is particularly relevant in the CCIs, where learning often occurs through professional practice, collaboration, experimentation, and community-based knowledge exchange. As such, micro-credentials serve as a bridge between **creative learning cultures** and **formal qualification systems**, helping to legitimise the diverse ways in which skills are acquired in the sector.

3.3.2 Strategic value of Micro-credentials for the Creative and Cultural Industries

The strategic value of micro-credentials within the CCIs lies in their capacity to respond to **fast-changing skill demands** while supporting **lifelong learning** and **career adaptability**. Creative professionals often require rapid upskilling in areas such as user-centred design, immersive media, AI-augmented workflows, sustainable materials, or digital marketing. Micro-credentials allow these needs to be addressed swiftly, without requiring individuals to disengage from work or undertake lengthy formal programmes.

Micro-credentials also support **cross-sectoral mobility**, enabling creative workers to integrate skills relevant to sectors such as tourism, health, manufacturing, ICT, and social innovation. Their modular structure means that competences can be stacked, combined, or tailored to regional or sectoral needs, aligning learning with **Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3)** and regional innovation agendas.

For education and training providers, micro-credentials enhance **responsiveness and cooperation**. They create incentives for collaboration between HEIs, VET providers, enterprises, and cultural institutions, promoting co-designed curricula and facilitating **work-based learning**. They also foster alignment between creative skills and broader policy directions such as the **Green Deal, Digital Decade**, and **New European Bauhaus**, increasing policy coherence across domains.

3.3.3 Achievements and lessons learned through SACCORD

SACCORD's work on micro-credentials has generated new understanding of both the opportunities and constraints of adopting this learning model within the CCIs. MateraHub conducted in-depth research and consultations with training providers, HEIs, industry actors, and policymakers, identifying a set of recurring lessons that illustrate the sector's readiness and its structural challenges.

First, there is strong recognition of the **need for flexible learning formats** that accommodate freelance work patterns and the rapid pace of technological change. Stakeholders consistently highlighted micro-credentials as a promising tool for addressing skill gaps in digital production, entrepreneurship, green design, and creative technologies.

Second, the project revealed significant **barriers to adoption**. Many creative professionals and smaller organisations lack awareness of micro-credentials or perceive them as administratively complex. Education providers, meanwhile, face challenges integrating micro-credentials into existing governance and accreditation structures, particularly where national frameworks remain underdeveloped or overly rigid.

Third, SACCORD found that successful micro-credential ecosystems depend on **collaboration between HEIs, training providers, and industry actors**, ensuring relevance and uptake. In several regions, training institutions expressed strong interest in co-designing micro-credentials with creative enterprises, but noted the need for clearer quality-assurance mechanisms, financial support, and incentives to develop new offerings.

Fourth, emerging practices indicate that micro-credentials can act as **bridges between disciplines**. For example, creative professionals often seek skills in digital technologies or green innovation, while professionals from other sectors increasingly need creative-thinking and design-driven competences. Micro-credentials create modular pathways that support this bidirectional flow of skills.

Overall, the SACCORD experience demonstrates that micro-credentials are a promising instrument for the CCIs, but require **policy stability, institutional support, and awareness-raising efforts** to reach their full potential.

3.3.4 Policy implications and recommendations for advancing Micro-credentials

The insights gathered through SACCORD underscore the importance of strengthening the policy framework for micro-credentials across Europe, particularly within sectors characterised by non-linear learning and non-standard labour structures such as the CCIs.

At European level, continued implementation of the **Council Recommendation on Micro-credentials** is essential for ensuring portability, recognition, and transparency. The CCIs stand to benefit from European-wide alignment of definitions, learning outcomes, and digital credentialing infrastructures. The European Commission should consider targeted calls within **Erasmus+**, **Creative Europe**, or **Horizon Europe** dedicated to developing micro-credentials for creative skills, especially in areas aligned with the **Green Deal**, **AI transformation**, and **cross-innovation**.

At national level, governments should integrate micro-credentials into qualification frameworks, accreditation systems, and adult-learning strategies. Given the CCIs' reliance on freelancers and micro-enterprises, national schemes should ensure that micro-credentials are **financially accessible, flexible, and supported through incentives** for both learners and providers.

At regional and local levels, LEPs can act as intermediaries for identifying skill needs and coordinating micro-credential design, ensuring coherence with regional innovation and cultural-development agendas.

Education and training institutions should invest in **co-design methodologies**, working directly with creative professionals and enterprises to ensure relevance and quality. They should also adopt **stackable learning models**, enabling learners to combine micro-credentials into broader qualifications or professional pathways.

Taken together, these policy directions would help mainstream micro-credentials as a **core component of the European creative skills system**.

3.3.5 Outlook for the future development of Micro-credentials in the CCIs

Micro-credentials are poised to become a fundamental building block of **future-oriented learning systems** in the Cultural and Creative Industries. Their flexibility, modularity, and potential for cross-sectoral relevance make them particularly well suited to the fluid, innovation-driven nature of creative work.

In the coming years, the CCIs will require micro-credentials that address emerging areas such as **AI-augmented creative production, sustainable and circular design, platform-based practices, data literacy, and creative entrepreneurship**. Ensuring that these micro-credentials are credible, portable, and embedded within wider policy frameworks will be essential.

As Europe progresses toward a more integrated skills architecture -potentially through the emerging **Union of Skills**- micro-credentials can serve as an important connector between initiatives, institutions, and labour markets. Their evolution will depend on continued cooperation between the LSP, LEPs, training providers, and policymakers.

With the right policy support and institutional commitment, micro-credentials can help the CCIs build a **cohesive, responsive, and future-ready skills ecosystem** capable of meeting Europe's cultural, social, and economic ambitions.

3.4 Higher Education Institutions: Anchoring creative skills in Europe's learning and innovation systems

3.4.1 Role and evolution of HEIs in creative skills development

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) occupy a central position within Europe's learning and innovation systems. In the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), they serve not only as education providers but also as **knowledge hubs, labs for experimentation, and bridges between research, culture, society, and industry**. As technological, environmental, and societal transformations reshape the landscape of creative work, HEIs play an increasingly important role in supporting the development of **creative, digital, green, and entrepreneurial competences** that are essential for long-term resilience and competitiveness of the sector

Through SACCORD, ELIA draws on its extensive network and credibility in Higher Arts Education Institutions (HAEIs) to engage a significant number of institutions in the LSP and related activities, such as Creative Skills Week, strengthening their integration within a multi-level skills ecosystem

that includes LEPs and cross-sectoral actors. The high attendance and engagement of HEIs in SACCORD activities also shows the notable interest of this stakeholder group in finding solutions to known impediments related to National regulations and quality assurance requirements which often limits HEIs in developing flexible and future-proof curricula that respond to the needs of society and the industry. HEIs are in fact uniquely positioned to integrate emerging competences into curricula, develop new teaching and learning formats, and strengthen connections between academia, vocational education and the creative labour market. In line with broader European policy developments - including the **European Education Area**, the **European University Initiatives**, the **New European Bauhaus**, **Digital Education Action Plan**, and the **Council Recommendation on Micro-credentials** - the work developed by SACCORD reflects a needed evolution of education and higher education that encourages collaborative, practice-based, and modular learning pathways across disciplines and borders.

In the context of the accelerating AI transition,, HEIs increasingly operate in a hybrid space where artistic practice, technological development, and societal engagement intersect. Particularly Higher Arts Education Institutions — fulfil a crucial societal function as hubs for collective knowledge development. Beyond technical upskilling, they provide protected spaces for artistic experimentation, critical inquiry, and ethical reflection on how AI reshapes creative processes, authorship, labour conditions, and cultural value. This role is increasingly vital as creative work becomes more deeply entangled with algorithmic systems and data-driven infrastructures. This creates opportunities for HEIs to act as **drivers of future-ready skills**, fostering creative capacities that can support Europe’s transitions and strengthen the resilience of the cultural and creative workforce.

3.4.2 Strategic value of HEIs within a multi-level skills ecosystem

The strategic value of HEIs lies in their ability to combine **long-term educational provision** with **research-led innovation and carefully governed experimentation in learning, including flexible learning formats** that respond to continuous emerging of competence needs. Their credibility, infrastructure, research capacity and responsibility for quality assurance enable them to shape skills ecosystems in ways that differ from — and complement — vocational, non-formal, and industry-led training providers.

Within the CCIs, HEIs support skills ecosystems through:

- **Curriculum innovation**, integrating creative, digital, and green and transversal competences into accredited degree programmes.
- **Research and artistic experimentation**, generating new knowledge that informs industry practices and future skills needs, creative practices and policy debates.
- **Cross-sectoral collaboration**, connecting the CCIs with other sectors such as health, eco-sustainability, manufacturing, and ICT.
- **Internationalisation**, enabling engagement with European frameworks, mobility schemes, and transnational networks.
- **Lifelong learning provision**, through continuing education, micro-credentials, and partnership-based learning models.

In addition, HEIs play a crucial role in safeguarding quality and **quality assurance**, transparency, and recognition within evolving learning landscapes. Their involvement helps ensure that new formats — such as micro-credentials and modular learning — are anchored in robust quality assurance systems and remain portable and trusted across national and European contexts.

Within the SACCORD multi-level model, HEIs complement the functions of the LSP and LEPs, helping to translate skills intelligence and policy direction into **structured learning opportunities**

and **professionally relevant training**. Their ability to synthesise academic, artistic, and technological knowledge positions them as critical intermediaries and stabilising actors within Europe's creative skills architecture.

3.4.3 Achievements and lessons learned through SACCORD

SACCORD's collaboration with HEIs has highlighted several important achievements and lessons relevant to the future development of creative skills in Europe.

First, HEIs are increasingly adopting **flexible learning formats**, including micro-credentials, blended learning, and modular courses. Institutions expressed strong interest in designing short learning units that respond to emerging technological trends, particularly around AI, immersive media, data literacy, and sustainable creative practices.

Second, SACCORD revealed the importance of **bridging the gap between academia and industry**. Creative labour markets evolve rapidly, and many HEIs reported challenges in keeping curricula aligned with fast-changing skill demands. Collaboration with enterprises, cultural institutions, and creative professionals is essential for ensuring relevance and employability. Unlike non-formal providers, HEIs are embedded in national accreditation and quality assurance systems designed to ensure educational integrity, equity, and public accountability. While these systems provide essential safeguards for learners and society, they can limit the speed at which new curricula or experimental formats can be formally introduced, particularly in short-form and non-degree provision.

Third, the project confirmed that HEIs face **structural and systemic barriers** that complicate innovation in learning formats. Accreditation cycles, funding models, governance structures, and recognition mechanisms are defined largely at national level, reflecting the fact that education policy remains the responsibility of EU Member States. Innovation in HEIs therefore depends not only on institutional initiative, but also on enabling national policy environments and targeted public investment.

Fourth, SACCORD demonstrated that HEIs can act as **anchors within territorial skills ecosystems**, supporting LEPs and collaborating with local authorities, creative hubs, and training providers. HEIs bring credibility and capacity that help stabilise local ecosystems and ensure continuity beyond project cycles.

Finally, HEIs increasingly recognise the importance of **transversal creative skills** -such as problem-solving, collaboration, design thinking, ethical reflection and systems thinking- across all disciplines. These competences support both creative professionals and learners in other sectors who increasingly rely on creativity as a driver of innovation.

Illustrative examples of HEI-led initiatives

- **Creative Futures Academy (Ireland):** The Creative Futures Academy represents a collaborative model between three Higher Arts Education Institutions — University College Dublin, IADT Dún Laoghaire, and the National College of Art and Design — working jointly to address emerging skills needs in the creative sector. Through close collaboration with industry and public partners, the Academy has developed flexible learning units and short courses designed to be compatible with emerging European micro-credential frameworks. This approach allows learners to access modular, stackable learning opportunities while

maintaining strong links to accredited higher-education provision and labour-market relevance.

- **CYANOTYPES pilots within Higher Arts Education Institutions:** The CYANOTYPES pilots demonstrate how higher arts education institutions can experiment with competence-based, modular training formats within a European cooperation context. Participating HEIs tested learning units aligned with the CYANOTYPES competence framework, exploring short-form, practice-based, and cross-sectoral learning offers developed in partnership with creative professionals, local ecosystems, and policy actors. These pilots illustrate how HEIs can contribute to innovation in lifelong learning and skills development while remaining anchored in quality assurance and public education missions.

3.4.4 Policy implications and recommendations for strengthening the role of HEIs

The role of HEIs within Europe's creative skills ecosystem has several important policy implications.

At European level, continued investment in **higher-education cooperation**, curriculum innovation, and micro-credentials development is critical. Programmes such as **Erasmus+**, **Creative Europe**, and **Horizon Europe** should provide targeted support for HEIs contributing to creative skills development, particularly in areas aligned with Europe's digital, social and green transitions. Strengthening the interoperability of micro-credentials through European-level standards will further enhance portability and learner mobility.

At national level, governments should enable HEIs to adopt **flexible accreditation models**, incorporate micro-credentials into national qualification frameworks, and strengthen cooperation between higher education, VET, and the cultural and creative ecosystem. Policies should also address funding gaps for updating curricula, investing in digital infrastructure, and supporting professional development for educators.

At regional and local levels, HEIs should be recognised as strategic partners within **territorial skills ecosystems**. Their involvement in LEPs can strengthen local innovation agendas, promote cross-sectoral collaboration, and create stronger links between education and labour-market needs.

For HEIs themselves, the SACCORD experience highlights the value of developing **co-designed training programmes**, establishing **cross-sectoral partnerships**, and **embedding lifelong learning into institutional strategies**. HEIs should continue expanding their offer of short, modular training formats, ensuring alignment with creative labour-market needs and with European policy priorities.

3.4.5 Outlook for the future role of HEIs in creative skills development

HEIs are poised to play an increasingly central role in shaping the future of skills within the Cultural and Creative Industries. As the sector faces technological disruption, new labour models, and sustainability requirements, HEIs will be essential for preparing learners to navigate and contribute to these transformations.

In the coming years, HEIs should continue to integrate emerging areas such as **AI-driven creative production**, **immersive environments**, **responsible innovation**, and **sustainable creative practice** into curricula. They will also be called upon to strengthen cooperation across sectors, supporting Europe's ambition to build a **cohesive, resilient, and innovation-driven skills ecosystem**.

By participating actively in the LSP, collaborating with LEPs, and adopting flexible, modular learning formats, HEIs can evolve into permanent and indispensable actors within Europe's creative skills architecture. Their continued engagement will be crucial for ensuring that the Creative and Cultural

Industries remain competitive, forward-looking, and equipped to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the coming decade.

3.5 Strategic dialogue and cross-sectoral recommendations

3.5.1 Role and evolution of strategic dialogue in the creative skills ecosystem

Strategic policy dialogue is an essential component of effective skills governance, particularly within complex and rapidly evolving ecosystems such as the Cultural and Creative Industries. As Europe advances major policy agendas -including the **European Skills Agenda**, the **Green Deal**, the **Digital Decade**, and the **New European Bauhaus**- the need for structured, ongoing dialogue between institutions, sectors, and governance levels has never been greater.

Within SACCORD, strategic dialogue evolved as a mechanism to connect **European-level frameworks, national policies, and territorial realities**. It enables continuous interaction between policymakers, education and training providers, cultural institutions, enterprises, and social partners, ensuring that creative skills remain a visible and recognised priority in wider debates on labour markets, innovation, and competitiveness.

The LSP plays a central role in this dialogue by acting as a **European coordination and intelligence platform**, while Local Ecosystem Partnerships (LEPs) provide grounded insight into the needs, barriers, and opportunities emerging across regions. Together, these structures form the backbone of a multi-level dialogue system capable of translating evidence into policy direction and ensuring coherence across governance layers. SACCORD's strategic dialogue activities -most notably plenary meetings, workshops, consultations, Creative Skills Week sessions, and working-group interactions- have helped establish a more structured interface between creative-sector expertise and policymaking processes.

3.5.2 Strategic value of a multi-level policy dialogue framework

The strategic value of sustained policy dialogue lies in its ability to strengthen **policy coherence**, support **evidence-based decision-making**, and bridge gaps between **creative-sector expertise** and **institutional processes** at European, national, and regional levels.

Such dialogue enables:

- **Feedback loops** between practice and policy, ensuring that emerging regional and sectoral realities inform European strategies.
- **Alignment of priorities** across governance levels, reducing fragmentation in skills interventions.
- **Cross-sectoral learning**, allowing creative skills to influence debates on digital transformation, sustainability, innovation, and entrepreneurship.
- **Stronger recognition** of the CCIs as key contributors to Europe's economic and societal goals.
- **Improved synergies** among EU-funded projects, facilitating knowledge exchange, complementarities, and the upscaling of successful practices across programmes and territories.

Strategic dialogue also enhances Europe's ability to anticipate future needs, supporting forward-looking policy approaches that take account of technological change, labour-market shifts, and societal transformation. By fostering exchange between actors who rarely meet in formal policy settings, strategic dialogue ensures that creative skills are not isolated in cultural policy but embedded across Europe's broader policy landscape.

3.5.3 Achievements and lessons learned through SACCORD

SACCORD has demonstrated that structured dialogue can meaningfully enhance cross-sectoral understanding, coordination, and policy relevance. During the project, several achievements became particularly evident.

First, the LSP emerged as a **recognised interlocutor** for the European Commission, particularly through its contributions to the Pact for Skills, Creative Skills Week, and working-group consultations. Its positioning enabled creative-sector stakeholders to bring their perspectives into EU-wide discussions, improving the visibility of the CCIs within broader skills debates.

Second, SACCORD helped establish **new channels of communication** between HEIs, cultural institutions, creative enterprises, regional authorities, and policymakers. These interactions revealed a shared need for coherent frameworks, improved recognition of creative competences, and stronger mechanisms for supporting lifelong learning.

Third, project activities exposed several structural challenges that hinder effective dialogue. These include the fragmentation of representation within the CCIs, limited time and resources among stakeholders for engagement, and gaps in the availability of **data and skills intelligence** necessary to support evidence-based discussion. Many national and regional authorities reported difficulties in understanding the creative labour market's complexity, reinforcing the importance of dedicated intermediaries such as the LSP and LEPs.

Fourth, SACCORD highlighted the value of **formally facilitated dialogue spaces**. Creative Skills Week, the Forward-Looking Plan workshops, thematic working groups, along with targeted policy-making actions all served as effective platforms for community building, consultation, and joint reflection. These experiences illustrate the importance of maintaining regular, structured opportunities for exchange beyond project cycles.

3.5.4 Policy implications and recommendations for strengthening strategic dialogue

The experience of SACCORD underscores the need to embed strategic dialogue more firmly within Europe's skills governance framework.

At European level, the Commission should continue supporting the LSP as a platform for **structured consultation**, ensuring that creative-sector expertise informs the design, implementation, and monitoring of skills-related initiatives. The forthcoming **Union of Skills** could institutionalise this function by establishing multi-sectoral coordination bodies and integrating LSPs into long-term governance structures.

At national level, governments should establish **cross-ministerial coordination mechanisms** - linking culture, labour, education, and innovation portfolios- to ensure that the CCIs are treated as a strategic skills ecosystem. National skills strategies should draw on evidence generated through LSP working groups and LEPs, embedding creative skills into wider employment, innovation, and regional development policies.

At regional and local levels, LEPs should be recognised as **critical intermediaries** for translating policy into practice and aggregating insights from creative communities. Their role in generating local intelligence and facilitating multi-stakeholder exchange positions them as essential partners for regional skills planning and S3 strategies.. This shift towards dialogues based around learning and skills rather than innovation per se is instructive and critically broadens the scope of the regional policy landscape.

The SACCORD experience also highlights the importance of **capacity-building** to support effective participation in policy dialogue. Creative organisations often require support to engage in policymaking processes, particularly smaller institutions or those outside major metropolitan centres.

Finally, Europe should invest in **permanent spaces for cross-sectoral dialogue**, ensuring that creative skills are integrated into strategic reflections on the future of work, innovation, sustainability, digital transformation, and societal change. Even from the early evidence of the impact of AI on the CCI, this cross-sectoral perspective is urgently needed if coherent responses to emerging challenges are to be coherently applied.

3.5.5 Outlook for the future of strategic dialogue in creative skills governance

Strategic dialogue will continue to play a decisive role in shaping the future of skills within the Cultural and Creative Industries. As Europe progresses toward a more integrated skills architecture, dialogue mechanisms must evolve from project-based initiatives into **permanent, institutionalised structures** capable of supporting long-term coordination and policy development.

The LSP is well positioned to serve as a **European focal point** for ongoing consultation, evidence sharing, and alignment of activities across governance levels. LEPs will remain essential sources of grounded intelligence, translating policy into action and ensuring that regional voices inform European priorities.

In the years ahead, strategic dialogue must become increasingly **forward-looking**, anticipating future trends -from AI-enabled creative production to new labour models and sustainability transitions- and ensuring that policy frameworks remain responsive, inclusive, and aligned with Europe’s cultural and economic ambitions.

By consolidating and formalising these mechanisms, Europe can build a skills governance system that is **cohesive, resilient, and future-ready**, enabling the Cultural and Creative Industries to thrive and contribute fully to the Union’s long-term goals.

3.6 Concluding reflections on the thematic pillars

The analysis across these thematic pillars demonstrates that strengthening skills within the Cultural and Creative Industries requires a **cohesive, multi-level governance approach** rather than isolated or short-term interventions. SACCORD has shown that effective skills development emerges from the interaction of several mutually reinforcing components: a strong **European coordination mechanism** through the LSP; territorially grounded insights and experimentation through **Local Ecosystem Partnerships (LEPs)**; modernised and modular learning pathways enabled by **Micro-credentials**; the integrating and knowledge-producing roles of **Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)**; and a structured, ongoing **strategic policy dialogue** connecting evidence, practice, and policymaking.

Taken together, these pillars reveal that the CCIs benefit most from approaches that combine **coordination, intelligence, experimentation, and cross-sectoral collaboration**. The LSP provides a European backbone that aligns actors and frames shared priorities. LEPs translate these priorities into locally relevant action, ensuring policies resonate with territorial realities. Micro-credentials and higher education institutions enable flexible, stackable learning systems that adapt to technological and societal change. Strategic dialogue ensures coherence across governance levels and keeps creative skills visible within broader European agendas.

These reflections point toward a maturing ecosystem in which the CCIs are no longer peripheral to Europe's skills policies but increasingly recognised as **drivers of innovation, sustainability, and social value**. They also highlight the need for long-term, stable structures -supported by dedicated investment and institutional commitment- that can sustain the advances achieved under SACCORD.

The next chapter builds on these insights by outlining a **Policy Action Plan** that operationalises the recommendations arising from the thematic pillars. It provides a roadmap for strengthening governance, consolidating multi-level cooperation, modernising learning systems, and ensuring that the Cultural and Creative Industries continue contributing decisively to Europe's economic, social, and cultural future.

4. Policy Action Plan

4.1 Purpose and Scope of the Action Plan

The Policy Action Plan translates the thematic insights and recommendations presented in Chapter 3 into a structured set of measures designed to **sustain, scale, and institutionalise SACCORD's results beyond the project's lifetime**. It serves both as a strategic roadmap for policymakers and as an operational guide for the **Large-Scale Partnership for the Cultural and Creative Industries (LSP CCI)** and its wider community of stakeholders.

Aligned with the principles of the **European Skills Agenda** and the **Pact for Skills**, the Action Plan supports shared objectives of mobilising collective action around **upskilling and reskilling**, reinforcing skills ecosystems, and strengthening Europe's long-term competitiveness, sustainability, and social cohesion. It outlines priorities across **European, national, and regional/local** levels, addressing the needs of policymakers, education and training providers, cultural institutions, and creative-sector organisations.

By connecting SACCORD's evidence base with concrete instruments for implementation, this Action Plan provides a foundation for **a resilient, coordinated, and forward-looking European skills ecosystem** for the Cultural and Creative Industries.

4.2 Methodology for developing the Action Plan

The Policy Action Plan has been developed through an **evidence-driven, partner-informed process** involving SACCORD partners and stakeholders engaged in the LSP CCI. The Plan is based on **insights embedded within the project's work packages**, including:

- findings from the LSP governance and engagement structures;
- analyses from the LEP pilots and territorial mapping exercises;
- consultations and thematic exchanges within the LSP's Working Groups;
- insights generated through micro-credential and HEI-related activities;
- strategic reflections undertaken during Creative Skills Week sessions, LSP plenaries and other policy dialogue activities.

Each proposed action reflects the following guiding principles:

Relevance and feasibility – aligned with existing EU and national policy frameworks and compatible with ongoing programmes and funding instruments.

Scalability and sustainability – supporting mechanisms and structures that can be maintained and expanded beyond SACCORD's duration.

Complementarity – maximising synergy with relevant initiatives such as CYANOTYPES, EKIP, EIT Culture & Creativity KIC, while avoiding redundancy.

Evidence-based decision-making – grounded in the intelligence generated by the project's analytical activities.

4.3 Priority actions by governance level

4.3.1 European level

At the European level, SACCORD's recommendations converge on the necessity of providing **institutional recognition**, **long-term funding**, and **strategic coordination mechanisms** for the Cultural and Creative Industries within the evolving EU skills architecture.

The European Commission should consider embedding the LSP CCI within the forthcoming **Union of Skills** framework as a **permanent sectoral coordination structure**, enabling stable governance, visibility, and cross-sectoral integration.

SMART action (Specific)	KPI / evidence (Measurable)	Owner (Accountable)	Key enablers (Achievable/ Relevant)	Deadline (Time-bound)
Embed the LSP CCI as a permanent coordination mechanism within the Pact for Skills (mandate, governance, annual work plan).	Formal recognition decision + published Terms of Reference; annual work plan adopted; at least 2 policy-dialogue moments per year.	European Commission (DG EMPL) + Pact for Skills Secretariat; LSP CCI Steering Group.	Secretariat capacity; governance charter; broad subsector representation (incl. freelancers and SMEs).	By Q4 2026 (recognition + ToR); annual review each Q4.
Launch a dedicated Erasmus+ funding line/call to support LSP/LEP coordination functions (governance, intelligence, peer learning).	Call published; coordination projects funded (e.g., at least 3); shared reporting framework for ecosystem outcomes.	DG EAC + EACEA (programme design and implementation)	Clear eligibility for ecosystems; simplified administration; synergy note with ESF+/ERDF.	Call in 2026; first grants start 2027.
Operationalise a European Creative Skills Observatory function through the LSP CCI (data, trends, foresight briefs).	Minimum viable dataset defined; dashboard prototype online; 2 trend/foresight briefs per year.	LSP CCI consortium (delivery) with DG EMPL/DG EAC (policy interface).	Data-sharing agreements; alignment with Cedefop/Eurostat where feasible; dedicated analyst capacity.	Prototype by Q4 2026; full rollout by Q4 2027.
Mainstream creative skills across EU flagship initiatives and programmes	Creative skills referenced in at least 3 programme guidance	DG EAC, DG EMPL, DG REGIO, DG CNECT (joint).	Inter-DG working group; mapping of relevant calls; communication toolkit for	Inter-DG working group by Q2 2026; guidance

(NEB, green/digital skills, cohesion, innovation).	notes/calls; cross-programme synergy note published.		managing authorities.	updates in 2026-2027.
Publish EU implementation guidance for micro-credentials in CCIs (quality assurance, stackability, portability), aligned with the Council Recommendation.	Guidance note published; QA checklist available; at least 5 pilots aligned and documented.	European Commission (DG EMPL/DG EAC) with QA bodies and sector stakeholders.	Common learning-outcomes language; credential registry pilots; stakeholder consultation.	Guidance by Q3 2026; pilots evaluated by Q4 2027.

4.3.2 National level

At national level, SACCORD emphasises the need to link European priorities with coherent **domestic skills frameworks**, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of creative skills.

SMART action (Specific)	KPI / evidence (Measurable)	Owner (Accountable)	Key enablers (Achievable/ Relevant)	Deadline (Time-bound)
Include CCIs explicitly in national skills strategies and related budgets (lifelong learning, digital/green transitions).	CCI chapter in national skills strategy; dedicated budget line(s); annual monitoring report including CCI indicators.	National government (Education + Labour + Culture/Innovation, as applicable).	Use LSP CCI evidence; consult sector stakeholders and social partners; align with national reform cycles.	Next strategy/budget cycle, no later than end 2026.
Adopt a national framework for micro-credential recognition and credit transfer (stackability toward degrees/qualifications).	Framework published; recognition rules agreed with QA bodies; at least 3 HEI/VET providers participating in pilots.	Education ministry + national QA/accreditation body.	Alignment with EU micro-credentials principles; digital credential infrastructure; pilot funding.	Framework by Q4 2026; pilots in 2027.
Set up an inter-ministerial CCI skills steering group and a national contact	Steering group established; quarterly meetings; named contact	Lead ministry (or central government coordination unit).	Formal mandate; participation of agencies/funders; shared work programme.	By Q2 2026.

point linked to the LSP CCI/LEPs.	point with published remit.			
Expand access to reskilling for freelancers and self-employed creatives (e.g., vouchers/learning accounts; tailored guidance).	Eligibility rules updated; uptake and completion rates reported; learner satisfaction results published.	Labour/Social Affairs ministry + Public Employment Services (or equivalent).	Simple application; outreach via professional associations; co-financing with ESF+ where relevant.	Pilot in 2026; scale-up decision by end 2027.
Embed co-design with sector/LEPs in HEI/VET funding or performance agreements; require modular, work-compatible pathways.	Funding/performance criteria updated; number of co-designed modules/pathways; employer/learner feedback captured.	Education ministry + national funding councils.	Templates for co-design; staff training; support for micro-credential development and QA.	Implemented for the 2027 funding/performance cycle.

4.3.3 Regional and local levels

Regional & local authorities are essential for translating European ambitions into practical action. SACCORD's LEP pilots clearly showed that territorial ecosystems are indispensable for meaningful and sustained skills development. The roadmap is designed as a **living framework**, adaptable to political cycles, evolving EU agendas, & the continued maturation of the LSP and LEPs.

SMART action (Specific)	KPI / evidence (Measurable)	Owner (Accountable)	Key enablers (Achievable/ Relevant)	Deadline (Time-bound)
Formalise LEPs as permanent territorial coordination mechanisms with multi-annual funding and a clear governance charter.	LEP charter signed; coordinator appointed; multi-annual budget secured; annual action plan published.	Regional authority + municipalities, in partnership with sector organisations.	Match funding; alignment with regional development plans; stakeholder representation.	By Q4 2026.
Embed creative skills priorities into Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) and regional innovation/culture programmes.	S3 (or equivalent) update includes creative skills; at least 1 call or measure includes CCI skills actions.	Managing authority / regional innovation agency.	S3 stakeholder process; mapping of regional CCI strengths; evidence from LEPs.	At the next S3 update, no later than 2027.

Create an annual micro-pilot fund (vouchers, living labs, cluster training) to test modular learning for AI/green transitions.	Fund launched; at least 10 micro-pilots per year; evaluation report and scaling recommendations published.	Regional development agency + cultural/innovation funders.	Light-touch grant scheme; mentorship; partnerships with HEIs/VET and clusters.	Start 2026; annual cycles thereafter.
Co-design regionally relevant learning pathways with cultural institutions, companies, freelancers, HEIs/VET, linked to micro-credentials.	At least 3 pathways published; enrolment and completion reported; learner outcomes documented.	LEP secretariat + education/training providers.	Co-design workshops; shared learning outcomes framework; recognition agreements among providers.	First pathways by Q2 2027.
Set inclusion targets (rural areas, underrepresented groups, youth, non-traditional learners) and provide access support measures.	Targets defined; participation data reported annually; bursaries/support measures in place.	Regional authority + LEP partners.	Community partners; travel/fee support; accessible formats and mentoring.	Targets by Q3 2026; annual reporting from 2027.

4.4 Implementation roadmap

As SACCORD ends in **December 2025**, consequently, the revised roadmap begins in **2026**, ensuring full alignment with SACCORD's lifecycle and post-project implementation horizon.

Implementation timeline

Timeframe	Level	Key Actors	Actions	Expected Outcomes & Indicators
2026–2027 (Short-term)	EU	European Commission, LSP CCI	Formal recognition of the LSP as a sectoral coordination mechanism; continued policy dialogue with DG EMPL, DG GROW, DG EAC	Stronger institutional positioning and visibility Indicator: #policy dialogues

	National	Ministries of Culture, Education, Labour	Inclusion of CCIs in national skills strategies; establishment of national liaison mechanisms with the LSP	Improved policy alignment and multi-level coordination Indicator: # national strategies regarding up- & re-skilling (including CCIs)
	Regional /Local	Regional authorities, LEPs, CreativeFED networks	Expansion or consolidation of LEPs; launch of pilot training initiatives	Enhanced territorial implementation capacity Indicator: #LEPs established
2028–2029 (Medium-term)	EU	European Commission, EACEA, implementing agencies	Creation of a funding line for LSP coordination and activities development	A sustainable operational base for European-level coordination Indicator: #calls for LSPs
	National	Skills councils, qualification authorities, training providers	Integration of creative micro-credentials into NQFs and digital credentialing systems	Greater recognition and visibility of creative learning pathways Indicator: #micro-credentials recognised/stackable
	Regional /Local	Universities, VET centres, cultural institutions, clusters	Mainstreaming of creative skills into regional innovation and S3 strategies	Strengthened cross-sectoral integration Indicator: #S3 strategies recognising CCIs
2030+ (Long-term)	EU	European Commission, Member States, LSP	Long-term reinforcement of the LSP as Europe's central Creative Skills Intelligence and Monitoring Structure	Evidence-based policy development and monitoring Indicator: #Recognition of the LSP
	National /Regional	Governments, creative networks, ecosystem intermediaries	Full integration of creative skills into policy and funding frameworks	Long-term systemic resilience

				Indicator: #policies & programs adopting CCIs
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4.5 Concluding remarks

The Policy Action Plan consolidates SACCORD’s strategic vision into a coherent set of measures capable of guiding policy and investment decisions across governance levels. Its effective implementation will require sustained collaboration between **European institutions, Member States, regional authorities, and sectoral organisations**. Strengthened through SACCORD, the **LSP CCI** is now positioned to act as a permanent interface between policy, education, and industry, ensuring that creative skills become a central pillar of Europe’s innovation, sustainability, and resilience agenda.

The next and final chapter presents the overarching conclusions and key recommendations for embedding SACCORD’s achievements within Europe’s long-term skills architecture.

5. Final conclusions

5.1 Consolidating SACCORD's contribution

The SACCORD project has demonstrated that strengthening skills development in the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) requires an integrated, multi-level approach that links **European coordination, territorial ecosystems, flexible learning pathways, higher-education innovation, and continuous strategic policy dialogue**. Over its implementation period, SACCORD has significantly contributed to the maturation of Europe's skills governance landscape by building the foundations of a more coherent, sustainable, and forward-looking system for creative skills.

A key achievement has been the consolidation of the **Large-Scale Partnership for the Cultural and Creative Industries (LSP CCI)** as the recognised coordination structure for the sector under the Pact for Skills. Through SACCORD, the LSP has developed from a manifesto-based community into a **structured, intelligence-driven European mechanism** that brings together more than 230 organisations across Europe. Supported by the creation of a Secretariat, revitalised Working Groups, and new digital infrastructures, the LSP now functions as an anchor for sector-wide collaboration, enabling coordinated contributions to European skills policy.

At the same time, SACCORD deepened the territorial dimension of skills governance by piloting **Local Ecosystem Partnerships (LEPs)** in Amsterdam, Prague, Vienna, and Upper Austria. These pilots confirmed that the transformation of Europe's skills agenda depends not only on high-level policy ambition but on **locally grounded ecosystems** capable of diagnosing needs, mobilising stakeholders, and implementing tailored solutions.

The project has also advanced the debate on **micro-credentials**, highlighting their potential to create flexible learning pathways suited to the realities of creative work. Likewise, the involvement of **Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)** has reinforced the imperative for curricula, research, and innovation to better align with creative labour markets. Finally, SACCORD's strategic dialogues - through Creative Skills Weeks, LSP plenaries, and partner exchanges- have demonstrated the value of structured, continuous conversation between practitioners and policymakers.

Collectively, these achievements contribute to the implementation of the **European Skills Agenda**, the **Pact for Skills**, the **European Education Area**, the **Green Deal**, and the **Digital Decade Policy Programme**, positioning creativity as both a beneficiary and enabler of Europe's broader strategic priorities.

5.2 Lessons learned

The experiences gathered across SACCORD highlight several overarching lessons that should inform future European skills initiatives.

First, **structured coordination matters**. The LSP CCI has shown that when supported by appropriate governance, European partnerships can bridge the gap between policy ambition and sectoral practice, providing stability, shared intelligence, and strategic direction.

Second, **territorial ownership is essential**. The LEPs demonstrated that regional actors need both autonomy and support to contextualise training offers, integrate creative skills into local development strategies, and respond to region-specific economic and cultural dynamics.

Third, **flexible learning pathways are indispensable** for creative work. Micro-credentials offer a promising model to support freelancers, self-employed professionals, and workers engaged in hybrid or cross-disciplinary practices. Their recognition at national and European levels remains a crucial next step.

Fourth, **evidence and dialogue must be continuous**. The success of SACCORD's Working Groups, LEPs, and strategic exchanges confirms that policy learning flourishes in environments where stakeholders share insights regularly, rather than episodically.

Finally, the project reaffirmed that the CCIs are uniquely positioned to contribute to Europe's twin transitions. Creative professionals bring transversal skills -such as systems thinking, problem-solving, design literacy, and cultural awareness- that increasingly underpin innovation across sectors.

5.3 Future directions

Building on SACCORD's results, several priorities emerge for the next phase of policy and ecosystem development:

1. **Institutionalising the LSP CCI as a permanent coordination structure.**
The LSP's growing maturity demonstrates its strategic relevance as a European interface for skills policy. Long-term institutional recognition and dedicated funding are essential to maintain its Secretariat, Working Groups, and intelligence-gathering functions.
2. **Deepening regional implementation capacity.**
Future work should reinforce the role of LEPs and regional partners, embedding creative skills into **Smart Specialisation Strategies**, innovation agendas, and employment initiatives. Supporting regions in scaling pilots and accessing EU funding instruments will be crucial.
3. **Advancing recognition of creative learning through micro-credentials.**
Pilot actions under Erasmus+ or Creative Europe should test interoperability of creative-sector micro-credentials within the **EQF** and national systems. A European "library of creative micro-credentials," potentially hosted through the LSP, could support transparency and cross-border recognition.
4. **Strengthening evidence and policy dialogue.**
A structured **Creative Skills Policy Forum** -convened under the LSP- would ensure ongoing exchanges between DG EMPL, DG EAC, DG GROW, and other EU bodies. This forum would work in synergy with the LSP's intelligence function, ensuring that monitoring, analysis, and policy dialogue remain integrated within a single governance structure.

Together, these directions outline a roadmap for transforming SACCORD's results into long-term systemic change.

5.4 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The following overarching recommendations synthesise the project’s strategic implications:

- **European level:** The Commission should formally recognise LSPs’ strategic significance and financially support them as permanent coordination mechanisms within the **Union of Skills**. Dedicated funding for LSP coordination and intelligence would secure operational continuity and strengthen evidence-based policymaking.
- **National level:** Member States should integrate creative skills into national strategies and establish **liaison mechanisms** with the LSP CCI. Cross-ministerial collaboration between culture, labour, education, and innovation departments is essential.
- **Regional level:** Regional authorities should embed creative skills in development and innovation policies, leverage LEPs as coordination hubs, and align skills initiatives with cohesion-policy and Smart Specialisation agendas.
- **Sectoral level:** CCI organisations, networks, and training providers should continue contributing insights through the LSP, ensuring the sector maintains a collective voice in European policy discussions.
- **Research and education community:** Continued research is required to map creative competences, monitor skills gaps, and support data-driven strategies. HEIs and VET providers should continue aligning curricula with emerging creative labour-market needs.

Policymakers should also ensure that creative skills are **mainstreamed** across all EU agendas related to sustainability, digitalisation, industrial policy, and social inclusion.

5.5 Final reflection

SACCORD has demonstrated that when coordination is structured and collaboration is sustained, the Cultural and Creative Industries can become catalysts for transformation across Europe’s economies and societies. Their capacity to integrate cultural value with technological, social, and economic innovation positions them as **essential contributors to Europe’s long-term resilience**.

As the European Union progresses toward a more integrated **Union of Skills**, the lessons from SACCORD should guide future policy design. Skills ecosystems thrive when they are **collaborative, inclusive, evidence-based, and creatively inspired**. Embedding these principles into Europe’s long-term strategy will be the most enduring legacy of SACCORD -and a decisive step toward a more innovative, sustainable, and future-ready creative workforce.