CrAFt

CrAFt Policy Briefs
Summary

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Creating
Actionable
Futures

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Table of Contents

Document Information **2**

Table of Contents **3**

Executive Summary **4**

1. CrAFt Policy Engagement **5**
- 1.1 Scope 5
- 1.2 Target audiences 6
- 1.3 Dissemination 7

2. CrAFt's contribution to the NEB Mission Survey **8**
- 2.1 Context 8
- 2.2 Key messages 8
- 2.3 Links with other initiatives 11

3. ReCrAFting Cities **12**
- 3.1 Context 12
- 3.2 Key messages 12
- 3.3 Links with other initiatives 14

4. NEB Alliance Manifesto **15**
- 4.1 Context 15
- 4.2 Key messages 15
- 4.3 Links with other initiatives 16

5. NEB Facility Public Consultation – CrAFt's Answer **17**
- 5.1 Context 17
- 5.2 Key messages 17
- 5.3 Links with other initiatives 18

6. CrAFt at European Week of Regions and Cities **20**
- 6.1 Context 20
- 6.2 Key messages 20
- 6.3 Links with other initiatives 22

7. CrAFt two key messages and 10 key principles for the future of NEB **23**
- 7.1 Context 23
- 7.2 Key messages 23
- 7.3 Links with other initiatives 25

8. Conclusions **26**

Executive Summary

Creating Actionable Futures (CrAFt) is a Coordination and Support Action funded by the Horizon Europe programme of the European Union. It is part of the EU Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities (Cities Mission) and forms a bridge towards the New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative.

CrAFt supports cities to not only become climate-neutral, but —in the spirit of the **New European Bauhaus**— also inclusive, beautiful and sustainable. The project is bringing together 73 cities/municipalities, citizens, property owners, policymakers, arts and academia in co-shaping the transition to climate neutrality.

CrAFt established **three operational Sandbox Cities** —Amsterdam, Bologna and Prague— and effectively gathered commitment from 70+ cities and city clusters (**CrAFt Reference Cities**) that have engaged in testing local collaborative governance models and sharing knowledge among them to achieve the ambitious goal to become climate-neutral by 2030.

This document —**Deliverable 6.5**– summarises six policy briefs developed by CrAFt, together with their context, links to other relevant initiatives, and takeaways based on extracted knowledge and project stories.

The briefs varied in terms of context and messaging, including **contributions to public consultations**, **summaries of events**, **one policy manifesto** and **one synthetic brief with key messages and principles** from CrAFt illustrated with case studies and stories.

The six CrAFt policy briefs emphasise **the critical role of culture, creativity, and co-creation** in advancing the goals of the Cities Mission, the New European Bauhaus (NEB) and the European Green Deal. They highlight the need **to integrate science, technology, arts, and community participation** to make cities more inclusive, sustainable, and beautiful. Cross-sectoral collaboration, breaking down silos, and engaging diverse stakeholders—including policymakers, artists, and grassroots movements—are essential for driving **meaningful urban transformation**.

Experimentation and real-life testing should be prioritised to ensure effective and lasting change. Above all, fostering a participatory culture where communities are actively involved in shaping climate-neutral cities is fundamental to achieving long-term sustainability.

1. CrAFt Policy Engagement

1.1 Scope

From the start, policy engagement has been central to CrAFt's mission, working with policymakers at all levels—from local to European—as key stakeholders. We used CrAFt's experiences to inform policies that are better suited to real-world needs by sharing tested, impactful practices.

CrAFt has been supporting stakeholders by:

- **Promoting collaborative local governance models** inspired by the New European Bauhaus (NEB) and real-life examples from CrAFt Cities.
- **Bridging technology and arts/culture through new engagement formats** for students, property owners, and the cultural sector.
- **Highlighting the social benefits of climate action**, including inclusion and contributions from cultural and creative industries.

At local, national, and European levels, we aimed to raise awareness and influence policy through best practices, impact stories, and insights from CrAFt Sandbox and Reference Cities. Our work has directly informed policies through:

- **Developing policy briefs** based on lessons from Sandbox Cities, NEB Lighthouse Demonstrators[1], and other related projects.
- **Sharing policy insights** through a targeted online and offline storytelling-driven communication strategy.

The six policy briefs of CrAFt varied in scope and purpose, with **two briefs answering to public consultations** of the European Commission (on the **NEB Mission** and **NEB Facility 2025-2027**), **two briefs summarising takeaways from selected public events** (the *ReCrafting Cities* online event for cultural and creative sectors, and the *CrAFting DivAirCity* event during the European Week of Regions and Cities in 2024), **one policy manifesto document** (NEB Alliance Manifesto), and **one document with CrAFt key messages and principles** for the future of NEB (based on CrAFt stories and project deliverables).

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-miss-2021-neb-01-01

1.2 Target audiences

For the sake of its community and policy engagement actions, CrAFt identified three overall target groups that drive climate action and promote collaborative governance models.

1. **European Programmes & Initiatives** – stakeholders, organisations and individuals already actively involved in co-shaping pan-European and wider initiatives such as the EU Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities[2], the NetZeroCities platform[3], the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[4], the Davos Declaration *Towards a European vision of high-quality Baukultur*[5], and the Smart Cities and Communities Lighthouse projects[6].

2. **Cities, Communities & Regions** – Local and regional authorities, policymakers, city developers, and cities involved in the Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission: characterised by varying level of engagement in EU topics and actions

3. **Societal Stakeholders & Beneficiaries** – Citizens, property owners, tenants, cultural and creative sectors, universities and higher arts education institutions: other stakeholders that are oftentimes not directly involved in EU actions and initiatives, but their engagement remains crucial for climate-neutrality goals.

All three groups constituted potential target audiences for CrAFt policy briefs. This document therefore specifies which takeaways, recommendations and suggestions are relevant for each one of them.

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[2] https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/climate-neutral-and-smart-cities_en

[3] https://netzerocities.eu/

[4] https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

[5] https://ace-cae.eu/publication/davos-declaration-towards-a-high-quality-baukultur-for-europe/

[6] https://cordis.europa.eu/programme/id/H2020_SCC-1-2016-2017

1.3 Dissemination

CrAFt was able to share its policy messages and recommendations through online and offline platforms, stakeholder networks, and major EU policy events.

A key action for CrAFt communication and policy engagement was **building a community of practice around the 70+ Reference Cities**, integrating them with CrAFt partners. Through events, discussions, and online sessions, CrAFt refined policy themes and developed **six targeted policy briefs** aligned with the New European Bauhaus (NEB) values and working principles.

Beyond communication, active engagement of partners was crucial. CrAFt partners provided content, organised events, and created opportunities for city representatives to interact and exchange ideas. CrAFt has worked to integrate city representatives into broader stakeholder events, expanding their influence beyond their usual circles. **Key engagement events** that took place included for instance:

- *CrAFt Reference Cities Kick-off* (Prague, October 2022)
- *CrAFt Cities sessions* (online, January-April 2023)
- *CrAFting Cities Together* (Bologna, April 2023)
- *CrAFting Tomorrow's Cities* (Amsterdam, February 2024)

Attending and presenting at large-scale stakeholder events helped CrAFt share its findings, policy recommendations, and engage stakeholders. The team prioritised events linked to the Cities Mission and its NetZeroCities platform, the New European Bauhaus initiative, and key EU policy platforms. Dissemination efforts included presentations, networking, surveys, and distributing materials.

2. CrAFt's contribution to the NEB Mission Survey[7]

2.1 Context

The first policy brief of CrAFt was the **contribution to the NEB Mission Survey**, submitted and subsequently published online on 28 November 2023. After the European Commission announced in July 2023 a **potential sixth Horizon Europe Mission dedicated to the New European Bauhaus**, subsequently launching public consultations open until December 2023, CrAFt partners worked together to formulate a joint response to the survey.

To facilitate the process, CrAFt set up a **working group among partners**. Partners provided contributions, discussed and brainstormed on the objectives of the proposed NEB Mission and its implementation. The consolidated answers were provided on behalf of CrAFt by the end of 2023.

While the proposal for the NEB Mission was not successful, the process was very useful for CrAFt. The modalities of CrAFt partners working closely together on policy messages were later replicated for other policy briefs, in particular the **NEB Alliance Manifesto** (Policy Brief 3) and CrAFt's answer to the **NEB Facility public consultation** (Policy Brief 4).

2.2 Key messages

General takeaways

The brief pointed out that in order for the NEB Mission to be faithful to the initial spirit of the New European Bauhaus, it should concentrate on **bringing the European Green Deal to the daily lives and living spaces of inhabitants** across Europe and promoting an transdisciplinary, intersectoral, and collaborative culture of change and innovation.

Europe, given its history, diversity and strong cultural dimension, has a **major opportunity to become the first climate-neutral continent** in the world. However, Europe needs to focus not only on digital and economic solutions, but on putting its people at the heart of the change process.

[7] https://bit.ly/NEBMissionContribution

Bringing the European Green Deal closer to citizens and their living spaces and experiences requires genuinely connecting the world of science, technology, art and culture. The human element thus remains its centre.

Takeaways for European programmes & initiatives (European stakeholders)

- There is a need for **more impact research for the NEB initiative**, aimed at showing the quantitative and qualitative benefits of a transdisciplinary, trans-sectoral and multi-actor approach towards the green transition.
- **Innovation in design, technology and processes** that can help transform neighbourhoods in sustainable and inclusive ways should be encouraged. This includes supporting experimentation and development of new methodologies for innovation that is grassroot-led, participatory, and/or interdisciplinary, to complement the already existing formats which are not yet addressing the needs brought forth by the climate crisis.
- While many challenges are shared, local contexts differ widely across Europe: **the potential NEB Mission should be flexible and adaptable**, with an emphasis on sustainability, inclusion, aesthetics, quality of life, and innovation that can bring positive change to neighbourhoods across Europe, telling the unique stories of these local contexts.
- **Funding:** providing funding for the implementation of innovative, transdisciplinary, participatory and experimental projects and initiatives, **with higher potential risk but also higher reward** (e.g. support from European funds, public or private investments, crowdfunding initiatives, and grant programmes for local communities).
- **Innovation**: it can have different angles, so the Mission should look beyond the 'obvious' methodologies and industries. For example, in cities, it could include developing smarter cities for, by and with their citizens using digital technologies to improve energy efficiency and mobility. It can also mean supporting grassroot cultural, inclusive and green citizen initiatives, helping them to scale up. Most importantly, in order to achieve sustainable and long-term change, it would mean innovating governance models in such a way that the green transition is rooted in collaboration between municipalities, industries, public and private organisations, and citizens.

Takeaways for cities, communities & regions (incl. policy initiatives)

- **Interdisciplinary collaboration**: making sure that teams working on the transition of neighbourhoods, cities, and the lived environment are of diverse disciplines and backgrounds (including the arts). This approach can support innovative thinking and a holistic approach to transformation, underlining the value of working together. It is particularly valuable to already integrate this approach in education institutions, preparing students for a future in which they will have to work with and communicate with people from a variety of backgrounds.
- **Participation**: involving residents in the ideation and decision-making process and working with local communities and organisations to achieve common goals. Co-creation and co-decision processes.
- **Involving and empowering local communities**: consultation, workshops and dialogue with residents to take into account their needs, views and knowledge, from creating a joint vision to anchoring the decisions, planning, implementing and documenting strategic policies. It is also important to establish mechanisms to maintain this cooperation and empower communities after the potential NEB Mission will have ended, to ensure the long-term sustainability of the initiative.
- **Outreach and supporting civic participation**: raising awareness of sustainability and leveraging the potential of cultural and artistic organisations and initiatives in bringing people together and increasing civic democratic participation, which is key to making collaborative processes successful (see the report from the European Commission, *Culture and Democracy, the Evidence*[8], for reference).

Takeaways for societal stakeholders & beneficiaries (other stakeholders)

- **Art and culture**: creating accessible opportunities and spaces for art, culture and informal education at different scales and levels are key for democratic processes and the participation of citizens. Artistic (research) methodologies and artistic intelligence can also be means for boosting innovation and/or community participation.

8 https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/07370fba-110d-11ee-b12e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

- **Education**: expanding the traditional education models with porous models that are made for and with citizens (e.g. micro-credential-based courses, training for community managers, non-formal education opportunities like folk high schools, bringing local expertise and crafts within formal education programmes), and embedding co-creation, transversal and green competencies from day 1 in formal education of most disciplines (such as those outlined in GreenComp: the European Sustainability Competence Framework[9]).

- **Youth and student engagement**: paying particular attention to including the voices of youth. The CrAFt project has been piloting various formats of transdisciplinary student engagement and giving a platform to student-led initiatives. These can be found on the CrAFt website[10].

2.3 Links with other initiatives

The New European Bauhaus initiative needs to define its vision of *community engagement and local democracy* **in connection with other European policies** and frameworks actively engaged on these themes, such as the **European Cohesion Policy**, **the EU Youth Strategy**, and **the strategic framework for the EU's cultural policy**.

Experiences and insights from the currently running and completed NEB projects, including the **6 NEB lighthouse projects**, and **5 existing Horizon Europe Missions** should be used to draft the objectives for the NEB Mission. Furthermore, a large community of people and organisations across Europe are already implementing NEB projects and initiatives, funded by the various EU programmes, or carrying out initiatives closely linked to one or more of the NEB values, without necessarily using the same terminology. They should all be consulted and heard in order to make the process of building up the future of NEB genuinely bottom-up and inclusive.

9 https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/greencomp-european-sustainability-competence-framework_en

10 https://craft-cities.eu/students/

3. ReCrAFting Cities[11]

3.1 Context

The second policy brief of CrAFt is the **summary of proceedings** of the *ReCrAFting Cities* online event. On 6 December 2023, ECF organised a 3-hour online session *ReCrAFting Cities. Arts and culture for sustainable urban spaces*. The rationale behind the session was to gather further suggestions as to CrAFt deliverables and local stakeholders' needs, together with the perspective of cultural actors and initiatives.

This collaborative session brought together **cultural and creative sectors**, but also other stakeholders: the cities, property owners, students as well as local changemakers and activists. In a more collaborative way, we can exchange on more levels. The event was attended by representatives of local authorities, urban networks as well as **EU-level policy-makers** from several Directorates of the European Commission invited as speakers (DG RTD, JRC, DG EAC).

The summary of the session and the proceedings of the event were made public to CrAFt audiences on the website, together with an open call for contributions on the role of arts and culture in the future of cities. The session summary was made available as one of the CrAFt policy briefs.

3.2 Key messages

General takeaways

ReCrAFting Cities online event was above all addressing **three following questions**:

- How can arts and culture make cities more inclusive, sustainable and beautiful?
- How can city representatives and cultural operators improve their cooperation for the benefit of more inclusive, sustainable and beautiful cities?
- What role do arts and culture play in the framework of the New European Bauhaus and broader EU policies addressing environmental sustainability and the urban transition?

[11] https://bit.ly/RecraftingCitiesProceedings

The speakers shared stories about **using art to improve city life**, including successful cases of **inclusive fashion**, **multifunctional community spaces**, and **renewal of industrial complexes**, schools and churches. The participating city representatives and policymakers from city, regional and EU levels all demonstrated a strong interest in using art to address city challenges. Furthermore, they all agreed that cross-sectoral cooperation and stakeholder involvement are paramount to make cities better for everyone.

Takeaways for European programmes & initiatives (European stakeholders)

- ***Radical* collaboration**, i.e. innovative, out-of-the-box, bringing unlikely stakeholders together, comprehensive and underpinning all other activities, can bring considerable added value to policy-making also on the European level.
- Community engagement is the **fuel for thriving societies** across Europe.

Takeaways for cities, communities & regions (incl. policy initiatives)

How can cities and the cultural sector improve their cooperation for the benefit of sustainable development and citizen participation?

- By **mobilising collective intelligence** and defining shared goals through glossaries, joint vision, and identifying opportunities.
- By **ensuring access to funding** for both small and structured initiatives to maintain and develop the community.
- By emphasising the **importance of internal work for cultural institutions**, integrating environmental efforts in daily practices and activities, and not outsourcing problems.
- By recognising the **value of cultural heritage** and **utilising existing cultural spaces** (libraries, museums) as meeting spaces for creative collaboration, daily life encounters and conversations.
- By **opening co-creative, interdisciplinary and collaborative processes for governance to a wide range of participants**, including students and out-of-reach communities, with ambassadors in neighborhoods.
- By **using creativity to accelerate results**, acknowledging that visible outcomes in cities and urban development take time.

Takeaways for societal stakeholders & beneficiaries (other stakeholders)

- Climate City Contracts and climate action plans should be **open to various types of stakeholders**, not only the official and institutionalised ones (i.e. local authorities).
- Projects like CrAFt can **provide valuable resources**, information and guidance.
- Arts and culture act as **catalysts for social inclusion.**
- Arts and Culture can be **remedies for well-being** and a sense of belonging in times of crisis.

3.3 Links with other initiatives

During the *ReCrAFting Cities* online event, a number of suggestions was made as to **how local stakeholders can get more closely involved in the European cultural ecosystem** and wider European reflections on arts, culture, public space, quality architecture, and advocacy. The suggestions made included:

- **Participating in calls launched by the European Union**, including for instance specific, more research-oriented calls under **Horizon Europe programme**, but also initiatives **supporting individual cultural action and cultural mobility such as Culture Moves Europe**[12]
- **Getting in touch with National Contact Points for the New European Bauhaus**[13], or finding more info on the NEB website on how to get involved
- Joining initiatives such as the Creative Europe-funded **Living Spaces peer-learning programme**[14] carried out by Eurocities and its partners
- Joining pan-European advocacy initiatives such as the **Cultural Deal for Europe**[15]

[12] https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/creative-europe-culture-strand/culture-moves-europe

[13] https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/about/national-contact-points_en

[14] https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-and-creative-sectors/architecture/living-spaces

[15] https://culturaldeal.eu/

4. NEB Alliance Manifesto[16]

4.1 Context

Together with a diverse network of NEB initiatives and pan-European organisations , CrAFt established **the NEB Alliance.** The Alliance is designed as an independent, streamlined entity, guided by a shared Manifesto outlining goals, key actions , and ways of working together.

The NEB Alliance was officially launched during the CrAFt Consortium meeting, open to external guests and stakeholders, in May 2023 in Bologna. Following the launch meeting, CrAFt co-created the **NEB Alliance Manifesto**, together with the 20+ founding members and fine-tuned it ahead of its **official launch in Amsterdam in February 2024**. The NEB Alliance Manifesto is also the third policy brief of CrAFt, published on the project's website and disseminated via CrAFt channels.

The NEB Alliance aimed to involve **a wide range of stakeholders that might not yet have been connected** to NEB. The Alliance also wanted to explore how they could work more closely together with arts, culture, and grassroots initiatives in crafting their transitions to climate neutrality to be beautiful, inclusive and sustainable.

4.2 Key messages

General takeaways

The goal of the NEB Alliance is to **bring together people from different fields** like **engineering**, **economics**, **facility management**, **marine biology**, **industry**, **artificial intelligence**, and others. It also wants to connect these groups with **arts**, **culture**, **grassroots movements**, **design**, and **architecture**.

The Alliance wants to find common ground across various interests, sectors, and disciplines. It aims to improve the way we live, our economy, and the technology we use, ultimately preparing society better for the future.

The NEB Alliance Manifesto remains **a living document**, open to improvements, fine-tuning, and endorsements.

[16] https://bit.ly/NEBAllianceManifesto

Takeaways for European programmes & initiatives (European stakeholders)

- **Benefits for everyone**: the real-life changes brought about by NEB projects and how they improve people's everyday lives should be documented, so that changes made can be copied and adopted by more decision-makers and stakeholders beyond NEB.
- **Evaluate & Iterate**: how can we use the shared knowledge from NEB to shape rules, guidelines, education, and investments?

Takeaways for cities, communities & regions (incl. policy initiatives)

- **Work together**: how do we work together, across interests and sectors, to change our cities and communities for the better? Transforming places to protect and value their local resources, history, and special qualities. Activating communities through art, culture, and creativity to drive change. Giving power to communities to speak up and be heard, especially those who are often overlooked, to support fair and inclusive systems.
- **Try, learn & upscale**: how can we try new things and learn in a way that makes a real difference and can be shared in many places? How can we make ideas more widespread, from small local tests to big changes over time?

Takeaways for societal stakeholders & beneficiaries (other stakeholders)

- Organising **open spaces available to everyone** can help to facilitate cross-disciplinary collaborations around climate issues. This is where NEB creators, investors, and local leaders from cities and communities can meet to share successful projects, encourage initiatives to grow and spread, adapt them to other situations, and include them more effectively in their own planning.

4.3 Links with other initiatives

The goal of the NEB Alliance from its outset has been to **unite experts and local communities working across the whole range of fields**, such as engineering, economics, marine biology, artificial intelligence with arts, culture, grassroots movements, design, and architecture. Its current **26 members** include NEB initiatives and pan-European organisations dealing with topics linked with NEB, including architecture, spatial planning, cultural policy, education, and more.

5. NEB Facility Public Consultation – CrAFt's Answer[17]

5.1 Context

In April 2024, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission launched a survey to collect **input for developing the New European Bauhaus Facility.** The NEB Facility would have one component in the framework of the Horizon Europe programme, combined with a roll-out component. CrAFt addressed the survey, building on the previous contribution to **NEB Mission Survey** (the first CrAFt policy brief) and emphasising the **pivotal role of arts and culture** alongside participatory governance models in facilitating the green transition.

Following exchanges between partners and the work on a joint document, the CrAFt official response was submitted online and the answers were published on the CrAFt website as the **fourth policy brief of the project**.

5.2 Key messages

General takeaways

The policy brief stressed that the NEB Facility should above all leave **ample room for experimentation and testing** meaningful community engagement and redesign and reconstruction processes of neighbourhoods in real-life conditions. While developing methods and tools to facilitate collaboration among diverse stakeholders in the context of NEB is crucial, they should above all be tested live, with their validity checked.

Furthermore, CrAFt pointed out **that culture and creativity are the key to green transformation**, while climate neutrality should go beyond technical fixes and engage local communities via local collaborative governance. This can happen with arts, culture, participation & co-creation, and this is what CrAFt strives to demonstrate.

Takeaways for European programmes & initiatives (European stakeholders)

- **Need for upscaling and mutual learning**: we need to explicitly address the mechanisms for scaling up successful local solutions and facilitating mutual learning across Europe. This involves leveraging pan-European

[17] https://bit.ly/NEBFacilitySurvey-CrAFtResponse

peer learning, knowledge sharing, and coaching to promote innovation and transformation.

- **The importance of social inclusion**: including critical voices and creating safe spaces for questioning existing power structures and dynamics within NEB-supported actions is key.
- **Inclusivity in stakeholder engagement**: the involvement of diverse stakeholders is crucial, including architects, engineers, designers, environmentalists, artists, and end-users, to foster multidisciplinary collaborations in circular and regenerative approaches.
- **Interdisciplinary connections**: innovative connections between industries and higher education institutions are necessary, including technical and arts universities, within the context of NEB dynamics.

Takeaways for cities, communities & regions (incl. policy initiatives)

- **Emphasis on community engagement and co-creation**: involving communities in the (re-)design and (re-)construction processes of neighbourhoods is crucial.
- **Development of participatory governance models**: participatory governance models and practices have to be developed and researched locally.

Takeaways for societal stakeholders & beneficiaries (other stakeholders)

- **Emphasis on culture and creativity**: we highlight the pivotal role of culture, creativity, and cultural diversity in local governance and green transformation processes. This includes the involvement of local cultural and creative ecosystems and the use of collective creativity in pilot projects.
- **Expanding business model rethinking**: we call for exploring new business models and social innovation across different industries impacted by NEB values and working principles beyond focusing solely on construction.

5.3 Links with other initiatives

The policy brief and CrAFt response to the NEB Facility public consultation acknowledges that half of the Facility will function **in the framework of Horizon Europe**. This creates room for linkages with other actions of the programme and

supported initiatives, but it is also **likely to reinforce barriers** that cultural & creative operators and organisations, smaller entities and NGOs as well as local & grassroots actors face when accessing such large-scale EU programmes. It is therefore important that the Commission acknowledges and addresses that explicitly in the roll-out component.

Furthermore, it is crucial that the Commission ensures appropriate synergies with other Horizon Europe Clusters, as well as **synergies with other EU funding and co-funding streams** that remain crucial for the New European Bauhaus (such as, for instance, **Cohesion Policy funding**).

6. CrAFt at European Week of Regions and Cities[18]

6.1 Context

The fifth policy brief of CrAFt summarises main ideas and thoughts shared during a **participatory session** held by CrAFt in the context of **European Week of Regions and Cities 2024** in Brussels, in collaboration with another EU-funded Horizon project, **DivAirCity**[19]. During the session, we discussed how to ensure that co-creation is fit-for-all in terms of time, place and pace to develop environmentally sustainable cities.

The *CrAFting DivAirCity* workshop session was organised as part of the **official European Week of Regions and Cities 2024 programme**, by **UniverCities**[20] (DivAirCity content and vision coordinator) and **European Cultural Foundation**, with following CrAFt partners associated: the **Norwegian University of Science and Technology** (NTNU), the **Czech Technical University in Prague** (ČVUT), the **Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences** (AUAS) and **Locality Europe**.

During the introductory part, **five practitioners**, **local authorities and EU representatives** shared their thoughts on the role of participation and co-creation in fostering climate-neutral cities, presenting their specific angles. Afterwards, in a practical session, all gathered participants **worked in groups** and shared best practices, policy advice, and tools to engage citizens.

6.2 Key messages

General takeaways

Main takeaways shared at the CrAFting DivAirCity workshop session by the participants included:

- **Co-creation has to be treated as necessity**, not as an option, in cities' path towards climate neutrality
- Genuine co-creation **requires a considerable amount of time**, and failing in the process creates the risk of losing people's engagement entirely.

[18] https://bit.ly/CrAFtatEWRCSummary
[19] https://divaircity.eu/
[20] https://www.univer-cities.org/

- For people to get meaningfully involved in co-creation, they need to see there is **room for a tangible purpose** or output at the end of the process.
- Participatory processes **need to be repeated**, and not carried out in an one-off manner.

Takeaways for European programmes & initiatives (European stakeholders)

Laura Hetel, Policy Officer at the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) of the European Commission, stated that ***the European Mission on 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities***[21] ***by 2030 is raising the bar on how citizen engagement can spur climate action****. What we see emerging are spaces of encounter that are always there for citizens and policymakers to use. Examples include the Civic Factory in Valencia*[22]*, the Leuven2030 platform*[23] *and the Civic Imagination and Innovation Centre in Cluj-Napoca*[24].

Takeaways for cities, communities & regions (incl. policy initiatives)

Noemí Julián, Project Manager at the Foundation for Urban Innovation from Bologna, shared insights regarding her foundation's role in carrying out the Climate Citizens' Assembly: *We're a research and innovation centre dedicated to envisioning and shaping the present and future of our city and its communities. In this context, we're part of the city's climate-neutral mission and we organised* ***the first Climate Citizens' Assembly of Bologna***[25]*. There are some major players involved in the mission too, but through our work, we manage to also involve* ***smaller stakeholders and citizens***.

Takeaways for societal stakeholders & beneficiaries (other stakeholders)

Maciej Hofman, EU Affairs Advisor at European Cultural Foundation, reflected on how culture and philanthropy can assist local participatory processes around climate neutrality: ***Culture comes in with imagination****, scaling up, design*

21 https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/climate-neutral-and-smart-cities_en

22 https://factoriacivicavalencia.civicwise.org/#2

23 https://en.leuven2030.be/

24 https://clujnapoca2030.ro/?publications=ciic-a-model-of-innovation-showcased-in-the-european-commissions-digital-exhibition

25 Read the full story on the CrAFt website: https://craft-cities.eu/stories/managing-the-climate-citizens-assembly-in-bologna/

thinking, changing mindsets. At the same time, ***philanthropy and foundations can reach local activists****, changemakers or artists with smaller grants—such as the Culture of Solidarity Fund*[26]*—, reaching beyond the professionalised group of usual suspects benefiting from EU funding.*

Magali Thomson, architect and representative of Equilibrium Network, addressed how youth and girls in particular can play a role in creating climate-neutral cities: *The people that are* ***10-19 years old constitute 16% of the world population****, and it's their future that is most affected by our decisions. Girls in particular are experiencing a crisis of confidence due to a number of reasons.* ***Compensating girls and teenagers for their time spent*** *addressing urban and climate issues and going to places where they feel safe are all important. Public space use increases physical activity and its associated benefits, and offers young women respite from home life, opportunities to socialise, interact with peers and develop their independence.*

6.3 Links with other initiatives

The CrAFting DivAirCity workshop session was an occasion for CrAFt to **connect with a wider EURegions Week audience**, but also to link the community of CrAFt with the one of DivAirCity, a 4 year project funded by the Horizon 2020 programme and addressing the equation of social inequality, health conditions and air pollution in cities. DivAirCity involves **24 EU organisations and 68 international external stakeholders**, and creates replicable NBS (nature-based solutions) pilots starting from 5 EU cities: Aarhus (DK), Bucharest (RO), Castellón (ES), Orvieto (IT), Potsdam (DE).

[26] https://cultureofsolidarityfund.eu/

7. CrAFt two key messages and 10 key principles for the future of NEB[27]

7.1 Context

The sixth policy brief of CrAFt, drafted in February 2025, is a **synthesis of the project's key messages**, geared towards **new institutional setting of the EU after** the European elections of 2024: new European Parliament committees, a new European Commission and its 2024-2029 priorities as well as reflections on the future EU budget (2028-2034) and programmes.

This document extracts **learnings and inspirations** from the project, using CrAFt stories: specific CrAFt experiences (***How did CrAFt do this?***) and showcased practices (***CrAFt inspirations***). It aims at defining two crucial messages from the project, together with suggestions for the **future of the New European Bauhaus initiative** and its **NEB Facility 2025-2027**.

7.2 Key messages

General takeaways

The sixth policy brief of CrAFt presents two key messages, namely:

- **The need to break down silos and forge collaborations across cultures and sectors on equal footing**: deconstructing barriers between sectors is a must, while looking for creative solutions to address climate topics.
- **The need to recognise the vital role of culture, participation and co-creation**: achieving climate-neutrality in our cities requires us to go beyond technical fixes and harness collective creativity.

Takeaways for European programmes & initiatives (European stakeholders)

- **Encourage transdisciplinary collaborations**: NEB and its Facility should commit to a transdisciplinary approach, bridging the world of science, technology, art and culture to advance sustainable solutions.
- **Facilitate financial support**: funding that is flexible and inclusive is crucial, with prioritising access for small and mid-sized organisations, cross-sectoral investments, encouragement to neighbourhood innovation

[27] https://craft-cities.eu/results/

and financial retribution to local communities, volunteering organisations and arts and cultural sectors.

Takeaways for cities, communities & regions (incl. policy initiatives)

- **Adopt a multi-actor approach**: team up to problem-solve and feel empowered, with everyone—from local businesses to cities, citizens and corporates—seeing their role in the change.
- **Prioritise co-creative processes**: co-creative approaches are essential for working together to improve our living spaces. This needs as well the creation of spaces where community members can convene to exchange and cultivate ideas.
- **Treat social inclusion as a must-have**: making sure no one is left out is important to make our communities stronger. We need to focus on making cities places where everyone, no matter their background or situation, can thrive. Social inclusion also means implementing participatory models in our policies so citizens can be involved in decision-making that is inclusive, and making sure residents are familiarised with local contexts from an early age.
- **Strengthen your communities**: by prioritising community engagement, we foster a sense of ownership and commitment among citizens, which is vital for the long-term success and sustainability of environmental initiatives.
- **Encourage civic democratic participation**: it is a vital component within the framework of strengthening communities, which plays a crucial role in shaping the governance of cities by encouraging direct and collaborative engagement between residents and decision-makers. Examples include participating in community planning sessions, co-creating urban development projects and serving on local boards or panels that have a real impact on decision-making.
- **Foster innovation**: innovation - not only technological but also social and financial - is essential to move beyond conventional solutions and methods in addressing our environmental challenges. It is also essential to support the experimentation and development of new, innovative forms of expression that go beyond the traditional approaches. Arts, culture and creativity can offer new ways of approaching and discussing climate issues and sustainability.

Takeaways for societal stakeholders & beneficiaries (other stakeholders)

- **Imagine with arts and culture**: arts and culture are vital in driving us towards environmentally friendly, resilient and inclusive cities. This also entails creating spaces for people to learn, share and experience culture outside of formal settings. Cultural organisations and various city stakeholders working with arts, culture and creativity all have a role to play.
- **Engage the youth and students**: we need to include the voices of youth and students. Actively involving them can harness fresh perspectives and innovative ideas crucial for the green transition. Engaging youth also means engaging those who will be the most affected by climate change. It is crucial to recognise the agency of young people who are already active contributors and agents of change in their communities! Education institutions play a vital role by connecting students with city stakeholders and communities through collaborative opportunities in curricula.

7.3 Links with other initiatives

The sixth policy brief of CrAFt is illustrated by **case studies and specific initiatives** from across **CrAFt three Sandbox Cities** as well as **CrAFt's Reference Cities**.

All of the provided examples have been **featured as CrAFt stories**[28], one of the project's deliverables. They include:

- **DumBO hub space** and **Climate Citizens' Assembly** in Bologna
- **Marineterrein**, **'t Groene Veld**, **Green Mile**, **Sluisbuurt**, **Schoonschip Floating Community** and **Expeditie Vrije Ruimte** from Amsterdam
- Prague 6 **pop-up playground**, **Urbania Exhibition** and **Prague Pixels** from Prague
- ***Opolno-Zdrój is the Future!*** initiative co-funded by the **Culture of Solidarity Fund** of the European Cultural Foundation
- **NEB-STAR**, **Nebula**, **Re-value** and **DigiNEB** EU-funded projects
- **Marius Renard Energy Community** in Brussels
- The **Umecom** programme for citizens' ideas in Umeå
- **Business Improvement Districts** model in Sweden

[28] https://craft-cities.eu/stories/

8. Conclusions

CrAFt - Creating Actionable Futures (2022-2025) took place against the backdrop of **shifting political landscape**, for the New European Bauhaus and for Europe.

CrAFt witnessed the (unsuccessful) proposal of a **new Horizon Europe Mission** dedicated to the New European Bauhaus in 2023, as well as the proposal and then successful adoption of the **New European Bauhaus Facility 2025-2027**, the first multi-annual support mechanism dedicated to NEB.

Furthermore, 2024 marked the **new strategic period for the European Union**, with the new European Parliament and the new European Commission in place for 2024-2029. Other strategic milestones that the Union will need to deliver are just behind the corner, including the first proposal of the **new EU budget for 2028-2034 to materialise in 2025**, and discussions and negotiations that will follow.

We hope to have contributed to increased priorities regarding **participation**, **co-creation** and **room for experimentation** in upcoming EU actions, strategies and funding opportunities Similarly, we look forward to the European Union continuing to take an active role in connecting sectors, communities and themes in **pushing for inclusive and comprehensive green transformation**.

Above all, our work has informed the EU to increasingly recognise the **critical role of culture**, **creativity** and **co-creation** in championing the goals of the New European Bauhaus: **sustainability**, **inclusivity**, **beauty**.

And, last but not least, we strongly suggest for **pan-European projects like CrAFt** to develop, ideate, exchange, connect, experiment, work together, propose solutions and address challenges.