

Seven and last study visit organised within InCompass Project

Medway Council hosts study visit in Rochester and London

PRESS RELEASE

From 25th till 27th February, Medway Council organised the 7th Study Visit of the InCompass project. 27 participants from 11 countries came to the UK for a week to look at different incubator models in Medway and London.

The visit started at Project 161/CoFwd in Rochester High Street where partners were welcomed by Matt Peacock from Brentsen Ltd and Vincent Hagnere and Estelle Timothy from Medway Council. There, partners discovered a self-managed creative co-working space where businesses are responsible for the management of the space. The visit continued at Sun Pier House in Chatham where partners held the steering group meeting to discuss the administrative and financial management of the project and the final conference, due to take place in Brussels in November 2014.

The group then moved on to London where partners visited 6 different spaces. Camden Collective is a not-for-profit incubator financed by Camden Council, private businesses in Camden via Camden Town Ltd and supported by the Mayor of London. The space provides 2 workspace hubs, an incubator, pop-up shops and a learning academy.

In Holborn, partners visited Cockpit Arts, a crafts-focused charity and a social enterprise, which has strong relationships with buyers, giving great opportunities for trade to their newly established artists. At Trinity Buoy Wharf, partners came across a multi-purpose area in one place: containers turned into offices, studios, a primary school, cafes and an art installation in a lighthouse. The first parcours company in the UK opened in one of these spaces and featured in the London Evening Standard the day of the visit.

The group then went to London Accelerator, part of London Metropolitan University, which has been developed for student entrepreneurs and a workspace for creative and tech businesses and the final visit was to C4CC, part of the University of London. This is a stand-alone project. It provides a space for clients to test their project with like-minded entrepreneurs in an environment where failure is seen as a constructive part of a business idea.

Not only did these places provide diverse and interesting models but they also are a rich source of good practices for partners to identify and feed in to their Regional Implementation Plan.

Medway has seen an emerging creative community in recent years and there are very strong links between local artists and creative industry businesses. The establishment of creative workspaces and cafes, and the organisation of events focusing on creative arts and culture such as the Fuse Festival and Medway Open Studios means that opportunities for the creative industries in Medway are on the rise.

Medway Council acknowledges the economic value of the creative sector and has been successful in securing national and European funds to support the creative economy. The Recreate project is a good example of a Medway initiative to engage with creative businesses and create links with local communities through the development of work space and retail spaces within town centres and a UK and French partnership.

The Recreate and InCompass projects are strongly related. Not only do they share the same creative industry theme, but they both consider creative workspaces (or incubators) as a sustainable opportunity to generate growth, job creation, business collaboration and to boost social and physical regeneration of town centres.

NOTE FOR EDITORS

InCompass project aims to support the self-sustainability of creative incubator units and enable them to develop and share innovative methods to move away from a general dependence on public funding. Funded by the EU's European Regional Development fund through the INTERREG IVC Programme, the project aims to support and inform the collaborative development of local, regional, national and EU policy and thereby increase the capacity to create more spaces for experimentation, innovation and entrepreneurship in the creative industries, and to enable them to provide a driver for sustainable growth and job creation as stated in the Lisbon Agenda. The InCompass project website will be available very soon at the following link: www.incompassproject.eu

INTERREG IVC is an EU funded programme that helps Europe's regions form partnerships to work together on common projects. These projects enable regions to share knowledge and experience that will help them develop new policy solutions to economic, environmental and social challenges. More information can be found at www.interreg4c.net.

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