



DEVELOPING
INCLUSIVE
AND SUSTAINABLE
CREATIVE ECONOMIES

REGIONAL CASE STUDY REPORT: LEUVEN, BELGIUM

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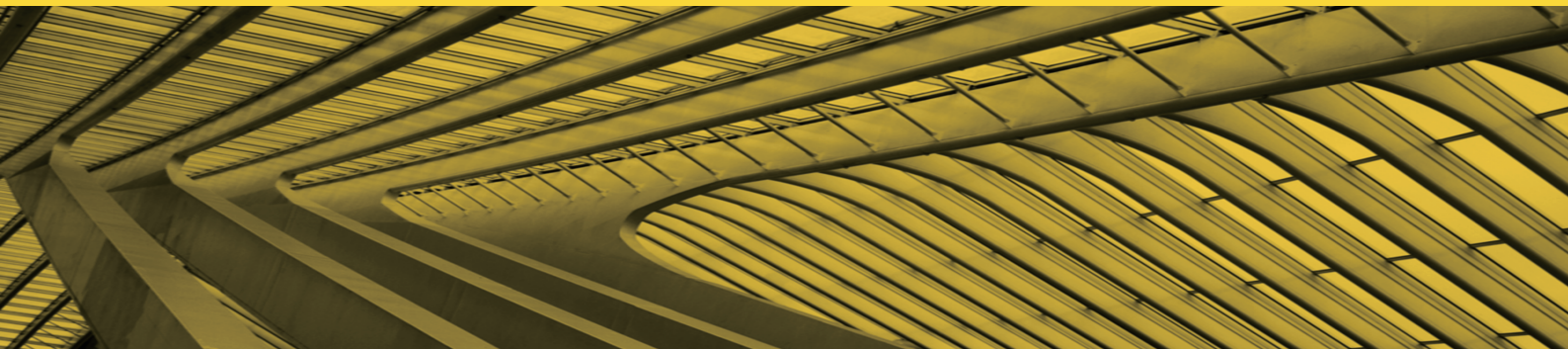
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1. Introduction

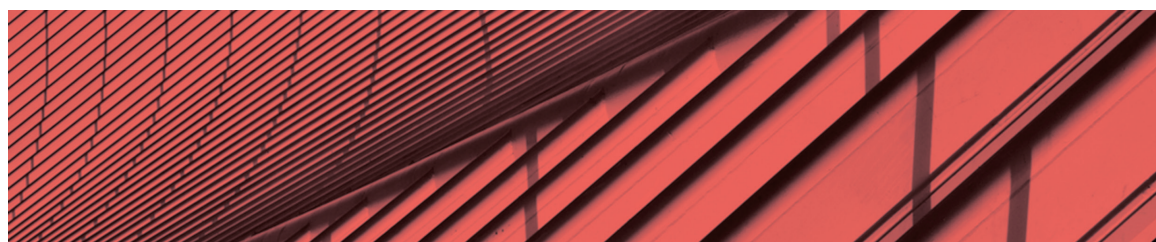
DISCE is a research project funded by the European Commission, via Horizon 2020. The overall research question that DISCE is seeking to answer is: What are inclusive and sustainable creative economies, and how can they be developed?

To answer this question, we conducted ten regional case studies across Europe. To select the case study locations, we established the following criteria as the primary basis: the locations had not been extensively studied and they were of comparable size, with a population of approximately 150,000. Additionally, we sought locations that are diverse in terms of their creative economy profile and planning, ranging from cities with an established reputation for creative economy, to those for whom this is not the case.

In this document, we present a brief overview of one of our ten case study locations, the city of Leuven, Belgium. We present key facts about the city, with a particular attention to how the ‘creative economy’ has previously been understood, based on a review of existing academic literature, publicly available data, and policy documents. In future publications we will present the findings of our own empirical work within Leuven, comparing and contrasting our findings with pre-existing accounts of creative economy in the city.

A key feature of the DISCE research project is that we are using ‘creative economies’ with a deliberately inclusive meaning, involving creative activity outside of paid employment, as well as within paid employment. This is reflected in the range of academic texts, publicly available data and policy documents we are concerned with in this report: not only focusing narrowly on the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), but more broadly on areas such as cultural participation, and aspects of community development.

To read more about the distinctive DISCE approach to understanding and developing inclusive and sustainable creative economies, please see the publications on the project website: <https://disce.eu/>.





2. Facts and Figures

2.1. Overview of the City

Leuven is the capital and largest city of its province (Arrondissement Leuven) in the Flemish Brabant Region in Belgium, close to Bruxelles. The resident population in 2019 was 101 132, of which 50 813 males and 49 946 females. In 2019, the resident population in Leuven represents less than 1 per cent of the overall Belgian population. The resident population in regional level was 1 146 643 in 2019. (Eurostat, 2021.)

The city of Leuven appears in historical documents for the first time in the year 884. From 1190 on, Leuven became an important administrative centre. Due to cloth trade, the city prospered. In the 14th century, the cloth trade lost its importance and Leuven lost its administrative position to Brussels. In the 18th century, the brewery industry started to flourish in Leuven. Stella Artois beer – first brewed in 1926, at Leuven’s Brouwerij Artois – is still one of the most well-known brands internationally.

Nowadays, much of the local economy in Leuven is concentrated on spin-offs from academic research, especially related to healthcare and technology. In 2020, Leuven was chosen as the European Capital of Innovation, a reward from the European Commission for a city that uses innovation to improve the quality of life of its inhabitants. There is close collaboration between residents, companies, knowledge institutions and local organisations. Leuven is an internationally oriented city, having a workforce from many nationalities. It also attracts a high number of tourists.

The city has three universities, the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven), University Colleges Leuven-Limburg and LUCA School of Arts. KU Leuven was founded as a Catholic University in 1425, making it one of Europe’s oldest universities, and it is currently Belgium’s largest and highest ranked university. UC Leuven-Limburg is one of the major universities of applied sciences in Flanders. The Hogeschool Sint-Lukas Brussel known as the LUCA School of Arts is focused on art and design and was, until 2012, the only independent art school in Flanders. It has now been incorporated into KU Leuven. There are almost 60, 000 students in Leuven.

Leuven has a City Council, and its current mayor was elected in 2018. There are several museums and art spaces in Leuven, among them for example Museum Leuven, 30CC and Kunstencentrum STUK. Leuven has a wide cultural offering of different music, theatre, sound art, dance, and film events.

Also, several historical UNESCO sites are located in the city. Leuven has nominated eight creative ambassadors from a range of cultural and creative disciplines to represent the city for a two-year term.

2.2. Socio-Economic Profile

Several economic indicators have been analysed to delimit the socio-economic profile of Leuven and its province. At province level, the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019 was about 19649.95 million euros, which represents almost the 40 per cent of the GDP produced in the Flemish Brabant region, and the 4 per cent of the national product. The province is growing quite rapidly, with an increase in the GDP in 2019 of 19 per cent with respect to 5-years before, and of 3 per cent with respect to year 2018. The GDP per capita in purchasing power standard units was € 38500 (in 2019), which is quite below the Belgian average of €41400, and below the EU average of €44920 (Eurostat, 2021; World Bank, 2021).

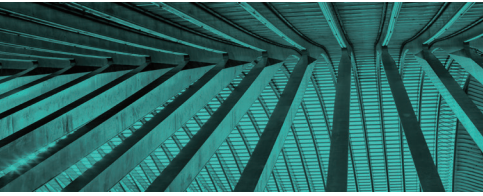
The rate of employment in Leuven for persons between 20 and 64 years old was about 95 per cent in 2018, of which 53 per cent are males and 47 per cent females. The unemployment rate in Leuven was 4.0 per cent in 2018, which was lower than the Belgian average of 6 per cent and with the EU average of 7.3 per cent (Eurostat, 2021).

For what concerns social aspects, the Province of Leuven registers a median age about 36 years old with an age dependency ratio about 54.8 per cent. The population structure in the province of Leuven is quite equal between two genders. The female population in the province is represented by the presence of 99 women per 100 men, which is quite below the Belgian average of 102.9 in 2019.

The geographical compositions of people living in the city of Leuven is mainly nationals (81 per cent), while foreign people are both EU foreigners and non-EU citizens (8281 EU foreigners with respect to 10721 non-EU foreigners in 2019).

The overall life satisfaction level in Belgium is 7.6/10 which is above the EU27 average of 7.3 (Eurostat 2018).

Finally, at country level, the proportion of population aged 25-64 qualified at level 5 to 8 ISCED in 2011 was about 34.6 per cent.



2.3. Cultural and Creative Profile

In order to highlight the main features of the cultural and creative economy of Leuven and the surroundings, indicators related both to demand and supply are taken into consideration.

Creative and cultural workforce

For what concerns the job market statistics, the percentage of employment (jobs) in arts, entertainment and recreation (NACE Rev. 2, R to T) was about 7.8 per cent in 2019. In the Flemish region, the cultural sector counted 47,104 FTE jobs at the end of 2019. These jobs were spread across 5,629 employers. (Flanders Statistics 2021.) The creative sector, however, counted 187,196 FTEs in 2018, across 4,479 employers (CreativeSector.be 2019). In the Flemish Brabant province, 34,316 people worked in the creative sector in 2018. Of these 23,015 worked in core NACE categories (jobs in the creative sector), and 11,291 worked in satellite NACE categories (creative jobs in non-creative industries). (CreativeSector.be 2019). In the Flemish region's workforce, 10.45% of self-employed workers and 6.3% of all FTEs worked in the creative sector (Flanders DC 2019).

The labour force is distributed across various cultural and creative hotspots. At the city level, Leuven counts 4 arts institutes, 8 public libraries, 9 cinemas (with 1883 cinema seats), 4 theaters, and up to 53 monuments and heritages sites. In the Flemish region, the gallery, library, museum, and archive sector, as well as the education sector, made up the largest cultural employers, each employing 16% of the cultural workforce in 2019. They were followed by printers (15%), creative activities, art and amusement organisations (13%), cultural membership associations (12%), and publishers (9%). Architecture companies, audio-visual companies, and recreation organisations all came in at 5%. The radio sector was the smallest employer on the list, with 3%. (Flanders Statistics 2021.)

The creative sector consisted of 592 employers in 2018 in the Flemish Brabant province. 317 of these were in core NACE categories (employers in the creative sector), and 275 were in satellite NACE categories (creative employers in non-creative industries). (CreativeSector.be 2019.) The branch of the creative sector that employed most FTEs was Communication/Advertising, employing 27.5% of creative sector FTE jobs. It was followed by Design (24.1%), fashion (14.4%), Architecture (7.8%), Audio-visual (6.1%), Music (5.0%), Publishing (4.9%), Visual Arts (4.5%), and Performing Arts (4.0%). The Gaming and Heritage industries each accounted for less than 1% of FTEs. (CreativeSector.be 2019.) Looking at core NACE codes only, the industry that offered the highest number of employers in the creative sector were Design and Audio-Visual, both making up 10.7% of creative employers. They were followed by Architecture (10.1%), Music (6.3%), Publishing (5.7%),

Performing Arts (4.7%), Fashion (3.5%), and Visual Arts (2.5%). The Gaming and Heritage industries were the smallest employers, accounting for 1.3% each. If looking at satellite NACE codes, Fashion (26.4%) and Design (22.8%) would be ranked a lot higher, as the majority of their jobs, while being creative, fall outside of the traditional creative industries. (CreativeSector.be, 2019).

Creative and cultural economy

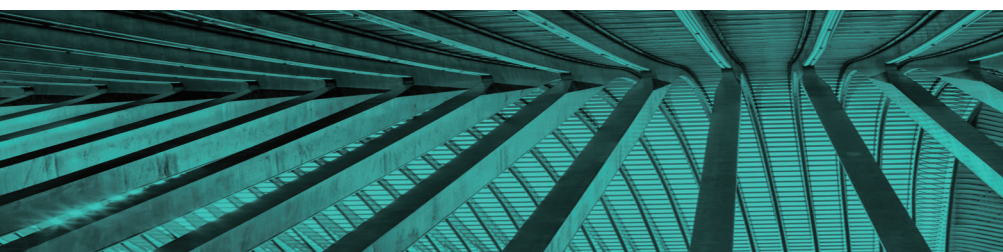
In 2018, the creative sector in the Flemish region produced €12.5 billion in gross added value (Flanders DC 2019). A different source mentions the Flemish region produced €14.2 billion gross added value (CreativeSector.be 2019). The difference may come from a discrepancy in definition of what constitutes the creative sector, caused by a difference in use of NACE codes. The €12.5 gross added value produced by the creative sector in the Flemish region in 2018 constitutes 5.6% of the total gross added value produced across all sectors in the Flemish region in that year. (CreativeSector.be 2019.) The creative sector in the Flemish Brabant province produced a turnover of €10.6 billion in 2018. Of this, €4.2 billion came from work produced in core NACE code industries, and €6.4 billion came from industries in satellite NACE codes. (CreativeSector.be 2019.) The creative sector overall is booming in Flanders. While the Flemish economy grew by 6% between 2009 and 2016, its creative sector grew by 26%. It even overtook the chemical and car industry. (Flanders DC, 2019).

Cultural institutions and participation

Across the Flemish region, 226,220 recreational and cultural events were held in 2019, and 130,342 in 2020. This includes courses, workshops, sports activities, holiday camps, markets, walking tours, and seminars, alongside more traditional cultural offers, such as music performances or exhibitions. (Flanders Statistics 2021.) Across the Flemish region there are 34 cinemas, which hosted 49% of the Belgian cinemagoers in 2020, or 2.7 million people in total (Statbel 2021). In 2019, 359 performing arts shows were held in Leuven, attracting 88,953 spectators (Stad Leuven 2019b: 228).

In 2018, museums in the Flemish region received 2.9 million visitors. In 2019, this number was 4.6 million, notably showing a steep increase due to adaptations in the counting method. Following the new counting method, 2020 showed 1.8 museum visits, a steep decrease due to Covid-19 (Flanders Statistics 2022). In 2019, museum M Leuven received 275,131 visitors, of which 98,486 were to their museum, and 176,645 were to the St. Pieterskerk (St Peter's Church) owned by the museum (Stad Leuven 2019b: 229). Museum M Leuven employed 51 employees in 2019, of which 47 were full-time workers (Stad Leuven, 2019b: 229).

De Bib (Leuven's public library) has one headquarters and three local branches. In 2019, it employed 60 people across its sites, and worked with 107 volunteers. (Stad Leuven 2019b: 242). Total number of 25,554 people borrowed items from De Bib libraries in Leuven in year 2019.





In 2019, Leuven's public heritage service Erfgoedcel employed 3.5 FTE (Stad Leuven 2019b: 254).

Leuven City council allocated €2.7 million into the cultural sector to support its cultural strategy for 2020-2025 (Stad Leuven & OCMW Leuven 2021: 15). This newly formed Leuven's tourism strategy for 2020-2025 is giving increased priority to local and national tourism as a result of Covid-19 (Stad Leuven & OCMW Leuven 2021: 15). The European Union also named Leuven the 'best performing cultural and creative city' in Belgium (EU Monitor 2020).

Tourism

Tourism is clearly affected by the pandemic. In October 2021, the Flemish Region counted 2,027,274 overnight stays, which is an increase of 145% from October 2020, but a decrease of 7% from October 2019 (Statbel 2022). The province of Flemish Brabant received 2,348,709 overnight stays in 2019 and 805,360 overnight stays in 2020 (Statbel 2021). In the city level, in 2020, Leuven received 89,277 tourists. Of those, 51,513 came from Belgium and 37,764 came from abroad. (Tourism Flanders, 2021.)

Across Belgium, 50.1% of all overnight stays were booked by Belgians in 2019, while that number was 67.6% in 2020. Local tourism grew due to Covid-19. (Statbel 2021.) A survey from 2019 shows that 75% of Leuven's inhabitants are satisfied and supportive of tourism in the city (Visit Leuven 2019).

In the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index rating of 2021, Leuven scores 61% in terms of sustainability as a destination. Its score is an average made up of multiple elements: Destination management performance (e.g. tourism policy) scoring 39%, supplier performance (e.g. hotels) scoring 59%, city social performance (e.g. safety) scoring 88%, and environmental performance (e.g. air quality) scoring 71%. It has gone up from an average score of 53% in 2020 (GDS Index, 2022).

Of the 219 Kunststedenonderzoek (Art Cities Research) (2022) respondents who visited Leuven as a tourist, 49.3% were Belgian, 18.7% visited from the Netherlands, another 18.7% visited from the UK, and 11.9% visited from Germany. France, Russia, and Switzerland were all represented too, but by less than 1%. Among these tourists in Leuven, 84% visits cultural attractions, museums, exhibitions, monuments, or churches, 75% visits hospitality or gastronomic experiences and 51% visits shopping areas. Of those visiting cultural destinations, 71% visits historical buildings and monuments, 68% visits museums, and 68% visits churches and cathedrals. (Kunststedenonderzoek. (Art Cities Research) 2022.) According to the Kunststedenonderzoek (Art Cities Research) (2022), on average, tourists in Leuven spend €115 per day. Of that, €55 is for hotels or other lodgings, €41 for food and drink, €10 for shopping, €8 for cultural attractions and €1 for transport.

The research shows, that among the motivations for tourists to visit Leuven, 50% quotes its attractive hospitality and gastronomic offer, 28% its options for relaxation and entertainment, 23% its local heritage offer, and 20% its rich history. In the lower categories, 9% visit to go to a specific cultural event, 6% comes to see museums and another 6% comes to see specific cultural offers that are not museum or arts related. (Kunststedenonderzoek (Art Cities Research) 2022.)

2.4. Inclusivity and Sustainability

Unfortunately, no official statistics or data were available applicable to the domain of the cultural and creative sectors. The only reliable statics were related to presence of women in the labour force or the presence of foreign people in the territory of L'Aquila and surroundings.



3. Creative Economies: Research and Public Policy

3.1. Overview of Academic Studies

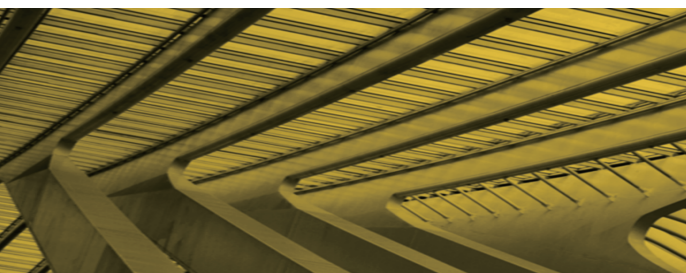
Academic publications and policy documents were gathered in the following way:

- DISCE researchers, and a Dutch-speaking researcher affiliated to the project, conducted a web-based search, including webpages of the cities of Leuven and of the province of Vlaams-Brabant.

The following academic papers are mainly focusing on the district of Flanders regarding the development and change of its decision-making politics and development of statistical methods for the district's creative economy.

The paper from Temmerman et al. (2012) studies the operationalization of regional governance and aims at clarifying the political debate in Flanders. The paper is based on an analysis of regional arrangements in Flanders and suggest renewing the political debate and reorganizing the public sector by focusing on network studies. A paper by Vanthillo & Verhetsel (2012) examines the change of paradigm in the regional policy from top-down politics to place-based politics. Place-based is defined as the new paradigm which considers the geographical

context, in terms of institutional, cultural, and social characteristics. It takes local knowledge into account in policy intervention, and the role of local institutions is emphasized. In the paradigm change, attention is also paid to smart specialization. The paper concludes that (at the time of the study) the old and new paradigm co-existed in Flanders, having several subregional actors involved in the development or implementation of smart specialization initiatives. (Vanthillo & Verhetsel 2012.)



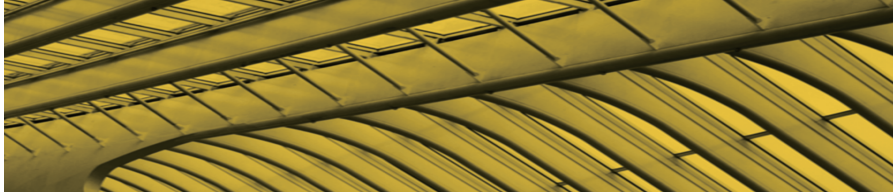
The research report from De Voldere et al. (2006) discusses the Flanders District of Creativity (Flanders DC), which is a worldwide network of creative regions founded in 2004. Its purpose is to exchange experience and learn from other's practices in economic policy making. The network consists of ten regions that are stated to have a creative mindset including Flanders. The report provides a view on the then contemporary (2006) state of DC regions in terms of creative, knowledge-based economy. It discusses how to move to the innovation driven economy where the concept of creativity, which in this case is linked to innovation, entrepreneurship, and internationalization, becomes the central point in the economic model. The idea is to meld creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, and internationalization into a model of creative economy that distinguishes different input and output factors. In the report, the performance of the DC regions is analyzed in terms of selected indicators of the creative economy. The report shows some problems on the limited data availability and comparing the data of the different regions. (De Voldere et al. 2006.)

Bowen et al. (2006) have developed and presented CICE "The Composite Indicator for Creative Economy", which is "a summary measure of an entity's (e.g. region's) creative capacity or capability in three key dimensions: innovation, entrepreneurship and openness". Nine regions' creative capacity were measured, including Flanders, which ranked as 3rd in creative capacity. Flanders is also ranked 2nd on innovation and openness, but 7th on entrepreneurship which was seen as one of the challenges the region is facing. The report claims that the index can be used to benchmark creative capacity across regions, it does not explain why one region shows better or worse performance on any given dimension. The author's proposal is that the CICE be used to consider best practice in terms of regional development and creative capacity in order to develop; "a greater understanding of regional differences with respect to the capacity to foster the Creative Economy." (Bowen et al. 2006, iv).

The Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (CCCM) examines "the role of the culture as a resource for development, with a specific focus on empirical measurement aspects". The CCCM has 29 indicators, data is gathered from 168 cities in 30 European countries, and it is a response to the lack of proper monitoring tools for culture in cities. Leuven is one of the cities in the study, described as a medium- or small-sized city. According to the monitors, Leuven has an excellent enabling environment which includes mobility and transport. Along with other medium sized cities in the monitor, Leuven also indicates that the presence of universities be an advantage, and, in this case, Leuven has a high number of graduates in ICT. The study suggests future research questions such as which factors may affect the differences between cities, and whether best scoring cities have common features in terms of, e.g. policy governance and actions. (Montalto et al. 2019.)

The presented publications indicate that Leuven and the district of Flanders are to some extent recognised as having the potential and enabling environment for a strong creative economy.

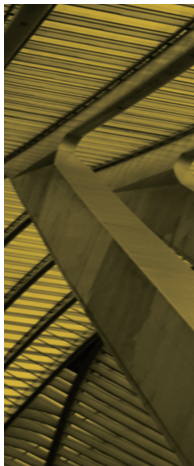




The data gathered is relevant and interesting in terms of DISCE's approach, however, DISCE's approach goes beyond these publications in a few respects – including by developing further and comparable statistical methods and indicators for the CCIs at the regional, national and EU level. DISCE will also provide policy responses and recommendations for promoting the creative economy in terms of inclusivity, sustainability, and growth.

3.2. Overview of Public Policy Documentation

DISCE's key term, 'inclusive and sustainable creative economy', although not used as a joint concept, is found in related forms in many policy documents. 'Creative economy' is a familiar term, appearing in many policy documents (Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate 2021; Montalto. et.al. 2017; Peoplesphere 2018; Stad Leuven 2017; Stad Leuven 2019a etc.). 'Inclusivity/inclusive/inclusion' appears in related contexts and in a variety of ways, such as 'inclusive (and caring) city' (Stad Leuven 2019a; Montalto et.al. 2017) or 'inclusive innovation' (Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate 2021) or 'inclusive and creative community' (Peoplesphere 2018) etc. 'Sustainability/sustainable' is found in a wide variety of contexts, some of which can be related to the creative economy, such as 'sustainable city' (Stad Leuven 2019a) or 'sustainable entrepreneurship', 'sustainable economic development' (Stad Leuven & OCMW Leuven 2021), or 'innovative and sustainable society' (Montalto et.al. 2017).



List of selected 'creative economy' policy documentation is presented in table 1. Most of the documents are in Dutch, but the titles have been translated for the table.

Table 1 Selected 'creative economy' policy documentation

Document	What this document is about?	To what extent creative economies are discussed in the document? ¹
ERSV Vlaams-Brabant VZW (2016) Taskforce Top Region Leuven.	Profiles the region of Leuven as a knowledge region with three priorities: health, high tech and creativity.	Creative economies mentioned
Leuven MindGate (2016) Towards an Understanding of Working and Living Environment for International Workers. White Paper.	Presents research with Leuven based international workers from the knowledge economy on how to make the city more attractive to increase the amount of international talent for regional development.	Creative economies mentioned
Leuven MindGate (2020a) Presentation Leuven MindGate Company.	Positions Leuven region to be at the top in health, high-tech, and creativity, and describes why the city is an attractive place to work, study, live and meet.	Creative economies mentioned
Leuven MindGate (2020b) Vision Paper Innovation Region Leuven.	Envisions Leuven as an innovative region and serves as a basis for an action program that will realize the vision.	Creative economies mentioned
Leuven MindGate (2019) Presentation Leuven MindGate Creativity.	Identifies Leuven as a region for health, high-tech and creativity and describes the role of Leuven MindGate in stimulating the creative network in the area.	Creative economies mentioned
Montalto, V., Jorge Tacao Moura, C., Langedijk, S., Saisana, M. (2017) The Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor.	Shows how over 150 cities in EU30-countries perform on various measures describing the 'Cultural Vibrancy', the 'Creative Economy' and the 'Enabling Environment' of a city, and portrays an ideal Cultural and Creative City in Europe as a mix of eight cities, one being Leuven for its high score on human capital and education.	Focus on creative economies
Peoplesphere (2018, May 31) Creative industry good for 28, 296 jobs by 2030 and Brussels, Leuven and Gent will be at the forefront of the innovation.	Describes Brussels, Ghent and Leuven as the hotspots of creativity, connectivity and technological innovation in Belgium according to the 'New Renaissance Hotspots' study.	Focus on creative economies

¹ The classification includes four categories:

- Focus on creative economies
- Creative economies mentioned (e.g. culture, cultural or creative sectors or industries, creative businesses/companies, creative workers/people/class, cultural hotspots/hubs)
- Creative economies not mentioned but addresses closely related topics (e.g. innovation, innovative industries/companies, knowledge cities, knowledge-intensive sectors)
- Overall economy of the city or region (creative economies not mentioned specifically)

Stad Leuven (2021a) Database gives local creative entrepreneurs a boost in Leuven.	Talks about how the city of Leuven and Leuven MindGate aims to further strengthen collaboration within cultural sector in Leuven by having set up a database in which local creative actors can register and search for creative professionals for their needs.	Focus on creative economies
Stad Leuven (2021b) We are Leuven: European Capital of Innovation.	Showcases Leuven as the European Capital of Innovation when the city received the European Commission's iCapital Award in 2020.	Creative economies not mentioned but addresses closely related topics
Stad Leuven (2019a) Pioneering Leuven: Ten ambitions for a nurturing, green and prosperous city.	Describes Leuven as a city wanting to be in the forefront in meeting the local challenge of population growth and various global challenges by identifying ten themes with goals and action plans (culture and creativity addressed directly or indirectly in several of the themes).	Creative economies mentioned
Stad Leuven (2019b) Annual report 2019.	Reports on governance and state of urban affairs in the city, including identifications of responsible officers for the cultural and creative policy, statistics on cultural centers and projects to enhance cultural participation and creative entrepreneurship in the municipality.	Creative economies mentioned
Stad Leuven (2017) Structure Plan 2.0 Space for Quality.	Communicates about the city's decision on spatial planning mentioning seven themes: living, working, energy, mobility, green space and water, cultural heritage and services.	Creative economies mentioned
Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate (2021a) Leuven?! Unveiling a creative city in 8 stories.	Depicts the city as a hotbed of creativity through stories of eight creative ambassadors.	Focus on creative economies
Stad Leuven & OCMW Leuven (2021b) Strategic Paper: Adjustment multiannual plan 2020-2025.	Strategizes on 5 themes which involve, directly or indirectly also culture and creativity, including Leuven as a pioneering, social, inclusive and sustainable city, a breeding place of talent and a vibrant knowledge city with jobs and activities for everyone.	Creative economies mentioned

3.3. Terminology and Stakeholders of Public Policy

Who is responsible for 'creative economy policy' in Leuven?

How – and how much – 'creative economy' policy has been developed?

As a consequence of the internal state reform in Belgium in 2014 substantial changes to cultural policy and financing have taken place.

Before 2014 the federal authority was responsible for providing multi-year funding for cultural institutions, but now national cultural budgets are divided between the three Flemish Region governments (Flanders, Wallonia, and the Brussels Capital Regions)². Since 2016, local arrondissements, including Leuven, have gained independence to determine their own local cultural policy, while the Flemish regional government provides a supportive and stimulating role.

However, different approaches to regional development have been implemented in Flanders before. One driver of such development was the Flemish RESOC which was a tripartite consultative body in Flanders established in 2004. RESOC stands for Regional Socio-Economic Consultation Committee. It was organized at regional level between local social partners, and the local authorities at the province and municipality level. The main objectives of RESOCs were to draw up a regional pact every six years, including strategic choices and solutions for resolving socio-economic problems in the region, to stimulate innovative initiatives, to give advice, and to provide a consultative framework for regional actors on labor market and economic policy development.

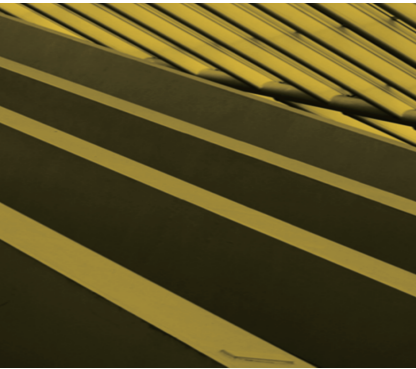
RESOC Leuven was established in 2005 and had the responsibility of developing and delivering the regional plan along with other local partners. The 2016 ERSV Vlaams-Brabant project proposal to the European Social Fund outlines the development of the 'RESOC period' in two stages, the first taking place between 2007-2012 and the second between 2013-2018. These regional pacts were designed as strategic exercises that would lead to operational objectives and concrete actions for regional development.

One of the core themes that was emphasized in the first regional pact was a "further profiling and positioning of the Leuven region as a knowledge region: with the expanding the knowledge economy to more 'classic' sectors and also to small and medium-sized companies throughout the Leuven region and extra efforts for the fighting a dual society" (ERSV Vlaams-Brabant VZW 2016, p.4). The second pact strengthened this aim to "support the active cooperation between Leuven and the smaller central cities to anchor the existing knowledge economy throughout the region and maximum involvement of human capital" (ibid. p.10).

The development of 'knowledge economy' was even further promoted in 2016, when the Leuven MindGate was founded. Leuven MindGate is an initiative from the City of Leuven, in conjunction with regional industry and academic establishments. The aim is to position Leuven as a region with a high quality of living and a strong international position in healthcare, technology, and creativity (Leuven MindGate 2016; 2020b).

As such, there is a clear policy framework that incorporates the Creative Economy as a driver of innovation and growth across employment and regional development. Creating employment opportunities within the region is a key policy drive for the city.

² Implementation of local cultural policy | Department of Culture, Youth & Media (vlaanderen.be)



The ERSV Task force document (2016) refers to the various data and information gathered by RESOC Leuven which identifies that although there is a high-income population in the city-region, there is low economic performance at the regional level indicating the high reported commuter flow to Brussels and Halle-Vilvoorde (p.19). The need to create both opportunities for employment and address the issue of space led to a collaboration between RESOC and InterLeuven, and the development of a series of working groups which resulted in a 'strengthened' vision for the regional policy drive to develop the area as a knowledge region and health metropolis across the three pillars of 'Health, High Tech and Creativity' (2016, 21).

Considering how the responsibility for different fields comprising the creative economy is shared in the city, the mayor of the city has a college of nine municipal officers (shepen) whose responsibilities are divided and they cover different sectors (Stad Leuven 2019b). The municipal officer of culture, events, part-time art education, tourism and seniors is responsible for the cultural services of the city, the cultural center 30CC, the library Tweebronnen, the city's archive, the cultural heritage, the support for cultural associations, cultural activities and the preservation of cultural infrastructure. This role is also responsible for the KUnST Leuven, for the M-Museum Leuven and for part-time arts education SLAC, the arts academy and the conservatorium. She is responsible for the fairs, the folkloric festivities, carnival, "Leuvenement" etc. (Stad Leuven 2019b, 9-10).

The municipal officer of economy, education, diversity, public parks and city buildings is responsible for regional and urban projects of economic development and promotion; for the collaboration with the Leuven Mindgate; for management of industrial estates, craft zones, research and science parks, collaboration with other public and private actors etc. (Stad Leuven 2019b, 10).

There exist also advisory bodies, for example, the Cultural Council (Stad Leuven 2019b, 56). The Cultural Council consists of 5 sub-councils (for amateur arts, leisure time, cultural education, heritage and art) and the Board of Culture. Together they provide advice on urban cultural policy. Around 300 recognized professional organisations, associations, experts, and individual artists are affiliated with the council. The Board of Culture is combined from 5 sub-council board members, a chairman, a vice-chairman, and a secretary.

The sectoral sub-councils are responsible for formulating recommendations about their sector (on their own initiative or at the request of the Board of Culture) and give further follow-up to the Board of Culture. They take initiatives to stimulate the operation of their sector and to bring it closer to the people of Leuven. The Board of Culture discusses information from the sub-councils and operates as the point of contact between the mayor and the municipal officers and the cultural field.

Leuven has worked towards international recognition in terms of innovation and creative economy, and has become the new European Capital of Innovation 2020. The award, also known as the iCapital award, recognises European cities who are demonstrating their ability to harness innovation effectively to improve the lives of their citizens.

At European and international levels, Leuven positions itself as a dynamic city when it comes to culture, tourism and events, and is seeking to be the European Capital of Culture in 2030 (Stad Leuven 2019a).

There are several policy documents that speak of Leuven's ambition to improve its position as an innovative and creative city, for example, the Strategic Paper for 2020-2025 (Stad Leuven & OCMW Leuven 2021) categorizes five directions where

the city aims to develop: (1) Leuven as a social and inclusive city, (2) Leuven as a sustainable city, (3) Leuven as a breeding place/incubator of talent and a vibrant knowledge city with

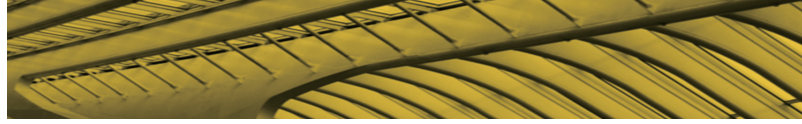
jobs for everyone, (4) Leuven as a vibrant city with activities to everyone's taste, and (5) Leuven as an attractive and pioneering city.

Leuven is considered a popular place for many companies but available space is limited creating the need for the city to prioritize which companies it can accommodate. According to Stad Leuven 2017, companies within the knowledge economy including the creative economy were prioritized.

In its vision for the future of Leuven, Leuven Stad (2017, 6-7) states that it expects economic growth, especially the already rapidly growing health and knowledge sectors. The city is home to various research organisations specialising in health-care and technology, including the Gasthuisberg Campus, the science park Arenberg and research park Haasrode. It states the creative sector is similarly growing in Leuven and is largely locating in the Vaartkom area. The city's strategies will support development in all of these areas, and will pay special attention to the local economy and to smaller entrepreneurs and companies. Moreover, because of these growth sectors, Leuven attracts mostly highly educated inhabitants, and hence it will make an effort to provide affordable housing for people from all backgrounds, so it can keep its demographics more diverse. Finally, the city is aware that its historical heritage makes Leuven a more attractive place to live, and so it will prioritise its protection.

In addition to the future vision, Leuven Stad (2017, 14-15) also presents a list of economic priority areas as part of its structural planning. It mentions the following industries as key priorities:

- The knowledge economy (particularly universities, hospital research units, and technology research).
- The creative economy (particularly communication, design, media and gaming companies and the creative clusters in the Vaartkom area).



- Leuven as a governance hub (as capital of the Flemish Brabant province).
- The local economy (particularly place-based entrepreneurial activity).
- The social economy (particularly around employment opportunities for those with few qualifications).
- Companies with a strong legacy in and connection to Leuven (which will be supported to keep growing).
- Local agriculture (particularly for local produce and urban gardening).

The Strategic Paper for 2020-2025 (Stad Leuven & OCMW Leuven 2021) shows that Leuven's city council hopes to make Leuven a stronger creative incubator and hub for knowledge by prioritising sustainable entrepreneurship, young entrepreneurs, education and creative learning spaces (literally 'Make/Learn Spaces'). To achieve that, they support initiatives such as young entrepreneurs incubator space Studio Start and youth creative learning space STEaMlab. Moreover, the council hopes to support the cultural sector by investing in the Leuven 2030 City of Culture bid (ibid.).

Another crucial aspect in the creative economy policy is the encouragement for mutual collaboration among the players in the creative and other sectors. It was in 2014 when culture journalist Wouter Hillaert introduced the term Leuven Model, a model of cooperation particular to Leuven's cultural and creative sector. Organisations see themselves not as competitors, but as partners, and achieve a high degree of consensus. The short lines of communication between policy and sector are another of Leuven's strengths, as is the high degree of involvement in major plans for the future (Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate 2021, 25).

3.4. Thematic Review of Public Policy Documentation

3.4.1. Creative Economy Policy & Cultural Opportunity

What are the aims of creative economy policy in Leuven? What does success look like?

Strengthening the Knowledge Economy. In some documents the aim of regional level policy includes 'strengthening' the knowledge economy. (ERSV Vlaams-Brabant VZW 2016.) The more specific aims, to that effect, include cultivating conditions which will attract companies to settle in the city (ERSV Vlaams-Brabant VZW 2016). A report from Leuven Mindgate (Leuven Mindgate 2020b) summarizes three ambitions for the region:

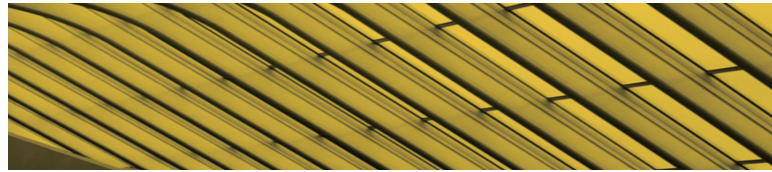
- By 2030, the Leuven 'innovation region' will have attracted 15-20 international companies that are 'research oriented';



- To achieve a year's economic growth of 1 % above the average growth within Flanders;
- To increase the number of start-up and scale-up businesses in the region over the next ten years (Leuven Mindgate 2020b: 6).

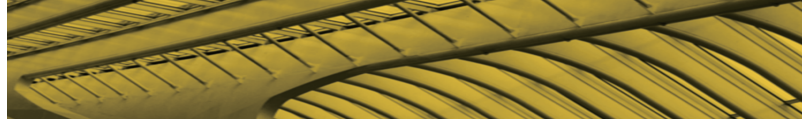
In this same report, a series of ambitions are also articulated for the profile and 'image' of the city:

- That inhabitants are aware of the distinctive features and characteristics of Leuven, acknowledge their importance, and contribute to promoting its reputation;
- Leuven develops an international reputation, with the 'big players' within Leuven promoting the city and its features globally;
- Leuven Mindgate develops as an internationally recognised 'brand', like Silicon Valley and Brainport Eindhoven;
- The region establishes an international reputation for excellence in 'high tech', 'health' and 'creativity' (Leuven Mindgate 2020b: 9).



Connecting and Empowering. One of the themes of a report by Stad Leuven (2019a), *Pioneering Leuven: Ten ambitions for a nurturing, green and prosperous city*, is "connecting and empowering". The report states that social contact enhances mutual comprehension, trustworthy relationships, well-being and security. To attain this, the report says, civil society associations, the public domain, culture, education, and local initiatives are important and should be encouraged. One of the ten ambitions for the city, whilst not directly about creative economy, is potentially consequential for it. This is the ambition that Leuven establish itself as "an industrious city with jobs for everyone and a breeding place of talent. It is important that all citizens of Leuven can develop their talents and find a meaningful job close to home." (Stad Leuven 2019a, 104).

Supporting 'Inspiring Learning Environments'. The Stad Leuven report (Stad Leuven 2019) also indicates ambitions for education related to the creative economy. The city seeks to support "inspiring learning environments" (Stad Leuven 2019, 107), such as the MaakleerPlek, where they bring together creativity and experimenting, connect the industries with creative actors and deploy innovation projects. The City has invested 8.6 million euros for the development and coordination of the Maakleerplek: a space where learning, creating and entrepreneuring go together. Youngsters, teachers, entrepreneurs, artists, neighbours and creators come together to work, to experiment to participate in a workshop or to have meetings. This space will be established in the silos in de Vaart (river). (Stad Leuven & OCMW Leuven 2021, 12.) Schools are also identified as places where children can participate in arts and culture, and where policy can play a supportive role. The City seeks to stimulate collaborations with the cultural institutions of Leuven in two directions: from school to culture and vice versa.



The City supports the education network SOM (Samen Onderwijs Maken// Making Education Together) and facilitates collaborations with partners.

They seek to bring together the expertise of different sectors and professionals in “innovative educational initiatives”, and to address “the societal challenges of today and tomorrow” (Stad Leuven 2019a, 104).

Supporting the Development of Creative Skills and Talents. Policy documents indicate the City’s ambition to support the development of creative skills and talents of Leuven’s citizens;

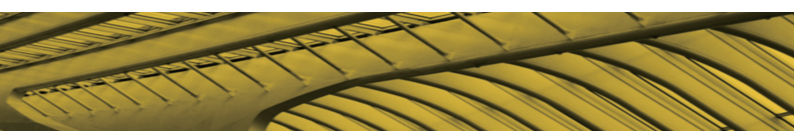
- By supporting the program of SLAC (part-time Art Education) and the activities for children of KinderKuren
- By focusing on creative learning with diverse projects, such as tandem projects between the schools and the sector, and the Maakleerplek
- By a strong artist policy (Stad Leuven 2019a, 144).

Skills development for the city is also an ambition in terms of attracting international ‘knowledge workers’ to the city. For example, presenting Leuven as a thriving creative cluster that could develop even further, the 2016 Leuven Mindgate report, for example, explores how to make the city an “enticing” living and working environment. (LeuvenMindgate 2016, 10).

Supporting a Diverse Creative Economy. Policy documents indicate that the City has an ambition to support a diversity within the creative economy in a number of ways:

- *“We stimulate organizations to train a diverse staff, diverse management*
- *We organize network opportunities around this theme*
- *We support ethnically diverse organizations and stimulate collaborations between associations*
- *We pay attention to a specific offer: Urban Woorden, Bijt in je Vrije Tijd [Urban Words, Bite In Your Free Time’ - a programme to introduce adult Dutch speakers to Dutch-speaking organisations and activities.*
- *In collaboration contracts with the big pass time providers, we ask special attention for diversity and for disadvantaged social groups.”* (Stad Leuven 2019a, 143).

Supporting Leuven’s Cultural Heritage. The city authorities indicate that cultural heritage is an important part of the city of Leuven. They indicate the ambition that, together with the university and the city’s many heritage actors, Leuven adopts a “dynamic heritage policy connecting moveable, immovable and immaterial heritage in new and unique ways” (Stad Leuven 2019a, 144).



This will involve optimizing heritage care by:

- Implementing an active acquisition policy with special attention for acquiring masterpieces.
- Working on a coordinated collection and acquisition policy (involving M museum, archives, heritage, external players, etc.)
- Implementing support for archive and collection care (including for digital heritage) for the broader voluntary and association sector and other actors (e.g. through toolkits or workshops) and through collaborations with film associations (Stad Leuven 2019a, 144).

Becoming European Capital of Culture. Writing in the ‘Creative Ambassadors’ report, the Mayor of Leuven indicates ambitions in respect of applying to be the 2030 European Capital of Culture “turning the city into a year-long festival”, that will “create a springboard for the region and its cultural, social and economic development.” (Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate 2021, 107).

What challenges and opportunities for creative economy in this location are identified?

An Innovative City. The Creative Ambassadors report indicates that there have been lots of recent initiatives to support the cultural and creative industries and Leuven, and “The driver behind this upward spiral is a generation of local entrepreneurs and out of the box thinkers.” (Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate 2021, 19.) The same report celebrates Leuven’s credentials as an “innovative” city, including its performance within the European Commissions 2019’s Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor. The 2016 Leuven Mindgate report, *Towards an Outstanding Working and Living Environment for International Knowledge Workers*, presents Leuven as a leading region for innovation and entrepreneurship. (LeuvenMindgate 2016, 7.) It suggests that “innovation and creativity are hallmarks of the City of Leuven in public, private and community spheres”, (LeuvenMindgate 2016, 9) and indicates that Leuven is now a well-recognised creative cluster.

Priority Innovation Sectors. The three priority areas of Innovation Region Leuven for the next few years are high-tech, health care and the creative sector. The connecting factors of these priority areas are entrepreneurship and quality of life. The report states that the biggest opportunities for the region can be found in those areas where high tech and health intersect, or where high-tech and creativity or health and creativity intersect (Leuven Mindgate 2020, 6). The Creative Ambassadors report also indicates that one of Leuven’s strengths lies in creative technologies being developed for the fulfilment of “social” goals, with a number of organisations working in this area. (Creative Ambassadors 2021, 27.)





Concentration of Knowledge Economy Institutions. In some of the policy documents which use the language of ‘knowledge economy’, there are indications that Leuven has particular opportunities due the concentration of its “internationally emblematic knowledge institutions: the university, imec, VIB, Flanders Make, UCLL, the health sciences campus Gasthuisberg”, with the explanation that they are “closely tied with urban life, they attract companies and employment, innovative and knowledge orientated spin-offs” (Leuven Mindgate 2020, 3).

Creative Education to Strengthen Leuven’s Creative Cluster. The 2020 Leuven Mindgate report also says that in the next 10 years, Leuven’s creative cluster needs to make big progress. To attract more creative companies, Leuven needs to organize more creative degree programs. Innovation Region Leuven also needs to invest in (international) education. The presence of ISL (International School of Leuven) gives the city an advantage. The report says that the region has to prepare its young people so they are able to participate in the knowledge economy of the future and in the development of the innovation region of Leuven. They also want to invest in multi-disciplinarity. (Leuven Mindgate 2020.)

Partnership and Cooperation. The Creative Ambassadors report indicates the Leuven has a strong reputation for cooperation and collaboration, with opportunities to further develop in these ways. Leuven’s reputation for cooperation and collaboration is now so well-established that it has been referred to as ‘The Leuven Model’, first coined by the journalist Wouter Hillaert in 2014 (Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate 2021, 23). The report indicates the city has strengths in both multi-lateral and bi-lateral partnership work. It goes so far as to suggest that, “The idea of Leuven as the ultimate city of cooperation, across all industries and levels, is evidenced by the networks through which local policy is building a future in tandem with the knowledge institutions, residents, businesses and organisations. This unique approach sets an example for Belgium and even the rest of Europe”. (Creative Ambassadors 2021, 25.) Examples are also provided of effective bilateral relationships, such as between the university and the city council – whose partnership has included working together on a ‘Cultural Memorandum’, written jointly in 2019, for the government of Flanders. (Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate 2021a, 25.)

Supporting the Commons. The Creative Ambassadors report indicates that there are opportunities – and the ambition – to support the commons, promoting interconnections between a range of organisations in the city. The report says: “In the firm belief that there is a vital role for the city to play as a facilitator, Leuven is constantly on the lookout for new collaboration models based on cooperation and ‘the commons’: a materials library, a repair café, neighbourhood initiatives, or a community land trust (CLT).” (Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate 2021°, 23.) It goes on to suggest that “Leuven’s cultural and creative sector is shaping up as an extremely diverse, sustainable and solid ecosystem. It is a healthy mix of bottom-up initiatives, city projects and established names.” (Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate 2021a, 23.)



Further Collaboration and Reputational Growth. Leuven Mindgate indicates the opportunity to further stimulate collaboration and interaction between the institutions and companies within the knowledge and government (Leuven Mindgate 2020). The organization also seeks to invest in the international promotion of the region, and to organize network events where different actors can meet and get to know the concept of the innovation region of Leuven. The report suggests that when companies with ‘knowledge institutions’, the capacity for innovation increases (Leuven Mindgate 2020, 7). The international profile of the region can be strengthened, it suggests, by an international marketing program, strong support structures for business development, and further developing the role and profile of the International School Leuven (Leuven Mindgate 2020, 8).

Employment Growth in the Creative Economy. A piece in the magazine Peoplesphere (2018, May 31), referenced Brussels, Gent and Leuven as the strongest Belgian cities when it comes to creativity, connectivity and technological innovation. The technologie company Huawei, IDA (Institute of Arts and Ideas) and trend consultancy company Kjaer Global conclude in their research that these sectors will create 28,296 extra jobs by 2030 in Belgium. The article claims that 18,860 people in Leuven were working in the creative sector, 3 times the Belgian average. Furthermore, according to a Reuters ranking, KU Leuven is the most innovative university of Europe. The research congratulates IMEC and MindGate for making Leuven into a dream destination for the health and high-tech industry. The results of the research were based on indicators such as the number of jobs in the creative sector and the knowledge sector, the interest and involvement in digital and cultural activities, the diversity and integration of new technologies, the graduation rates of the creative and technology based education programs and the number of patent applications in the IT sector (Peoplesphere 2018).

Creative Sector Database. The City of Leuven and Leuven MindGate have developed a database to support the creative sector of Leuven, which may open up new opportunities. The database is intended to support companies, entrepreneurs, and other citizens of Leuven to find creative professionals that have skills and experience that meet their needs. Leuven Mindgate developed the database because companies had difficulties finding creative professionals. (Stad Leuven 2021.) Leuven’s alderman for Culture, Denise Vandevoor, said about the project: “The cultural sector in Leuven has grown enormously in the last couple of years, with a lot of new talent and new players in theater, dance, visual arts, circus, music. [...] The boundaries between the arts and the creative economy continue to blur. Cultural organizations are professionalizing and a lot of artists are also entrepreneurs. The cultural sector in Leuven is known for collaborating and this database encourages this characteristic even more.” (Stad Leuven 2021a, 1).

Population Growth. A report from Stad Leuven (2019a), *Pioneering Leuven: Ten ambitions for a Nurturing, Green and Prosperous city*, speaks about the creative economy, the cultural sector and also uses the term “cultural and creative industries”, and discusses some of the challenges the city faces. It says that population growth causes new challenges for Leuven, such as: affordable housing, ensuring housing is located in green neighborhoods, combining sufficient housing capacity with the preservation of open spaces, sustainable mobility around the city for a growing population, ensuring economic prosperity for everyone, and overcoming disadvantage. Because of the demographic developments, it says, the new needs and desires of a growing group of older citizens, people who live alone and ‘blended families’ need to be taken into account. It suggests that Leuven also needs to acknowledge its responsibility as regards global challenges such as climate change, resource waster, migration, and the resilience of the democracy. (Stad Leuven 2019.)

In discussions of the wider context of the development of Leuven and its future, other documents also indicate that Leuven expects a population growth, because of the growth in the number of jobs, the attractive living areas, and the typical inflow and outflow of population (immigration and emigration) of the city. The city’s ‘Structure Plan 2.0: Space for Quality’ (2017), seeks to develop a clear policy to channel this expected growth. The City also expects economic growth, because of its developing health and knowledge economy, the different research institutions specialized in high tech and health care and the growing creative sector. The report anticipates that companies from these sectors have the potential to attract highly educated workers to Leuven. The City wants to keep ensuring affordable housing also for lower incomes (Mozaïek 2017, 6).

The structure plan includes an increase in services: such as sporting facilities, schools, green spaces, shops, hotels, and restaurants. In the context of these plans for housing, services and the built environment, the City seeks to be climate neutral by 2030 – and the structure plan describes policy approaches related to sustainable energy use, renewable energy production, local food policy, water and temperature policy and preservation and improvement of green spaces. Other important themes in the structure plan are the conservation and increased awareness of cultural heritage and of the landscape, and an increase in mobility (Mozaïek 2017, 7).

Aligning Labour Supply and Demand. The Stad Leuven report also indicates the need to better align demand and supply of labour within the city over the next twenty years. The report indicates that the knowledge economy in Leuven is growing and to fill in the open vacancies they seek to:

- develop regional potential and talent in Leuven
- attract international talent to compensate a deficit of high level knowledge workers
- develop together with the right partners (VDAB) a policy to fill the gaps in

the labour market (Stad Leuven 2019a, 110).

Better Connecting Educational Institutions and the Labour Market. The City has a plan to better connect the education system to the labour market. It promotes internships in companies and organizations and facilitates or supports initiatives that look for an optimal connection between the educational needs of the educational system and those of employers. The City also investigates ways to support collaborations between different schools and knowledge institutions with regards to entrepreneurship and socioeconomic questions (Stad Leuven 2019a, 109).

Developing Specific Areas of the City. The opportunities for creative economy in Leuven articulated in this report also relate to specific areas of the city: “We have committed to developing a masterplan for the railroad plateau in the North of Leuven in collaboration with KU Leuven. We are investigating the economic needs for the strategic positioning of the science park of Leuven North. Together with Leuven Mindgate we are investigating the economic needs for space and the vision for 2030. We are also investigating how the science park and the knowledge economy in Leuven North can benefit the adjacent living areas and local companies close to the railroad.” (Stad Leuven 2019a, 123.)

To boost the creative economy the City wants to develop a co-creation space for crafts and entrepreneurs in Leuven. In this space, the report suggests, the added-value of creative entrepreneurship can be encouraged and like-minded people will be challenged to contribute to innovative entrepreneurship in Leuven. The City also wants to offer space to the creative economy in the Vaartkom (canal). The report indicates that the existing creative cluster, the closeness of the train station and the existing industrial heritage buildings add value to this space, and that it could develop into a valuable creative district. The city council wants to attract creative companies, facilitate more meeting places through new and existing initiatives (Stad Leuven 2019a, 123). In the Creative Ambassadors, report the Mayor of Leuven highlights the Hertgoten site, “where we are set to transform an old hospital into a sustainable, low-traffic residential area with a new, open ‘arts district at its centre by 2027.” (Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate 2021, 3.)

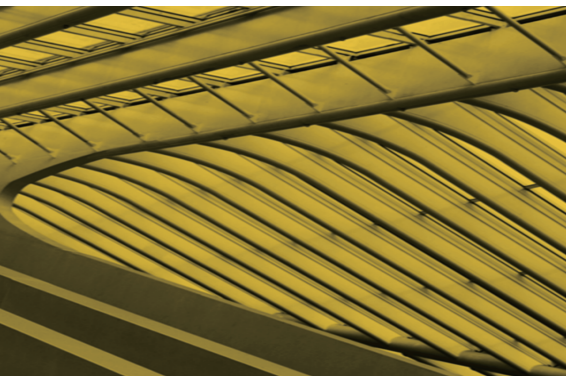
Connecting with Other Cities. Some reports suggest that in order to strengthen the knowledge economy, Leuven needs to strengthen its ties with smaller central cities and also with the local governments of the region to speed up regional development (ERSV Vlaams-Brabant VZW 2016, 21; Leuven Mindgate 2020).

What opportunities for ‘aesthetic capability’ – opportunities to ‘participate’, to have cultural ‘experiences’, etc. – are identified within the documents and data?

As indicated above, a range of policies in Leuven relate to the expansion of opportunities for cultural participation in a broad sense, including opportunities for more cultural and creative businesses in the city, and more cultural opportunities for children and young people.

In addition those opportunities already indicated above, the 2019 annual report of Stad Leuven mentions particular efforts to enhance cultural participation:

- The UITPAS, a savings and benefit card for cultural (and other leisure) activities in Flanders and Brussels.
- In collaboration with 30CC and cultural events, the centers of the neighborhoods (Buurtcentra Leuven) organizes monthly trips to the cultural centers of Leuven.
- In the future, Buurtcentra Leuven wants to develop the cultural program together with the citizens, to enhance their interest in cultural participation (Jaarverslag 2019 Stad Leuven 2019, 289).



The City takes the position that “Everyone has a right to culture and free time” (Stad Leuven 2019a, 142). In support of this, there is a plan to deploy a platform where all pass time activities and organizations are featured. This platform will also include initiatives to make the offer more accessible (Stad Leuven 2019a: 142). There is also the ambition for the City to support and stimulate cross-over collaborations between

pass time sectors and economic actors to enhance the creative sector in Leuven. In collaboration with Leuven Mindgate Creativity, the city supports the development of a network in the creative sector, accessible spaces for artists, creative entrepreneurs, and associations.

The 2016 Leuven Mindgate report indicates the range of cultural opportunities offered to support the “social and cultural integration” of international “knowledge workers”, with the City of Leuven hosting “a wide array of cultural and leisure activities” (LeuvenMindgate 2016, 41), as well as the availability of sports facilities and activities, and the city library. Community organisations and neighbourhood centres also play an important role in offering cultural opportunities. For example, the City of Leuven recognizes and supports 35 organizations that bring together people of the same origin (e.g. China, Russia, Nepal, etc.). Leuven also has six “Buurtcentra” or neighborhood centers. These are meeting places where residents can encounter people from their own neighborhood and where a wide range of activities are organized: computer training, cheap meals, cultural excursions, Dutch conversation classes, etc. Some of neighborhood centers also have an extensive offering for children. There are also a lot of neighborhood committees in Leuven, with people organizing events for their neighborhood (e.g. neighbors day, street parties, safe streets for playing during the holidays, etc.). (LeuvenMindgate 2016, 41.)

Who is involved in creative economy policymaking? And what processes are in place for developing creative economy policy and data? Do these policy documents draw on a wide range of community voices in the process of policy planning? For example, through a formal process of consultation?

The Creative Ambassador report (2021, 25) indicates there are “short lines of communication between policy and the sector” and that this is one of the city’s strengths, with new urban development projects, for example, “designed in consultation with several stakeholders.” (Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate, 2021, 25) The report also indicates that “Leuven’s residents also help shape the city. The population is engaged and happy to help decide the city’s future.” A few examples of this are provided, including Kom op voor je Wijk, in which residents are given the opportunity to implement a new idea of their own for the neighbourhood, or to group together to commission a new artwork for a designated public space. The Leuven Maak Het Mee online platform is another tool to encourage citizen participation, which has been much emulated by other cities in the interim. (Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate 2021, 25.)

There are other indications of a move towards inclusive, participatory processes. For example, the City has taken steps to involve citizens in the establishment of ‘pass time’ programs. The goal is to set up a participation model for the whole city in which every member takes on part of the tasks. That way, everyone has the chance to actively participate in and create the pass time program. (Stad Leuven 2019a, 142.)

In some existing policy documents there is evidence of consultation processes. For example, the LeuvenMindgate Vision Paper Innovation Leuven Region (Leuven Mindgate 2020) was developed with the help of approximately 30 interviews with stakeholders from the government, knowledge institutions and companies in the region of Leuven. It will serve as the basis for an action programme to realize this vision.

The report by Stad Leuven (2019) Pioneering Leuven: Ten ambitions for a nurturing, green and prosperous city, was developed in collaboration with the associates of Group Leuven and external experts. Group Leuven consists of the city of Leuven and all local organizations embedded in the city: OCMW Leuven and its well-being association Zorg Leuven, the police of Leuven and some agencies of the city, such as M Museum, urban vzw’s, and HeLics. The report indicates that after a broad participation project, the intention is for report to be developed into a multi-annual plan (Stad Leuven 2019a, 6).

The 2016 LeuvenMindgate indicates that stakeholder consultation was integral to the work leading to its 2016 report on the practical measures needed to make Leuven an attractive living and working environment for international workers. And the City of Leuven seeks to support Leuven Mindgate in its ambition to map the creative sector and to make it known by other companies and citizens, in order to stimulate cross-overs. (Stad Leuven 2019a, 124.)

3.4.2. Creative Business Development & Entrepreneurship

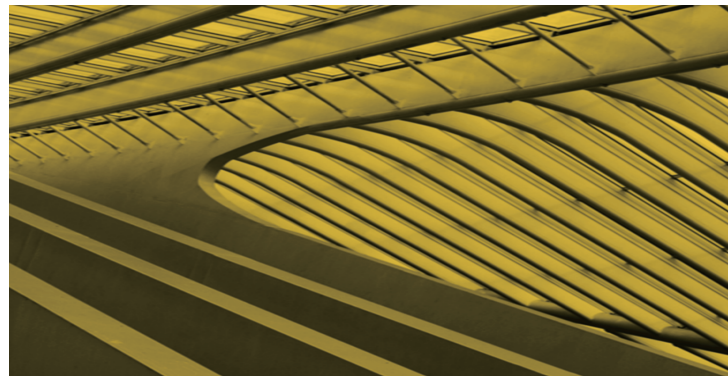
Is there any strategy for creative businesses / entrepreneurship /self-employment for the city?

The city of Leuven has various visionary and strategic policy papers and creative businesses / entrepreneurship are addressed, indirectly or directly, across each of these documents. Some of the policy documents refer to entrepreneurship and innovation in general or in some of them the focus is more specifically on pharma, bio, and manufacturing industries and their innovations.

Leuven expects growth both in population and economy in the future because of the growing health, knowledge, and creative sectors. The presence of knowledge companies is one of the reasons why highly educated young people move to Leuven. (Stad Leuven 2017.)

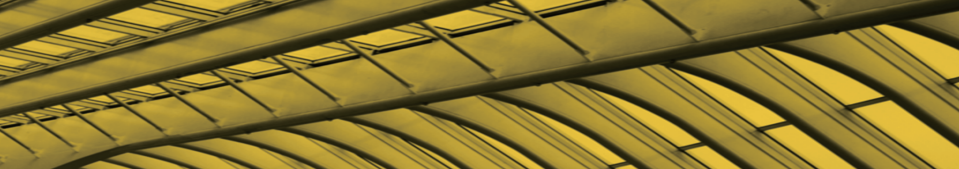
Are businesses / entrepreneurship included in policy discussions of the creative economy? If so, how?

One of the ambitions for the city is to become industrious with thriving economy in development and jobs for everyone. (Stad Leuven 2019a; www.leuvenmindgate.be). Creative sectors are important in achieving this as Leuven is considered to be one of the top cities in Belgium when it comes to creativity, connectivity and technological innovation, and a significant number of new jobs are expected to be created in these sectors by 2030 according to the 'New Renaissance Hotspots' study (Peoplesphere 2018). By 2030 Leuven hopes to attract 15–20 research orientated international companies and big international companies in the pharma, bio, and manufacturing industries. There are goals for economic growth in Flanders and plans to accelerate the realization of scale-ups and new start-ups in the next 10 years. (Leuven MindGate 2020b.)



The city of Leuven and Leuven MindGate have created a database to support the creative sector of Leuven. The purpose of the database is to help creative entrepreneurs, companies, and individuals to find suitable creative professionals to their needs, and it has been considered as a success. (Stad Leuven 2021a.)

Overall, the documents describe the city of Leuven to have an entrepreneurial spirit in its policy making as the city aims to be in forefront in responding to local challenges of a growing city, such as a balance between affordable housing and green space as well as economic polarization and social isolation, and to various global challenges including e.g. climate change, scarcity of resources and migration (Stad Leuven 2019a). To find answers to these challenges the city cherishes various themes, most notably diversity, spreading, openness, quality, sustainability, interconnectedness, and experimentation (Stad Leuven 2019a).



Policy documents identify collaboration between different sectors and actors, including companies and entrepreneurs, at local, regional, national, and international level as a central means to meet the forementioned challenges (Stad Leuven 2019a; 2021a). Leuven region is profiled internationally as a top knowledge destination especially in three sectors, including health, high tech, and creativity (ERSV Vlaams-Brabant VZW 2016; Leuven MindGate 2020a; Stad Leuven 2019a). This is manifested in the Leuven Mindgate literature as an ecosystem and a model of collaboration in which companies, knowledge institutions and the city of Leuven have joined forces to provide projects, activities and events to support interdisciplinary relations between the profiling sectors of health, high tech, and creativity (Stad Leuven 2019a; Leuven MindGate 2020a).

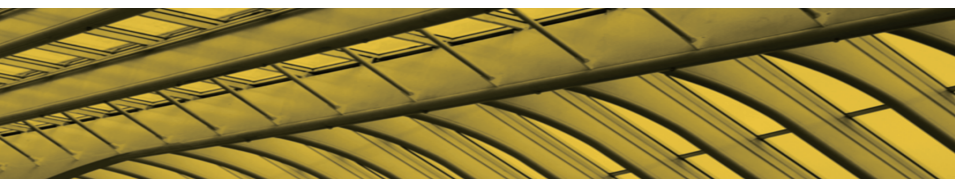
The city of Leuven wants to enhance both entrepreneurial mindsets and entrepreneurial action in its cultural ecosystem. One of the central themes of the city being 'experimentation', it wants the cultural sector to be proactive (lead), innovative (create opportunities) and bold (dare to fail) (Stad Leuven 2019a). To boost such a mindset the city has created physical spaces, such as MaakleerPlek, where companies, schools, artists, and residents can experiment together in various innovative projects (Stad Leuven 2019a; Stad Leuven & OCMW Leuven 2021). The city's interest in promoting entrepreneurial action within the cultural ecosystem is evidenced in the documents – as artists becoming entrepreneurs is described to be a growing trend in Leuven. This is considered central to blurring the boundaries between arts and creative economy. (Stad Leuven 2021a.) The city wants to support entrepreneurship, both start-ups and scale-ups, in all sectors, including CCI's (Stad Leuven 2019a). To achieve this the city aims to deploy an online portal, a coworking space, a single-point-of-contact, and a buddy-system as well as to investigate a need for an experimental space and for affordable commercial properties, and, relatedly, to digitalize as much information as possible (Stad Leuven 2019a; Leuven MindGate 2019). Special attention is paid to stimulating entrepreneurship among young people, for example, via a portal for entrepreneurship and trade.

This is organized together with city's educational partners in arts (LUCA School of Arts), tech (RVO Society) and multitude of other fields (UCLL and UK Leuven) at different school levels. Growth-oriented companies are addressed in collaboration with various partners through Leuven Mindgate which organizes projects, activities, and events to support interdisciplinary relations between the three profiling sectors of health, high tech and creativity (Stad Leuven 2019a; Leuven MindGate 2020a).

Are there any discussions or recommendations for attracting creative businesses / entrepreneurship to the area?

Attracting creative businesses and entrepreneurs to the area is present in many ways in policy documents. Firstly, the city has proclaimed openness as one its central themes/values, meaning that it desires to be accessible, inviting and engaging (Stad Leuven 2019a).

Secondly, the ecosystem of health, high tech, and creativity aims to position Leuven as an attractive place to work, study, live, and meet (Leuven MindGate 2020a). Thirdly, the aim is to strengthen and expand a diverse creative sector in Leuven (Leuven MindGate 2019). To boost the creative economy the city wants to generate a co-creation space for crafts and entrepreneurs in Leuven. In this space, the added value of creative entrepreneurship can be encouraged, and like-minded people will be challenged to contribute to innovative entrepreneurship in Leuven and creative use of space. (Stad Leuven 2019a.) In practice, the City of Leuven wants to offer space to the creative economy in the canal zone (Vaartkom) of the city (Stad Leuven 2019a; Leuven MindGate 2019). The existing creative cluster, the closeness of the train station and the existing industrial heritage buildings add value to this space. It could develop into a valuable creative district. The city council wants to attract creative companies, facilitate more meeting places through new and existing initiatives. (Stad Leuven 2019a.)



The city council wants to attract creative companies, facilitate more meeting places through new and existing initiatives. (Stad Leuven 2019a.)

Leuven is described as a center of knowledge, which helps to increase attractiveness to companies and workers. Leuven Mindgate recommends that Leuven should aim to collaborate with other cities of the region, such as Tienen, Aarschot and Diest, as they are home to several important industrial companies. Building stronger connections with other cities can also provide space for housing and opportunities for entrepreneurship. Leuven has good accessibility as it is close to the airport and the capital Brussels. Despite that, mobility issues should be resolved together with other cities. An international image can be created in collaboration with the airport of Zaventem and the region of Brussels. Leuven is also close to important infrastructures. The presence of highly educated and wealthy citizens, a pleasant living area, and a historical inner city help Leuven to become an attractive city for companies and entrepreneurs. Leuven has several international knowledge institutions such as the university, imec, VIB, Flanders Make, UCLL, the health sciences campus Gasthuisberg that are tied with the urban life and attract companies and employment and innovative and knowledge orientated spin-offs. (Leuven MindGate 2020b.)

Attractiveness can also be read in the support that the City of Leuven provides to its entrepreneurs: The city supports entrepreneurs by giving advice, creating networks and via POPstart offers starting entrepreneurs an affordable pop-up space and at the same time combats vacancy in the shopping streets. (Stad Leuven 2019b.) Fablab (Fabrication Laboratorium) is a space where high tech instruments such as 3D-printers and laser cutters are available for everyone (Stad Leuven 2019b). The purpose of Leuven Mindgate is to promote Leuven's strengths, success stories and distribute information, and to attract students and researchers to the area. It also aims to enhance the collaborations between the labour market, knowledge and research institutions and local governments (Stad Leuven 2019b). An organisation called LE(J)ON (Young Entrepreneurs of Leuven) supports young

entrepreneurs by organizing events, offering meeting spaces and networks and initiatives. (Stad Leuven 2019b.) Leuven MindGate Creativity network established an intensive coaching course (BAAS) for young cultural and creative entrepreneurs (Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate 2021).

One initiative to further stimulate cultural and creative industries in Leuven has been the system of creative ambassadors. The city of Leuven has nominated eight creative ambassadors from a range of cultural and creative disciplines to represent the city and to foster cultural industries and creative businesses for a two-year term (Stad Leuven & Leuven MindGate 2021).

Are there any challenges / opportunities in relation to creative businesses / entrepreneurship in general?

Knowledge economy and internationalization have been recognized as opportunities for the development of the city (ERSV Vlaams-Brabant VZW 2016). To seize the opportunity, Leuven has been profiled as a knowledge region with priorities in health, high tech, and creativity and Leuven Mindgate was established in 2016 forming an ecosystem and a model of collaboration for knowledge institutions, companies, and the city of Leuven (ERSV Vlaams-Brabant VZW 2016; Leuven MindGate 2020a).

A relatively low rate of entrepreneurship has been identified as a weakness of Leuven (ERSV Vlaams-Brabant VZW 2016). The city has responded to this by targeting policy actions to starting and growing a business, also in creative sectors (Stad Leuven 2019a).

Outdated industrial neighborhoods have been considered as another weakness of Leuven (ERSV Vlaams-Brabant VZW 2016). Lately, the city has started to transform this into an opportunity by initiating renewal projects in which old, urban industrial sites are transformed into creative areas (Vaartopia-project) (Stad Leuven 2019a).

Urbanization has been considered as a threat to the city through increasing prices of land and fragmentation of public space (ERSV Vlaams-Brabant VZW 2016). This concerns also creative sectors, and consequently, the city wants to provide accessible spaces for artists and creative entrepreneurs (through e.g. Vaartopia-project) (Stad Leuven 2019a; Leuven MindGate 2019). The attractiveness of the city is also seen as a problem in some ways, as there is pressure on the real estate market and because of some mobility issues. (Leuven MindGate 2020b.)

Leuven is described as a popular location for companies, yet space is limited, which is the reason why the city must choose which companies and economies it prioritizes. Priorities include knowledge economy, creative economy, local economy, social economy, some historic companies, and the local agriculture. In terms of creative economy, there is growth in the number of companies in communication, design, media, and gaming sectors. Both the cultural sector and the companies in the wider creative economy benefit from one another. Leuven wants to

provide more space for the creative sector and to expand the creative clustering in the Vaartkom area to create a significant creative hotspot. (Stad Leuven 2017.)

The policy documents distinguish economic, free time (voluntary) and heritage (public) actors within the creative sector. The economic actors are described as having a strong tradition of co-operation. The local creative sector has been growing rapidly lately providing opportunities for even further collaboration. At the same time companies operating in the sector have had difficulties in finding creative professionals for their needs. To facilitate the opportunity and to meet the challenge the City of Leuven and Leuven Mindgate have developed a database in which local creative entrepreneurs, companies and individuals can register and search for creative talent across various fields. (Stad Leuven 2021a.)

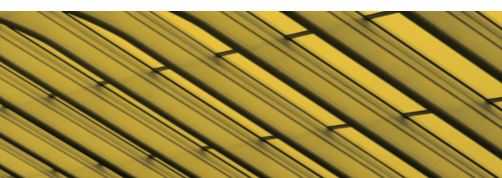
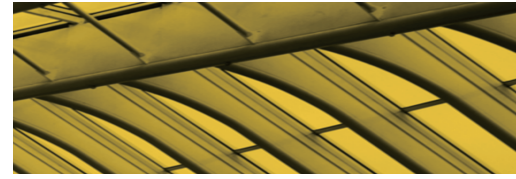
The city council wants Leuven to be a vibrant and lively city and, to achieve this, invests in a dynamic breeding ground and an accessible and varied offer of cultural and free time activities and events. The city supports (through small subsidies, micro-credits, and accessible spaces) various voluntary actors, including organizations, associations, artists, and individual initiatives who color the local life. Special attention is given to small and temporary initiatives as well as to new developments and forms of art and culture. (Stad Leuven 2019a.)

A selection of the policy documents (Stadt Leuven 2017; Stad Leuven 2019a and Stad Leuven & OCMW 2021) identify cultural heritage as an important part of the city of Leuven. Together with the university and other heritage actors, Leuven adopts a heritage policy connecting moveable, immovable and immaterial heritage. Special attention is given to, for example, acquisition of masterpieces, digitalization, and collaboration between various parties. (Stad Leuven 2019a.) Cultural heritage actors are part of the Leuven MindGate network (Leuven Mindgate 2019).

The city wants to support and stimulate further cross-over collaborations especially between economic and voluntary actors to enhance the creative sector in Leuven. Together with Leuven MindGate, the city supports the development of a network in the creative sector as well as accessible spaces for artists, creative entrepreneurs, and associations. (Stad Leuven 2019a.)

How are creative businesses / entrepreneurship described, imagined or referenced in these documents?

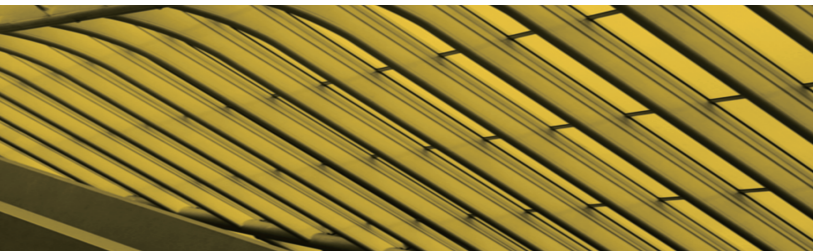
The policy documents profile Leuven as a hotspot for health, high tech, and creativity (Stad Leuven 2019a; Leuven Mindgate 2020a). The aim is to put Leuven on the international map in these fields and to stimulate cross-sectoral collaboration within the ecosystem (Leuven Mindgate 2019; 2020a; Stad Leuven 2019a). Leuven is described to have a high density of entrepreneurs and companies in creative sector.



There are as much as three times more creative workers active in comparison to the average of Flemish region, and the creative sector is thriving especially in culture, audiovisual, architecture, gaming, and communication (Leuven MindGate 2019; 2020a; Peoplesphere 2018).

The policy documents discuss blurring boundaries between the arts and the creative economy, and how this is considered welcome. The documents recognize two drivers behind the development, professionalization of cultural organizations and entrepreneurship of artists. An increasing number of organizations are not relying solely on in-house expertise but are willing to search for external talent,

while at the same time more and more artists work as entrepreneurs. Consequently, these two emerging trends have created a new market for creative expertise, and the city wants to encourage such a creative collaboration across sectors. (e.g. Stad Leuven 2021a.)

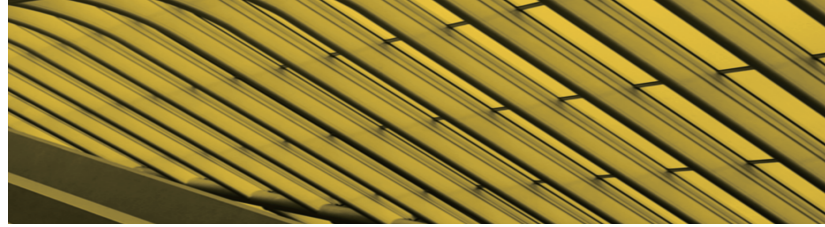


Leuven is described as an innovation driven city. Businesses are described in general as innovative international companies and connected to economic growth. Innovation is in some documents referred to as pretty much anything from artistic, cultural to technological innovation, yet there is a strong focus on health, nano, and digital technologies. Innovation is presented as inclusive. For instance, and& is an innovation festival open for everyone, and it promotes “innovation that goes beyond technological gadgets”. (Leuven MindGate 2020b.) All in all, The Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor shows that Leuven does well as a small-to-medium size city with, for example, creative and knowledge-based jobs, intellectual property and innovation, and ICT patent applications. (Montalto et al. 2017.)

3.4.3. Higher Education & Creative Workers

Is there a creative Higher Education strategy for Leuven? Or is there a Higher Education strategy that includes any specific reference to creative Higher Education within it?

There is no specific creative Higher Education (HE) strategy for Leuven however, within the existing policy documents and data, there is a clear recognition of the impact that the main university, KU Leuven, has on the region both as an employer, and as a draw for talent to the region. The 2016 regional policy document, ‘ERSV Vlaams-Brabant VZWTaskforce Top Region Leuven’ considers the recognised need to engage education institutions into the local regional pact and regional policy planning to ensure a clearer coordination between Higher Education and the broader local labour market as part of the wider strategy to develop Leuven as a ‘knowledge region’.



However, although this report mentions both education and creativity as sources for regional development, there is no specific focus on the role that Creative Higher Education could play in this policy focus. The educational focus is based around Technology and Innovation.

Are HEIs included in policy discussions of the creative economy? If so, how?

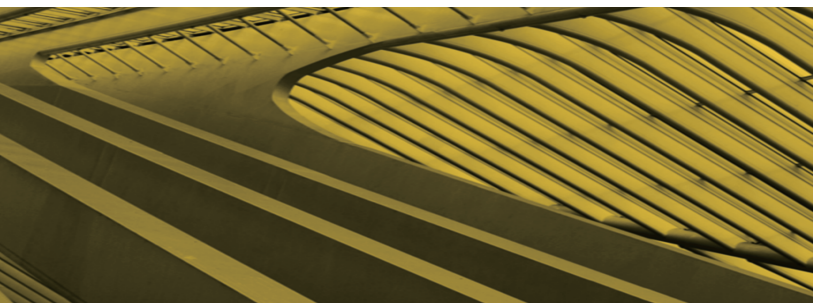
As discussed, Leuven MindGate was launched in 2016 following the regional pact and is managed by Stad Leuven. Leuven MindGate's purpose is to act as a link between the 'Triple Helix' of Leuven's 'ecosystem' of 'Companies, Government and Knowledge Institutions' and ensure the development of the city across its self-defined 'three pillars' of 'Health, High-Tech and Creativity'. There is no specific policy around the role that the wider creative/cultural HE courses play within the accompanying literature. KU Leuven is listed as a key knowledge partner and there is a recognition of the University as a driver of innovation in terms of health and technology, but there is no apparent connection between the University and the recognised creative community that is part of Leuven's regional ecosystem.

In a presentation, publicly available, Leuven Mindgate mentions that KU Leuven has received the Reuters 'most innovative university in Europe' award since 2016 (recently awarded in 2019) but again, the focus is on innovation and technology spin offs. In their 'vision document' published in 2020 there is a recognition that "Indien Leuven haar creatieve hub wil uitbouwen, dienen er meer creatieve studierichtingen" (2020b, 6), which translates as: "If Leuven wants to expand its creative hub, there should be more creative fields of study organised".

Leuven MindGate's Vision Document (2020b) was based on 30 interviews with stakeholders from government, knowledge institutions and companies from the Leuven region although it doesn't state who took part in those interviews and

if there were representatives from the HE or local creative community. The document mentions the issues around population growth and the need to attract international students to the region. In 2016, Leuven MindGate produced a White Paper, 'Towards An Outstanding Working And Living Environment For International Workers', which outlined

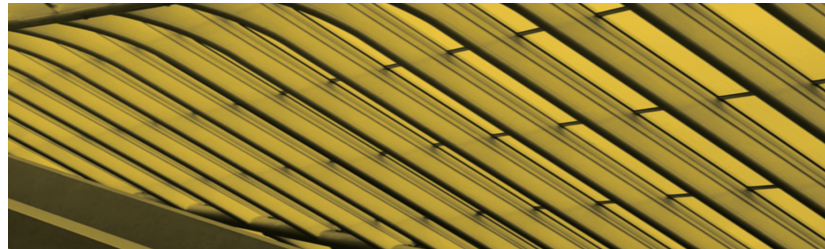
the regional development plan for attracting international talent to the area. As previously discussed, attracting, retaining and fostering employment within the region is an important element of Leuven's regional policy and linked to its development of the creative economy through the inclusion of 'creativity' as one of the three pillars.



Are there specific discussions or recommendations for attracting students to the area to study creative subjects?

Leuven MindGate's development was created via a series of 'taskforces' including:

- The "Organization" taskforce aimed at establishing the way Leuven MindGate is actually organized
- The "Communication" taskforce for ensuring the visibility of the Leuven MindGate project.
- "Events and Internationalization" organizes a range of activities and is responsible for international exposure, visibility and links.
- "Start-up and Space" looks into synergies between existing start-up initiatives and organizes space for start-up businesses.
- "People" focuses on international talent in the region. (Leuven MindGate 2016, 8.)



Research was conducted via the 'People' taskforce of Leuven MindGate and was based on a survey that reached 1264 respondents from 24 'knowledge' organisations. There was no explicit focus on attracting students, the focus was more on developing the best conditions to support the attraction and integration of international workers to the region. A 'Ten point plan' includes actions relating to integration from language support, housing, employment for spouses/partners, support with childcare including information on education childcare support. There is also a recognition to provide support for 'cultural and social intergration' with access to creative and cultural activities and local community based support as a key factor in international integration the report states: "To create a top-level working and living climate, it is not sufficient to focus merely on integrating international employees into their job. Integrating workers' families into the community is also crucial when it comes to establishing solid, sustainable integration" (Leuven MindGate 2016, 10). As such, the job, plus family and community are all considered as 'interdependent' and are the basis of the model for building better support for international workers in the region (2016, 10).

How are creative / cultural workers described, imagined, or referenced in these documents?

Do these policy documents include input from the creative/cultural workforce? If so, whose voices are included?

Leuven MindGate's aim to develop the region across the three pillars describes the value of the 'cultural infrastructure of the city': "In the past decade, Leuven has cultivated an intense, flourishing ecosystem for start-ups and growing companies in the creative industries, with a focus on communication, new media, music and audiovisual businesses. The rise of this bottom-up cluster is due to the relatively recent decision (10-15 years ago) taken by a small number (then) of pioneering entrepreneurs to settle in the area around the Vaartkom. Equally important is the impressive – and fairly new – cultural infrastructure in the city. This includes Museum M, Depot, OPEK and STUK – all forerunners in their respective sectors.

This has created a positive vibe and delivered growth for the economy in Leuven, because creative and knowledge companies attach great importance to operating in lively, bustling cities. Today, the creative cluster established in Leuven stands out in its field – including internationally – as the result of innovative marketing campaigns and television shows. Media productions from Hotel Hungaria (Dagelijkse Kost, Groenland, etc.), Bonka Circus (Iedereen Duivel) or De Chinezen (Iedereen Beroemd, Ten Oorlog, etc.) have led to an entirely new approach to human interest programs." (Leuven MindGate 2016, 9.)

In order to support the development across the three pillars of 'Health, High-Tech and Creativity', Leuven MindGate manages a series of 'projects' including:

- International House. Developed as a result of the White Paper (Leuven MindGate 2016) and based on the model developed in Copenhagen, International House acts as a 'one-stop shop for all legal requirements in terms of immigration, administration and registration.
- Leuven Value Network. Described as an innovation hub, the value network is a collaboration with Leuven MindGate, which acts as a 'partner' providing structure to enable increased connection between young professionals and experienced entrepreneurs.
- Leuven MindGate Database for Creatives. As previously discussed the database enables creative entrepreneurs, companies and individual creative/cultural workers to search for job opportunities, investment, space. It also provides news on the different events taking place in the region.

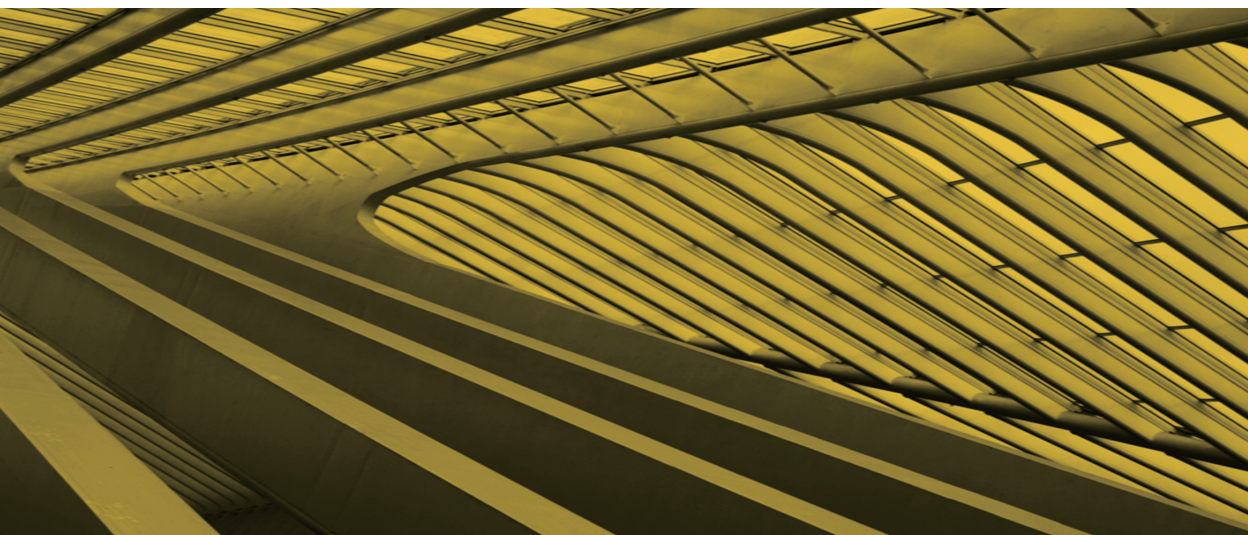
How is community engagement with creativity described, imagined, referenced? (Are community members referred to as constituents, audiences, creators, etc? Are there any specific groups that are mentioned or excluded?)

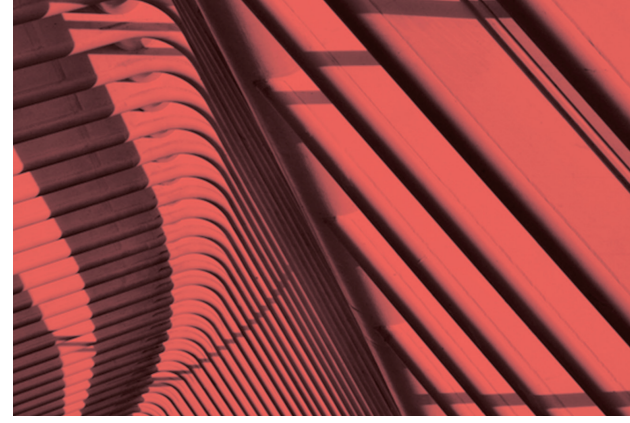
What is interesting in this review of the policy literature is the absence of views from the creative and cultural labour force / community.

There are references to consultations with ‘knowledge workers’ more broadly but no detailed examination of the needs and issues relating to the creative and cultural workforce. There is also, other than a recognition of the need to create more HE creative courses, very little connection between HE and employment opportunities for creative and cultural workers in the region beyond graduation.

The wider concept of ‘community’ is mentioned in the 2016 White Paper. According to this document, Leuven has six “Buurtcentra” or neighbourhood centers. These are meeting places where residents can encounter people from their own neighbourhood and where a wide range of activities are organized: computer training, cheap meals, cultural excursions, Dutch conversation classes, etc. Some of neighbourhood centers also have an extensive offering for children. (Leuven MindGate 2016, 41.)

One interesting factor that emerges from the policy literature is a specific focus on childcare. In the 2016 Regional Taskforce document (ERSV Vlaams-Brabant VZW) ‘childcare’ is included as a key factor in ensuring regional development. Although not explicitly linked to the creative/cultural workforce, the need for adequate childcare support is included in the regional plan and in specific Memorandums to the Mayor in 2014, as it is recognised that in order to enable participation in the labour market, supply of childcare is crucial (see also Leuven MindGate 2016).





4. Conclusions

4.1. Headline Findings from the Preceding Analysis

The preceding review of existing studies, policy documentation and data provides an important analysis of how creative economy is currently imagined, managed and governed within Leuven. This provides a set of key insights that DISCE's research speaks to, as we offer new understandings and possibilities for creative economy in Leuven – with our detailed empirical findings, conceptual innovations, and policy recommendations to be published at the end of the project, in 2022.

Our analysis of the existing academic and policy documents related to 'creative economy' in Leuven leads to the following conclusions:

- 1) Leuven has an established and growing reputation for innovation and the 'knowledge economy'. Policy documents indicate a number of ways in which this could be developed further, including through the ongoing development of Leuven as a city to which international 'knowledge workers' would like to move, and supporting the development of sufficient good quality housing to meet the needs of a growing population.
- 2) Entrepreneurship has a strong presence in policy discussions of the creative economy in Leuven. The city is very supportive and has a number of high profile, Triple helix model -driven, visions and initiatives to promote entrepreneurial spirit, action and collaboration among the city's three profiling sectors of health, high tech and creativity. The challenge for the city is to boost the relatively low rate of entrepreneurship when the space is limited and there is a lack of creative professionals for the needs of companies. A related challenge is to balance between the development of economic and voluntary actors within the creative sector and to maintain a rich variety of cultural offer in the city.
- 3) Some policy documents indicate considerable self-confidence about the overall health of the city's cultural 'ecosystem'. This includes celebration of the strength of co-operation and collaboration that has developed within the city over recent years, reflected in the notion of 'The Leuven Model'.

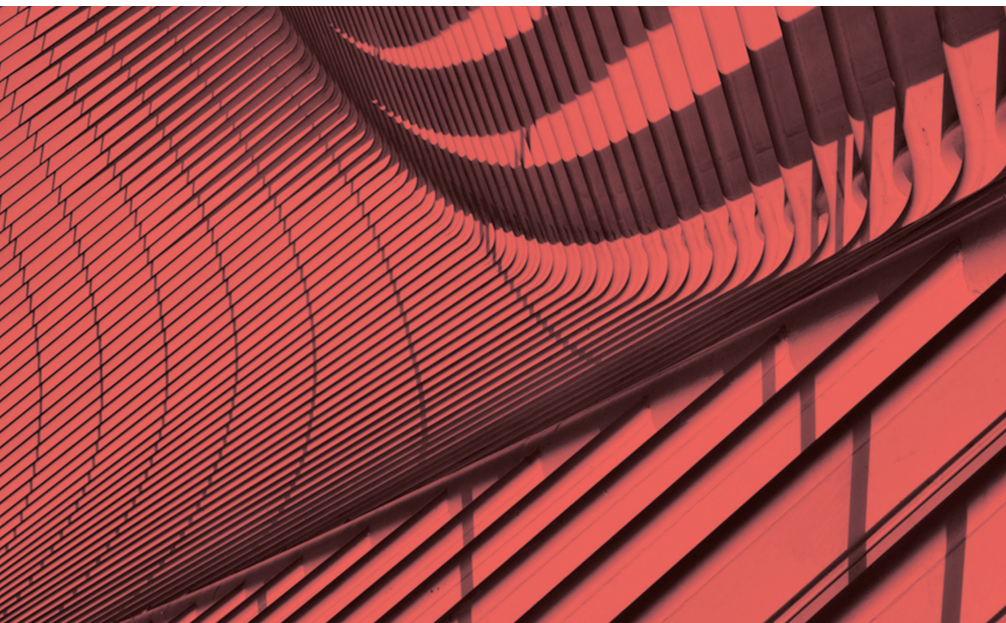
In the context of these conclusions, we look forward to offering a range of new insights on the basis of our fieldwork in Leuven. This will include providing new accounts of the what the 'creative economy' in Leuven consists of what range of 'value' it generates (and for whom), and what are challenges and opportunities – beyond those identified above – for developing a distinctively 'inclusive and sustainable' creative economy in Leuven.

4.2. DISCE's Approach & Next Steps

Our distinctive methodological approach challenges and expands prevailing accounts of creative economy, offering new insights into how creative economies can be supported to develop inclusively and sustainably. Our approach to the creative economy is deliberately very inclusive: involving not only people who work in the 'creative industries' and those who do creative jobs outside of the creative industries. We also include people involved in creative activities outside of paid employment. This is integral to our 'ecological' framework, in which we emphasize the interconnections and interdependencies between cultural and creative activities of many kinds, including 'everyday', amateur and community creativity.

We have therefore been very mindful about how we reach and recruit our research participants: ensuring our recruitment is not constrained by relying on a small number of gatekeepers. We conducted 25 semi-structured interviews in Leuven, including a deliberately wide range of people involved in the creative economy in the city. This diversity of participants in our research will be reflected in the distinctive insights into Leuven creative economy to be published in 2022.

To keep up to date with these publications, please sign up to the DISCE project email list via our project website. Here you can also read reports providing more detail on the distinctiveness of DISCE ecological approach to studying and developing creative economies: for example, in our case study framework (2019) and our initial policy briefing (2020). These and other publications can be accessed here: <https://disce.eu/publications/>



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