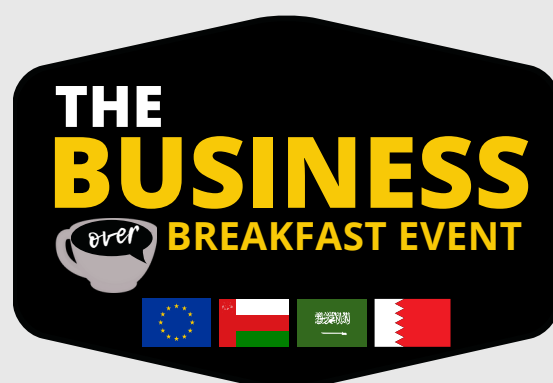




BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES - BUILDING THE CREATIVE ECONOMIES IN THE GCC

SUMMARY REPORT

For the Business over Breakfast Events
that took place from 21-23 February 2023
in Oman, Riyadh, and Bahrain.



EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification
A project funded by the European Union

tom fleming / creative consultancy /

Building the creative economies in the GCC

Introduction

Dr. Tom Fleming, Director of Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy has been engaged by the EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification project to host a series of **Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) events** in selected GCC countries, namely in **Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain** to:

- **Provide an overview of CCI's in the selected GCC countries, including sector performance and challenges, policies, and regulatory frameworks.**
- **Identify areas where the EU can assist the selected GCC countries in achieving their national development goals related to CCIs**
- **Outline opportunities for organizations and businesses to enter or expand into the selected GCC countries in this sector and identify local partners to develop activities in this area.**



Dr Fleming is a leading international authority on the creative economy, arts and cultural policy and creative cities and regions. His work focuses on advising governments, municipalities and institutions across the world to develop effective research, policy, strategy and action across the creative economy. He has led strategic research projects in every region, with a portfolio of projects stretching close to 20 years. Clients include The World Bank, UNESCO, European Commission, British Council, Arts Councils, multiple governments, municipalities, cultural and educational organisations and NGOs.

Tom is Director of the creative economy and cultural consultancy and research agency: Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy (TFCC). With offices in London and Porto plus associates working in 12 countries internationally, Tom leads an interdisciplinary and multi-lingual team which is delivering multiple projects across the world. Central areas of expertise include policy and strategy for the cultural sector and creative economy; deep knowledge on the relationship between culture, creativity and economic development; thought leadership on creative city planning models; and unparalleled expertise in sector investment, mapping, clustering and the spill over effects of the cultural and creative industries.

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The series of CCI events were hosted under the below themes:

- **Building the Creative Economy in Oman** which took place on **20th February** at the Crowne Plaza Muscat.
- **Building the Creative Economy in Saudi Arabia** which took place on **21st February** at the Hyatt Regency Riyadh, Olaya.
- **Building the Creative Economy in Bahrain** which took place on **22nd February** at the Ritz-Carlton Bahrain.

Welcoming Remarks by Douglas Aitkenhead, Team Leader EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification Project

As part of its ongoing activities to enhance economic diversification in the GCC, the EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification project is currently undertaking a study on Cultural and Creative industries (CCI's) in four GCC member countries – KSA, Oman, Bahrain and Kuwait.

The sector has been identified as having the potential to contribute to both economic growth and economic diversification in the GCC building on the established CCI initiatives in a number of GCC member countries.

- Cultural and creative sectors are important for ensuring the continued development of societies and are at the heart of the creative economy.
- Knowledge-intensive and based on individual creativity and talent, they generate considerable economic wealth.
- They show above-average growth and create jobs - particularly for young people and are critical to a shared sense of identity, culture, and values in every country.



Main points presented in the three CCI events:

- When we talk about the creative industry, we need to find a way of joining the dots in terms of being something that drives growth, but also drives innovation and potentially competitiveness across the economy, and also contributes to a set of softer but still equally vital assets in terms of local distinctiveness, place-making, culture identity, and even that horrible phrase, soft power.
- It's important to recognize these things. Because these are always either explicit or implicit when it comes to why countries invest in and try to support industries.
- While the creative industries are recognized in different countries, with different reasons for their contribution directly to the economy to grow performance, they are also recognized for their indirect contribution to the innovation ecosystem to value added to goods and services across the economy, whether that be in tourism, manufacturing, or in relation to the wider ICT sectors.
- UNESCO recognizes creativity as a precious resource with the potential to generate economic benefits while also enhancing our overall well-being. To strengthen creativity as a key factor for sustainable development, UNESCO implements a number of activities to promote arts and artists at the national, regional, and global levels. They are conceived in synergy with the initiatives linked to UNESCO's cultural conventions. These activities target primarily young artists, in particular, those in developing countries, and focus on policy orientation, exchange, training, advice, and capacity building.
- In distinct states, different places, countries, regions, or cities, these elements play out in different ways. So understanding customer distinctiveness is really key in understanding how you can build relationships that are beneficial in terms of the creative industries, the steps required, and having that cultural literacy that is really important working in the GCC region.
- The EU has been focusing on creative industries for a long time and it has big drivers like the **Creative Europe Program**. The Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 has a budget of € 2.44 billion, compared to €1.47 billion for the previous programme (2014-2020).
- Creative Europe invests in actions that reinforce cultural diversity and respond to the needs and challenges of the cultural and creative sectors. The main objectives of the programme are to:

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- safeguard, develop, and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage
 - increase the competitiveness and economic potential of the cultural and creative sectors, in particular, the audiovisual sector
 - The novelties of the programme will contribute to the recovery of these sectors, reinforcing their efforts to become more inclusive, more digital, and environmentally more sustainable.
- In 2021 the world saw the first recovery signs from Covid-19, but we are not there yet. At the same time, the UN declared 2021 the International year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development. This nomination could not come at a better time as the pandemic has paralyzed the cultural and creative industries (CCI), with creatives and professionals in the creative sector suffering from severe consequences.
 - It may be true that the CCI amount only for about 3% of global DGP, but its growth has been more than remarkable in the years preceding the pandemic. Creative entrepreneurship could be the key to the creative industry's recovery to its former glory.
 - While traditional entrepreneurship cares more about material gains, creative entrepreneurship acts primarily as a vehicle for social change instead of just focusing on profit. Creative entrepreneurship encompasses all businesses with an inclination towards arts or cultural heritage.
 - Cultural entrepreneurs understand the importance of culture and have created a platform to celebrate it.
 - Culture is the beliefs and values passing from generation to generation relatively unchanged. It creates identities and a sense of belongingness among individuals. In a globalized and fast-paced environment where identities are weakened and cultural roots are lost, cultural entrepreneurship can be a beacon of hope to remind us who we are.
 - This is partly why the cultural and creative industry had seen tremendous growth before the pandemic. Cultural products like films, theatre and literature, or cultural activities such as sports, live performances, and food festivals contribute significantly to the growth of the local and national economies.

EU Policy & Partnership Landscape

- Cultural and creative sectors are important for ensuring the continued development of societies and are at the heart of the creative economy. Knowledge-intensive and based on individual creativity and talent, they generate considerable economic wealth. More importantly, they are critical to a shared sense of European identity, culture and values. In economic terms, they show above-average growth and create jobs - particularly for young people - while strengthening social cohesion.
- The Creative Europe programme consists of the Creative Europe CULTURE and Creative Europe MEDIA (audio-visual) as well as the Cross-sectoral strand.
- The Creative Europe supports cross-border cooperation and networking activities for all cultural and creative sectors and co-finances important platforms and networks.
- In order to prepare the programme proposal for the upcoming Creative Europe programme 2021-2027, the Commission consulted with a wide range of stakeholders and Member States experts. These consultations were held in parallel with the interim evaluation of the 2014-2020 Creative Europe Programme and both concluded that the needs of some sectors were not sufficiently addressed in the current programme.
- The proposal for Creative Europe 2021-2027 intends to remedy these shortcomings by including new specific sectorial support to areas such as
 - music
 - architecture
 - books and publishing
 - cultural heritage
- These sectorial actions will focus on capacity building, professionalization and talent development, and data collection to understand better the sectors, as well as export opportunities. They will build on and complement EU-driven actions and projects already carried out over the past years such as the Music Moves Europe initiative.
- Entrepreneurship and innovation are important topics for the cultural and creative sectors and industries. These have been examined more in detail by Member States experts. Results can be found, for example, in the OMC Report on "The role of public policies in developing entrepreneurial and innovation potential of the cultural and creative sectors" and in a detailed Overview of related EU policies and studies.

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- Access to finance for the cultural and creative sectors and industries is an equally important topic that Member States experts have looked into and included their findings in the OMC Report on Access to Finance "Towards more efficient financial ecosystems."
- In January 2020, the policy project FLIP ("Finance, Learning, Innovation and Patenting") for the cultural and creative industries, together with the Commission and Member States experts, organised a conference to look more in detail into what has been achieved concerning finance, innovation and other relevant topics for the cultural and creative sectors.
- Beyond those specific initiatives, there is a variety of European support schemes for the sector and the industry tackling those issues
 - Cultural and Creative Sector Guarantee Facility in Creative Europe 2014-2020
 - European Institute of Innovation and Technology's funding of new Knowledge and Innovation Communities for the cultural and creative industries
 - options under Horizon Europe
 - Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs
 - Worth Partnership Project
 - STARTS initiative (Innovation at the nexus of Science, Technology, and the ARTS), the STARTS Residency programme
 - EU Support for digital Start-ups
- Networks in the areas of the cultural and creative sectors at European level
 - European Creative Business Network
 - EU network of creative hubs
 - European incubation network(s) for creativity-driven innovation
 - Pan-European network of Digital Innovation Hubs
 - Regional Initiative for Culture and Creativity
 - European Regions Research and Innovation Network – Working Group on Design and Creativity
- In order to support cultural and creative sectors via evidence-based policy-making, the European Commission and Eurostat are working on cultural statistics and other relevant studies.

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- The Council of the EU and other international organisations have for a long time recognised the power of cultural participation to promote inclusion and integration of isolated and excluded groups, as well as supporting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Participation in cultural activities is seen as a tool for promoting equality, empowering individuals and communities to communicate and develop their potential.
- Cultural cooperation with GCC countries (e.g. through twinning and/or transnational projects) can also be a tool for stimulating intercultural understanding, which is especially important when tackling issues of migration, security and radicalisation.
- The “Urban Agenda for the EU” document emphasises the importance of inclusive and cohesive urban development processes, involving civil society and communities in the process of place making. It also advocates the adoption of holistic approaches capable of taking into account economic, environmental, social, territorial, and cultural aspects.
- Cultural, and, more recently, urban and creative tourism have a major impact on the economy of places. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has for many years collected evidence showing how urban tourism is one important segment in today’s domestic and international tourism market.
- Cultural and creative tourism (part of experiential tourism) are a driving force in fostering positive economic, social and spatial dynamics (especially in smaller places). Through the rejuvenation of public spaces, infrastructures and the development of local amenities and recreational facilities, this kind of tourism can provide the means for transforming the local urban landscape, and, by extension, improve the image of places. By energising the local businesses’ entrepreneurship capacity, it can generate innovation of products and experiences.
- At EU level, CCI’s are defined as including the following areas of activity: books, newspapers and magazines, music, performing arts, TV, film, radio, video games, visual arts, architecture, advertising.
- A 2014 study by Ernst & Young Global limited (EY) shows that the creative economy’s contribution to the GDP of the Union is 4.2%, employing 7 million people (nearly 2.5 times more Europeans than the automotive industry). Such figures may suggest that the presence and development of cultural and creative industries constitutes a main economic driver for a city and a region, and because of their high content of creativity, CCI’s contribute significantly to spin-offs such as, for example, youth employment.

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- However, CCI's are a by-product of constant crossovers between the commercial and noncommercial sectors. Designers, or people working in advertising, look for inspiration in art galleries or museums for their new products; visitors want to see a city after reading an inspiring book or seeing a movie set in that location. Video game developers work together with illustrators and story-tellers to develop their creations. This is why cities with vibrant cultural ecosystems upstream are also the places where CCI's thrive downstream.
- Despite the considerable potential offered by culture and the CCI's outlined above, there is still a need to make a case for developing capacity building so that local policies aimed at raising awareness, supporting, developing and networking the sector together with establishing new hybrid forms of funding, can be identified and piloted.
- Capacity building is also about facilitating learning and the exchange of experience among those involved in the sector. In order to explore the key areas of culture and CCI's' impacts discussed earlier, strategic opportunities were grouped under four themes:
 - Creative Talent & Enterprise
 - Creative Clusters & Hubs
 - IP Regulation, Trade & Investment
 - Spillover Effects

1.2 Strategic Opportunity Themes

Creative Talent & Enterprise	Creative Clusters and Hubs	IP Regulation, Trade & Investment	Spillover Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative education • Validation of creative jobs • Skills programmes • Entrepreneurship support • Inclusive business support • R&D and knowledge exchange • Smart specialisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector networks • Place-based clusters and hubs • Digital infrastructure • Creative place-making • Production and showcasing infrastructure • Baseline studies / CCI strategies and frameworks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective IP framework, specialism and enforcement • Incentives for CCI investment and trade • Targeted investment programmes • Market-making: domestic, regional, international • Showcasing and celebration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage renewal • Cultural tourism • Health and wellbeing • Innovation and competitiveness • Inclusion, equity, ethics • Sustainable development • Pride and soft power

Growth Drivers to build creative economies in the GCC



• Open and Tolerant Cultural Environments

- Culture is an invaluable tool for the growth and proliferation of the creative industry. More open and tolerant cultures are conducive environments for creativity.
- Cultural tolerance is a critical factor in the region's ability to attract, retain, and mobilize creative talent.
- Culturally tolerant places open themselves up for new ideas, technology, and creative talent that would unlock the untapped creative potential in that place, broadening the scope of creativity that would eventually widen the creative sector's market boundaries.



• Education/Training

- Individual creative or innovative behavior is strongly related to their education and training. Education is needed to transform creativity and imaginative ideas into meaningful products and services with commercial value.
- Ideally, creative individuals need the right skills and competencies to convert their conceptualizations into viable ideas that can be developed and implemented for commercial success.
- While these creators could be having vague creative concepts, it takes the right skills and methodology to make that concept a reality. Because of this aspect, training institutions are crucial in molding and sustaining innovative behavior in the creative industry.



• Infrastructure

- Infrastructural development is positively correlated with the growth of the creative industry.
- Creative economies thrive more in denser, diverse, and talent-driven urban centers than suburban centers that allows creative interdependencies, local networking, and input sharing.



• Government Support

- Governments have been linked to the growth of creative economies. Governments are crucial in creating cultural openness and tolerance that drive traffic of creative talent and capabilities and technology required to produce innovative content. Ideally, governments provide incentives and the necessary support services to invest in the creative economy.
- Government support occurs mainly through regulatory tools and infrastructural development that control the operations of the creative industry.



• **Technology Enablers**

- Digitization is regarded as one of the most significant contributors to the growth of the creative industry. Technology enablers are usually anchored on the number of patents and expenditure on research and development.
- The creative sector is organized at the intersection of culture, technology, science, and commerce. This intersection has made technology an enabler in supplying goods and services of artistic and intellectual capabilities.



• **Global Distribution of Creative Content**

- Traditionally, global creative content distribution has occurred from developed countries to less-developed or developing nations. The US, the UK, and countries in the EU all experienced growth in their different sectors of post-industrialism development.
- This phenomenon allowed mature economies to expand their infrastructure, training, and education, to diversify their cultures and remain open and tolerant to new ones, and with governments that provide support through incentives, direct and indirect funding, and favorable policy and regulatory environments.



• **The Internet and Technology in Shifting Global Creative Content**

- The internet has transformed content creation and distribution patterns of the global creative industry. Traditionally, marketing relied on complex infrastructure and networks that presented structural barriers to designers. An individual had to belong to a particular professional network to derive value from your creative content.
- Since the creative economies were found in close proximity to academic, research, technology, and cultural centers, this location impeded the commercial success of creative products from faraway places from these hubs.
- The internet has broken those barriers by providing democratized access to creation and distribution tools.
- This democratized access provides individuals with tools to create more attractive products that resonate with the global market. The internet is both a means and an end to the creation and distribution of the creative economy.

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CCI Opportunities in Saudi Arabia

- The creative industry is a major contributor to the cultural scene in KSA, providing richness and diversity. Saudi Arabia's government recognizes the importance of this emerging industry and has made it a key pillar of its Vision 2030 plan.
- The aim is to increase the contribution of the sector GDP to 3%, generating \$20 billion in revenue and creating over 100,000 jobs by the year 2030. In order to achieve this, the government is investing in infrastructure and initiatives that will support the growth of the industry.
- This includes establishing new creative hubs, providing training and development programs, and creating new public-private partnerships.
- The Saudi Ministry of Culture has stated that its vision entails "a flourishing of arts and culture across Saudi Arabia that enriches lives, celebrates national identity and builds understanding between people". This new government body was created by royal decree in 2018, with the goal of protecting and promoting the nation's cultural sector at home and abroad.
- Under their guardianship, the arts and culture scene has witnessed a revival, with Saudi Arabian artists receiving newfound recognition on the world stage. Progress has been rapid — in the same year that the Ministry of Culture was established, Saudi Arabia hosted its first-ever Arab Fashion Week. In 2021, the Kingdom also unveiled its new national pavilion at the Cannes Film Festival, enabling Saudi filmmakers to showcase their talent and meet with international industry leaders.
- The Saudi Arabian national identity is reflected in the art, music, and fashion of the Kingdom. And the creative industry plays a vital role in preserving and promoting these cultural treasures. By focusing on the creative industry, KSA is also taking steps to diversify its economy. The government recognises that in order to thrive and reach its Vision 2030 goals, it must expand and modernise. Many sectors of the economy are competitive or well-established, so to diversify KSA is turning its attention to the creative industry. This is an emerging sector with great potential for growth, and by investing in it now, KSA can position itself as a leader in the global creative space.
- Additionally, a robust and active creative sector helps to promote the country's image abroad and attract tourists, while also providing opportunities for Saudis to express their creativity and identity. The sector has enormous potential to create much-needed jobs for the younger generation and generate sustainable revenue for the economy.

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- Saudi Arabia's creative industries demonstrate increased demand globally. The United Nations (2018) reports that in 2014, KSA's creative product exports were worth \$746.97 million, up from \$308.5 million in 2005. The European Union appears to be a rising KSA's innovative products' importer, as shown by a rise in demand from 7% in 2005 to 30% in 2014 (United Nations, 2018). Similarly, Asia accounts for over 60% of the country's market demand (Esmail, 2019).
- However, the majority of this export is in the fashion and design segment, accounting for 80% of the country's creative export (United Nations, 2018), suggesting underdevelopment in the audiovisual, new media, performing arts, art, and crafts, visual arts, and publishing. The rise in global demand could be attributed to the stronger government ties with development partners, technological improvements that facilitate the creation of high-quality international products through research and development, and progress in the country's training and education to develop skills.
- There are various enablers for the creative performance of KSA's creative industries. The country's Vision 2030 anchors KSA's development trajectory where the creative economy is projected to contribute at least 3% of the country's GDP.
- According to Moshashai et al. (2020), KSA's Vision 2030 intends to enable the country to diversify its over-reliance on oil revenues, reduce its budget deficits, balance its budgets, and promote long-term economic growth. The government has begun direct and indirect investments in the creative industry.
- Al-Khudair (2019) reports that the government plans to provide 60000 free Wi-Fi hotspots across the country as part of its infrastructural expansion. KSA established the ministry of culture in 2018, with 11 subsectors revamping the country's creative economy. This development was reinforced when KSA's culture ministry became a signatory to the G20's summit backing a \$ 2.3 trillion cultural economy (Esmail, 2019).
- Besides, KSA is undergoing a cultural progression towards supporting arts and culture (Al-Khudair, 2019). These enablers will attract suppliers and the necessary talent and technology to transform creative ideas into innovative products.
- The internet has transformed the supply chain from a supply-driven market into a demand-driven market. This development means that the SMEs involved in the different Saudi creative industries' different segments do not require singular and rigid value chains to distribute their content globally.

Moving Forward

- Saudi SMEs and individual content creators have the potential to compete and grow in the global creative economy. KSA's Vision 2030 and the government's direct and indirect investment in infrastructural development are cultural enablers for the development of the country's creative industry.
- Other policy developments include the relaxation of the national laws and its enforcement. These initiatives will bridge the global supply issues by providing decisive local factors to attract new talent and capabilities that will subsequently provide the innovative behavior required to produce demand-driven goods and services worldwide.
- The internet is a crucial tool in providing creative and distribution channels for Saudi innovative products' global performance.

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CCI Opportunities in Oman

- The Ministry of Heritage and Culture is providing material support to teams of folk art, recording their products, display it in the media (print and broadcast) and organizing events and competitions on a regular basis such as "a festival of Omani song," which is held every two years.
- The ministry also gives an opportunity to folk groups to participate in international forums continuously to support their varied shows, encourage them to continue innovation and excellence.
- The Sultanate believes that creating such opportunities is very important to preserve the Omani heritage, capacity building, maintenance and transfer of culture, generate income and employment opportunities.

What's the status of the Sultanate's creative economy?

- Oman started thinking about creative economy way back in 2013, when a symposium on 'The Role of Policies and Strategies in the Development of Crafts, Arts and Creative Industries in Oman', stressed the need to develop a creative economy with appropriate vision and strategy. It also highlighted the importance of factoring in the creative economy while planning cities and investing in infrastructure.
- The event turned the focus on the ways, mechanisms and significance of developing creative industries, especially SMEs, and nurturing Omani talents in the creative sector.
- Considering the government's consistent focus on development driven by sustainability, technology and innovation, and availability of a promising pool of young creative talents, Oman can hit the road to unprecedented growth if it strategically brings up its creative industry.
- More importantly, the country can very well aspire to establish itself as a regional hub for the creative industry. At the same time, it's essential that Oman's policymakers focus on strengthening the basics.
- For instance, though Oman has great institutions such as SQU, The Research Council and applied science colleges, they are yet to transform themselves into anchor institutions or idea hubs that function as platforms for fresh talents to interact and generate economic activities in the creative field. It's also necessary that a supportive entrepreneurial framework is established to nurture as many start-ups and SMEs as possible in the creative industry sector.

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CCI Opportunities in Bahrain

Bahrain is a culturally, ethnically, religiously diverse country where people live freely in a tolerant and hospitable environment. With its progressive cultural environment, Bahrain can add real value and compete on a global level. Establishing sustainability, developing skills, and offering tangible benefits by linking cultural activity with the Bahraini economy enables the kingdom to achieve its objective of becoming more economically diverse, sustainable, and productivity-driven.

The Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA) plays a key role in protecting, developing, and promoting the national cultural identity as a core component of its national identity. The Authority seeks to establish culture as a cornerstone of economic and social development, boost Bahrain's reputation as a culturally-neutral country internationally, and encourage creativity and innovation in the fields of culture, arts, sciences, technology, economics, management, architecture, urban planning, and government and civil society agencies, and utilize culture for economic gain.

Culture-related industries, family and cultural tourism, and arts are undoubtedly areas that can significantly contribute to economic development as they offer ample job opportunities and high revenue streams, as well as aiding in the recycling local capital.

The government will support cultural development through the following means:

- **Supporting the Role of Culture in Enhancing the National Identity:** The Authority will put together a medium-term plan which utilizes audio and visual media to promote national awareness with regards to cultural identity and modern culture, entrench positive traditional values, establish citizenship values as a catalyst to develop the present and foresee the future, shape the ideological and social standing of individuals and groups, and instill national loyalty and patriotism through programmes which focus on social development, education, dialogue, and media. In recognition of their fresh ideas and boundless ambition, youth will play a central role in proposing and implementing cultural and arts programs that contribute to the advancement of innovation and modernization of the national cultural identity.
- **Implementing a National Program for Social Culture:** BACA will prepare a national program for social culture that involves youth-oriented activities, in cooperation with the relevant government agencies such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development, and the General Organization for Youth and Sports. A series of youth-oriented events will be held which will include a wide range of cultural activities such as interactive lectures and symposia, workshops, theatre workshops, documentary film screenings, and competitions revolving around citizenship, civil education, aesthetic education, as well as productivity and work-related training. The government will support scientific framework for the workshops under this program.

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- Supporting Initiatives that Contribute to Societal and Cultural Development:** BACA will continue to support initiatives and cultural and artistic organizations which contribute to societal and cultural development, such as enabling full-time authors and artists, and supporting culture-related awards, industries, seminars, and conferences. The Authority will also nurture promising artistic talents, recognize art pioneers, support local cultural activities, and underwrite participation in international art events. It will also plan for cultural development in key areas such as theater, music, fine arts, and folk arts.
- Partnering with the Private Sector:** BACA seeks to establish new cultural projects – such as theaters, cultural centers, and community centers – which contribute to human capital development in Bahrain. To make such projects financially viable and beneficial to the country, the Authority seeks to manage them as fully-fledged business entities. Through the “Invest in Culture” initiative, the Authority will build strategic partnerships with the private sector to support the cultural landscape in Bahrain by financing construction projects and renewable programs revolving around entertainment – such as festivals, exhibitions, and other cultural activities.
- Being Open to Other Cultures and Arts, and Engaging in Inter-cultural Dialogue and Understanding:** Securing cultural agreements with brotherly and friendly nations, strengthening cultural ties through openness to cultures and arts from the world, and engaging in inter-cultural dialogue and understanding will create hugely diverse cultural horizons which benefit local cultural movements in the country, and in turn promote the Kingdom of Bahrain on the local, regional, and international level.
- Preserving and Nurturing an Advanced Cultural Environment:** BACA will utilize the appropriate means to establish and nurture a cultural environment by engendering technology-based paradigm shifts that revitalize the cultural scene and provide effective solutions. These shifts will feed into a modern communication system which will, in turn, drive two core missions related to overall development: accelerating development through the provision of information by the Authority and creating new investment opportunities in culture. The National ICT Strategy adopted by the government will provide a clear roadmap as to the role culture will play in the lives of individuals and communities, and facilitate information exchange between cultural organizations in the country.

- **Supporting Modern Cultural Industries, such as Digital Entertainment, Internet Culture, and Internet Gaming:** Culture cannot truly prosper without developing cultural industries, among the most important of which are modern cultural industries such as digital entertainment, internet culture, and internet gaming. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to arm future generations with healthy mindsets which enable them to overcome issues related to cultural education - such as internet forums and internet gaming - which have affected a large number of kids and caused a great deal of concern and worry among parents. The Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA), in cooperation with the government and social agencies in the ICT and education fields, will examine how to steer and familiarize kids with the modern internet world in a proper fashion.
- **Modernizing Systems and Regulations for Cultural and Artistic Societies:** Updating and introducing new systems and regulations will strengthen the relationship between the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA) and the various cultural and artistic societies and advance the cultural movement in Bahrain. These new systems include offering incentives to societies that augment their regular activities with non-material undertakings and create web content, providing premises to societies that conduct programs for cultural development, introducing systems that support the creation of a robust and dynamic market for artworks, and supporting the establishment of new societies which actively promote digital culture in all governorates.

Conclusions

From an EU perspective, the GCC countries represent a large and dynamic market for European culture and creative industries' products and services. The region's young and affluent population has a growing appetite for creative content and experiences, and the governments of the GCC countries have recognized the importance of developing their culture and creative industries as key drivers of economic growth and diversification.

Some of the specific opportunities for the culture and creative industries in the GCC from an EU perspective include:

- **Film and TV production:** The GCC countries are increasingly becoming a hub for film and TV production, with a number of major studios and production companies setting up operations in the region. The EU has a wealth of expertise and experience in this area, which can be leveraged to develop partnerships and joint ventures with GCC-based companies.
- **Design and architecture:** The GCC countries are investing heavily in infrastructure and urban development, creating opportunities for EU designers and architects to work on projects ranging from large-scale developments to individual buildings and public spaces.
- **Music and performing arts:** The GCC countries are home to a vibrant music and performing arts scene, with a growing number of festivals and events attracting international talent. EU artists and performers can take advantage of these opportunities to showcase their work and build relationships with local audiences and industry professionals.
- **Fashion and luxury goods:** The GCC countries have a large and growing market for luxury goods and fashion products, creating opportunities for EU designers and brands to enter the market and build relationships with local retailers and consumers.
- **There are significant opportunities for knowledge and policy exchange between the EU and GCC** - for example, on the building blocks for a successful CCI sector; on approaches to education, skills, investment, and infrastructure; and on the types of partnership models which can facilitate innovation and growth.
- **There are also opportunities for knowledge exchange on methodologies for baseline mapping and data capture in the CCIs** - both of which are vital for long-term evidence-based policy. EU expertise can ensure GCC countries adopt best practices in sector mapping and evidence development.

Overall, the culture and creative industries in the GCC represent a significant opportunity for EU companies and professionals to expand their reach and build new relationships in a dynamic and rapidly growing market.

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About the EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification

About the EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification Project

The EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification is a project funded by the European Commission Service for Foreign Policy Instruments under the Partnership Instrument.

The project contributes to stronger EU-GCC relations by supporting the GCC countries in the ongoing process of economic diversification away from hydrocarbon-dependent sectors, including by funding regular EU-GCC Business Fora.

The purpose of this project is to promote climate-friendly trade, investment, and economic affairs-related policy analysis, dialogue, and cooperation between stakeholders from the EU and GCC at both regional and country levels in the context of the GCC economic diversification process.

For more information on the EU-GCC Dialogue Project, and to download research reports and other publications, please visit:

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SCAN ME
to learn more about the project