

While the roots for the overall idea of Creative Ports date back to 2013/2014 and included workshops for cultural and creative entrepreneurs in the Baltic Sea Region, the application process for the successful project started in 2017. This included the realisation of internationalisation tools in the project as the main idea. After approval, the consortium began work at the end of 2018 and throughout 2019 the partners developed and refined the tools.

The first part of the physical internationalisation tool (“Pitching for a Better Baltic Sea”) was piloted at the end of 2019, while the other tools were to be tested and realised during 2020. The aim was to bring together and involve CCIs from the different regions around the Baltic Sea, travelling project partner organisations

Creative Ports

and so forth. Suddenly, the plans came to a halt in February/March 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic struck Europe and international mobility paused.

The pandemic was not easy to navigate for a network dedicated to fostering international cooperation through innovative, live, physical, events. However, the partners rose to the challenge, rearranging and adjusting the project for the new conditions. After much discussion and communication, we considered what the future of internationalisation for CCIs could look like, especially when it comes to jointly facilitating cross-border opportunities. So, new ideas were developed for a mixture of physical and digital tools.

Internationalisation in a pandemic

Some internationalisation tools were planned as normal live events with the participation of international creative companies, while others were shifted and adjusted to a virtual format. The partners built up capacity for these virtual formats and searched for new ways of interacting with CCI companies.

Although the results are different than was initially planned, the partner organisations gained new insights into ways of “doing internationalisation”, reducing over-seas travel (and, hence CO₂-emissions) and increasing accessibility of digital meetings. These lessons and more fruitful experiences will pave the way for internationalisation going forward.