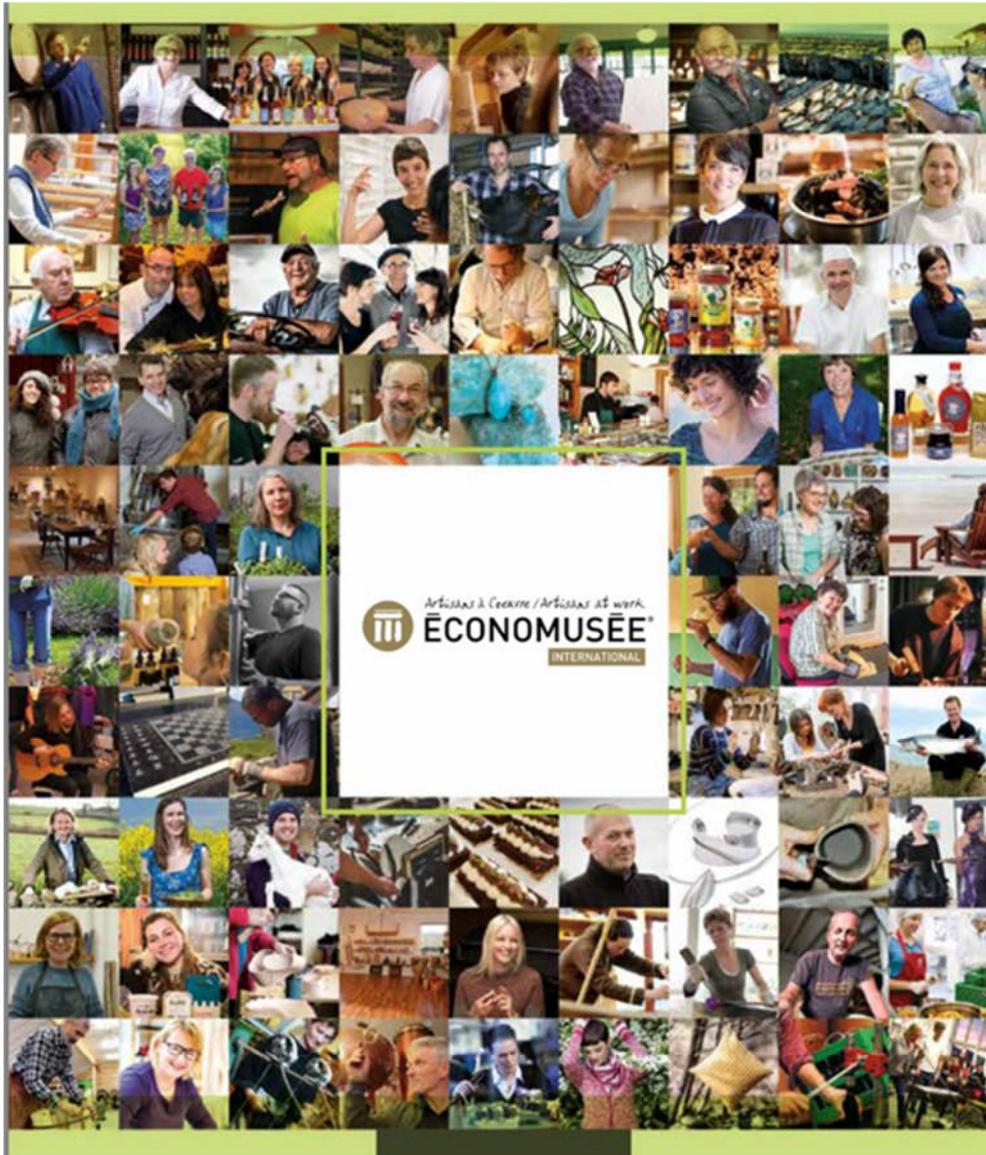


Study of Économusée Artisan Network

Making our network work for us



Summary

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1. Introduction

In mid-2017 as part of the NPA-funded CRAFT REACH project, Teagasc (Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority) led the conception, design and implementation of a study of the network of Économusée artisans in Canada and Europe.

An Économusée is an artisan business that opens its doors to the public to provide a learning and interpretive experience for visitors. As of May 2017, a network of 80 Économusées exists internationally, with 45 based in Canada and 35 in 7 European countries including Ireland, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, Northern Ireland, Norway and Sweden. An insight into the types of businesses, their location and background can found at www.economusee.eu

The overall aim of the study was to get a clearer understanding of the potential business and collaboration opportunities of these 80 artisans. Therefore, the study was not just about the Économusée network per se, but rather about the possibilities artisans do, or do not see, at national and international level, for collaboration and cooperation with each other. Therefore, the two clear objectives for the study were:

- 1) Identify the collaborative potential and needs of the artisans at national and international level.
- 2) Devise recommendations for actions by the Craft Reach project to address these issues.

Data for the study was generated through an online survey sent to all Économusée artisans through the national partners in the CRAFT REACH project, with qualitative feedback on the survey findings generated through workshop sessions at the Second International Économusée conference in Bergen, Norway, 2017. Before the survey questionnaire was distributed, all the CRAFT REACH partners had the opportunity to comment on the questionnaire and the survey in each country was implemented via the relevant CRAFT REACH project partner.

This summary report is heavily based on the final report compiled by Helen Conneely, Celtic Roots Studio, the Irish consultant and artisan who was commissioned by Teagasc to carry out the study. The key findings and recommendations presented here are based on analysis of the online survey data, qualitative feedback from artisans at the Bergen Conference and professional input from consultant Helen Conneely and from the Teagasc project team.

2. Key Findings

The survey sample was robust overall but more complete in Europe than in Canada. Coverage within Europe was virtually 100% of all Économusées so the survey was in effect a census of those artisans across 6 countries. Responses in Canada were not as extensive and were from Quebec and the Atlantic Province only.

Unsurprisingly given the differential geographical responses, **most recent recorded growth (past 3 to 7 years) in Économusée numbers has occurred in Europe.** However, this is also probably a valid representation of the wider population of Économusées.

64% of respondent artisans were female and nearly **60% of all respondents were between 36 years and 55 years of age.**

Nearly **40% of respondents are Économusées for less than 3 years** with nearly **one third of respondents only being an Économusées for less than one year.**

The level of awareness among artisans of the international network was low with only 38% stating that they have very good to good levels of awareness.

All but 4 artisans employ both full-time and part-time staff with three businesses having between 21-30 employees. Nevertheless, close to 90% of respondents employed less than 10 people and, therefore, reflect the conventional definition of **micro enterprise.**

One in three respondents is a food Économusée, highlighting the growth in the artisan food sector. It appears to be the fastest growing membership group.

92% of businesses promote their businesses on-line and 70% generate sales from their website confirming that **digital technology is part of artisans' business strategy.**

Apart from national organised meetings, **almost 8 out of 10 artisans are informally communicating with each other within their national networks.** However, only one in ten is communicating at least once a month and further 17% are checking-in with each other at least every two months.

Almost 9 out of 10 respondents would like to connect with other artisans. Artisans particularly want to cooperate with each other on new product development and sharing information on trends and business strategy. Artisans are keen to learn about craft fairs and trade fairs in other countries.

More than half of artisans see business potential in sharing expertise and problem solving. Nearly 70% are willing to share design ideas and skills.

Half of artisans are interested in sourcing raw materials from other artisans.

Although **31% of artisans would be either very interested or interested in promoting other artisans' products in their boutiques,** the same proportion are **either not at all or not interested in promoting other artisan's products online on each other's websites.**

Thirty out of the 47 respondents indicated they were **willing to get involved in discussing how best to progress the networking opportunities identified in the survey.** A list of these 30 artisans is contained in Appendix 1.

3. Recommendations

3.1 General

Any future project (or organisation) to support the Économusée artisans should include the findings from this survey as evidence upon which to devise key actions. Specifically, any future project (or organisation) should **facilitate and promote an Action Plan**, co-designed with the artisans, which would seek to:

- 1) Enable greater communication between artisans at international level.
- 2) Increase opportunities for sales of products and new product development among artisans.
- 3) Promote and facilitate sharing of knowledge and technical expertise among artisans.
- 4) Facilitate inter artisan communication by developing a communication platform.

3.2 Specific

An artisan '**champion**' should be identified in each country to be the main artisan contact person within each national network. A small working group of these 'champions' together with national/regional partner organisations should progress the previously mentioned **Action Plan**, the first objective of which would be to develop an online communication platform for artisans.

There are many **online platforms** that are ideal for group communication ranging from closed Facebook groups to business-oriented platforms like 'Slack'. It is clear that the way forward is online and finding platform(s) that help the artisans communicate and work collaboratively both nationally and internationally.

For **new product development** and sales of new combined products, a key cost or barrier to entry for the artisan is cost of shipping of products/ materials between artisans. In any new programme a **design competition** should be established to encourage artisans to collaboratively develop new products. This competition would also include a budget to support the co-design process and help bring the successful product concepts closer to market. As the Économusée network has international traction, perhaps a **link with an international shipping company like FedEx or DHL**, cover shipping costs and act as a main sponsor to the design competition and to other planned project/events should be considered. This link could be pitched in terms of corporate social responsibility given the aims of the Économusée network. It is a great story to highlight international connections between artists around the world that is also supporting sustainable businesses internationally.

The participating artisans must agree to share knowledge and feedback on the process, learning and sales achieved, though, for example, **facilitated peer to peer learning sessions**. Such sessions could also be used to evaluate the success of this and other support initiatives and encourage other artisans to follow the process. At the 2nd International Économusée Conference in Norway in October 2017, there were discussions re new product development but these types of interactions need to be harnessed and encouraged in a structured way. Collaborations at international level between designers in mainstream and luxury markets are something that has become important to brands developing new sectors and their longer term success. This is surely an inherent potential strength of the Économusée network. The long term sustainability (after sponsor) of this process could be funded from a percent of the sales of successful products. There is also potential for national exhibitions to focus on such new product development success and also shared stands at trade fairs to gain orders from for the new products developed.

An international Économusée design/art competition for artisans in all countries culminating in a travelling exhibition in the winner's country could be considered. Funding for the exhibition process could be found at national level with the relevant craft and food development agencies. Voting online on different social media platforms would add awareness to products/artisans at consumer level and would contribute to their national and international profiling. Separate categories for food, drink, clothing jewellery and accessories etc. could be considered.

Again an International sponsor could be sought to work with this project and/or cultural/economic attachés at national Embassies within the Économusée network could be harnessed for their support. Large companies and organisations are developing projects and linkages with not for profit projects with great stories to tell - similar to the Économusée network. This supports both their own online content and image internationally. The International Économusée network doesn't realise the good they are doing for artisans internationally and now is the time to lever this internationally to help support the future of the network financially and PR wise.

Collaboration between artisans and international training consultants for **creative engagement training** and reviews on how to create better customer engagement would be excellent to establish; a good example of this was given at the at the conference in Norway. The possibility of providing this training online should be explored.

An online, easily searchable **register/database** of artisans with their key interests and skills should be developed by and for the artisans. A demand for such emerged from discussions at the Bergen 2017 conference. The database of both technical and professional knowledge would be shared so as redress the gap that that many artisans have skills and expertise that others may not know about, ranging from languages, financial, technical, design, online and social media and others. Constructing and using this database would require confidence building with the artisans.

The recommendations above are significant and very achievable but without international support will remain aspirations. There is a hunger for greater work and collaboration between the artisans and I think the sustainability of the network long term is dependent on the artisans buying into network and achieving more through it internationally.

4. Implications for New Project Proposal

Any new project to support artisan Économusées must build on the evidence produced by this survey and the derived recommendations which are significant and very achievable but without programmatic support will remain aspirations.

There are 4 key implications from this study for any new project/support programme.

- 1) Both the content of a new project and the proposed implementation needs to take a more explicit **multi-actor and co-designed approach**. The evidence, findings and recommendations from this study provide one element of a co-designed input to the content of a new project, but this this needs to be broadened. The aim should be for artisans to be given the opportunity to assume greater ownership of the network they are involved in and its trajectory, so it becomes more 'artisan-driven'.
- 2) There is a clear unmet demand for more peer to peer learning and knowledge sharing among Économusée artisans, both nationally and internationally, across a range of business and technical issues and topics. The establishment of a methodology and infrastructure for,

and the training of facilitators (or champions) to run, **virtual discussion groups or peer to peer learning groups** should be explored as a key methodology for, and output from, any future project.

- 3) The artisan Économusées are comfortable, in general, with online platforms and technology although training and support is needed for specific platforms. **Online delivery of support to artisans** (e.g. including point 2 above) should form a substantial part of any new project, in addition to more traditional face to face support and training delivery mechanisms.
- 4) **By design, this study did not generate evidence about the Économusée concept or model of artisan support.** This is an information gap that needs to be filled and incorporated into any new project proposal.

Appendix 1:

Artisans who expressed an interested in being part of a group to find ways that the artisans can better communicate, collaborate and exchange knowledge and skills.

Please see list below:

<u>Business Name</u>	<u>Contact Name & Économusée Network</u>
Amos Pewter	Don Sheehan, Économusée Atlantic Canada
Livyers' Lot Economuseum	Elizabeth, Économusée Atlantic Canada
Føroya Grótvirki	Heini Tausen Économusée Faroe Islands
Joel Cole Art	Joel Cole, Économusée Faroe Islands
Connemara Smokehouse	Graham Roberts, Économusée Ireland
St.Tola Goat Farm	Siobhán Ní Gháirbhith, Économusée Ireland
Breeogue Pottery	Grainne Mac Loughlin, Économusée Ireland
Celtic Roots studio	Helen Conneely, Économusée Ireland
Broughgammon Ltd	Charlie Cole, Économusée Northern Ireland
Brighter Gold Rapeseed Oil	Leona Kane, Économusée Northern Ireland
Scullion Hurls	Micheal Scullion, Économusée Northern Ireland
Ursa Minor	Ciara O hArtghaile, Économusée Northern Ireland
Hillstown Brewery	Nigel Logan, Économusée Northern Ireland
Oselvarverkstaden	Vidar Langeland, Économusée Norway
Hillesvåg Ullvarefabrikk Spinning Mill	Ane Mørkve Kortner, Économusée Norway
Ullform	Tone Tvedt, Économusée Norway
Volda Elektriske Mylne AS	Elias Moe, Économusée Norway
Flåm AS avd Aurlandskoen	Mette Bakketun, Économusée Norway
Romsdalsmuseet Bunadsstudio	Hilde Stenmark Kvennes, Économusée Norway
Jan Zakrisson,	Jan Zakrisson, Économusée Sweden
Sedum design	Pernilla Salomonsson, Économusée Sweden
The Chevrier du Nord	Annie Pilote, Économusée Quebec
Atelier Pare,	Francoise Lavoie, Économusée Quebec
Économusée of woodcarving (and legends)	
Farm Langlois and son (Chez Médé)	Nathalie Langlois, Économusée Quebec
Vineyard Orpailleur	Edith Ducharme, Économusée Quebec
The gold smith	Richard Grenier, Économusée Quebec
Fromagerie du Pied-De-Vent	Renée Landry, Économusée Quebec
Délices du Lac-Saint-Jean	Émilie Gaudreault, Économusée Quebec
Domaine Acer	Nathalie Decaigny, Économusée Quebec