

EU DESIGN DAYS 2014

24-26 SEPTEMBER, BRUSSELS

The EU Design Days are an initiative of ERRIN, the European Regions Research and Innovation Network. ERRIN facilitates knowledge exchange, joint action and project partnerships between its members with the aim to strengthen their regions' research and innovation capacities. ERRIN also aspires to influence EU policies in order to make them respond better to the needs of European regions and engages in debate with EU institutions.

The EU Design Days are about gathering stakeholders from the design field in a cross-sectorial and multicultural perspective: fostering exchanges between regional stakeholders and the EU institutions; discovering EU funding and design projects; looking into new trends in design and much more. This year's edition of EU Design Days focused two themes: the 'economic value of design' and 'how to help young designers and enterprises to benefit from design'.

EHDM was invited to partake in a panel discussion alongside other EU funded projects, addressing questions such as:

- What valuable insights have come from the currently funded design projects?
- What is the value of funding EU design projects?
- What is next for EU funding on design projects?



Panel (from left to right): Isabelle Verilhac – IDEALL project, Anna Whicher – SEE Platform, Deborah Dawton – EHDM project, Marzia Mortati – DeEP project, Johanna van Antwerpen – European Creative Industries Alliance, Sandrine Gibet – REDI project and Bonifacio Garcia Porras – Head of Unit for Innovation Policy and Growth at the European Commission. Discussion moderated by: Caroline Hummels.

The projects currently funded by the European Commission are perceived to be extremely valuable for design as a discipline, but also as a way to push value creation and SME competitiveness across Europe.

There are two types of projects currently being funded: projects that develop knowledge and do not directly deliver economic value, and more hands-on projects that deliver tangible outcomes and have the potential to result in sustainable businesses. Both types of projects are necessary, but the panel highlighted that the Commission should continue to push EU-project entrepreneurship, to enable the creation of a circular economy.

For knowledge-type projects it is very important to collect the material developed during the projects in a central place where both design and business stakeholders have easy access to the gathered information. The Design for Europe project should provide such a platform and will enable future design projects to use this knowledge as a starting point for projects, avoiding them having to start from scratch.

The panel also highlighted some additional benefits of the Commission's focus on design:

- The Design Action Plan, delivered by the European Commission, has helped design bodies to speak to European regions.
- The Commission's work raising awareness of design and the benefits that it can have in a business or department has introduced design at a EU level. This awareness will enable design bodies to go and talk to national and regional governments and convey the benefits of design, and the ideal position of design across teams and departments (not in a separate design department). The support from other functions of the European Commission to carry on this activity is regarded as crucial.
- Because design sits across both business and the creative industries there is an opportunity to apply for funding in both areas and for design to have an even bigger impact on Europe.

