



Ajuntament de Granollers

## **THE ROCA UMBERT PROJECT: 'THE ARTS FACTORY'. CREATIVE EUROPE PROGRAMME- THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Granollers is a city located 30km to the north of Barcelona with around 60,000 inhabitants. The Roca Umbert Arts Factory is a project which was launched in 2004 by the city council. The object was to convert the derelict Roca Umbert textiles factory into a flagship cultural centre aimed at the training, production and promotion of the arts. The project also aimed to preserve for future generations a reminder of the city's industrial heritage.

The Roca Umbert Arts Factory combines the recovery of both tangible and intangible heritage whilst promoting creativity, innovation and information and communication technology (ICT) to generate economic growth and employment. It is also a key project which clearly demonstrates the council's philosophy with regard to urban regeneration.

There is, however, still some way to go. The project is very much evolving and there is still great potential for growth. As such, it is well worth continuing to strengthen the model which the city aspires to. This potential is based on the belief that the creative and ICT sectors contribute positively to economy of the city. This is a project which creates jobs and acts as a backbone to a diverse and highly talented sector with great capacity and potential to aid economic recovery. It is hoped that the project will bring the same wealth and social benefits as the textile industry did many years ago.

Roca Umbert Arts Factory has always been an international project, conceived with the benefit of experiences shared by other European cities that have helped to provide models and stimulus. Europe is now predominantly urban, with medium sized cities which give enormous potential for an economy based on innovation.

Roca Umbert has been conceived to provide an area where the City of Granollers can continue reinforcing relationships with other similarly minded European partners. The Europe Creative program is almost certainly a good framework to make progress in this area by developing a space which can foster cooperation and the exchange between European stakeholders working to strengthen the creative and cultural sector at local level. In the case of Roca Umbert, this objective is being achieved in a small town without all the infrastructure and advantages of being based in a very large city.

Roca Umbert and Granollers city council are working to present a project within the framework of the Europe Creative Program which will serve to:

- Provide a space for exchange and international cooperation
- Help to empower people within the cultural and creative sectors (especially the self employed and smaller companies) based in small/medium sized European cities
- Give the necessary tools to permit economic self sufficiency and promote growth.
- Assist people within the creative world to find different distribution channels and widen their potential audience.

We would like to involve partners from a minimum of **six different European regions** to give added value to the work space we would like to construct. These partners could be from various backgrounds; local government, associations which represent groups within the cultural sector, universities, research centres and culture promotional agencies to name just a few.



## Ajuntament de Granollers

It is planned to work in 3 main areas:

1. **'The Creative Industries Market'** Since the time of the Roman Empire Granollers has been a place of transit, commerce and exchange. These attributes are well known even well beyond the immediate locality. With this in mind, 15 years ago the emblematic 'Market audiovisual of Catalonia' (MAC) was launched. It is held annually at the Roca Umbert Arts Factory. The MAC is a permanently open space as well as a meeting point for different operators, both public and private, within the local creative industry. It offers a wide range of tools to help reinforce their capabilities. Using the experience and lessons learnt from the MAC, the proposal is to put into action, shared with other European places and projects, an international initiative aimed at the creative economic sector. This will act as a centre to:
  - Give advice and training to develop new business models, particularly for SMEs (small/medium sized companies).
  - Provide training to strengthen management skills.
  - Introduce and consolidate new communication and information technologies in the arts sector.
  - Provide a meeting point for creative personnel and organisations from around Europe.
  - Help to 'internationalise' businesses.
  - Develop new professions and activities connected with the creative industries.

Strengthening the capabilities of the sector should be seen as a commitment to open and exploit new employment niches, especially for young people. This, of course, will lead to the development of new areas in the economy.

This encompassing approach, focused on products & services, professionals and markets, will be supported by the FOMECC methodology, (<http://www.fomecc.org/en>) a tool kit to promote cultural and creative industries developed by Interarts (<http://www.interarts.net/en>), a private cultural cooperation agency based in Barcelona, and tested successfully in countries like Colombia, Honduras, Niger, Peru or Senegal since 2005.

2. Roca Umbert a **sustainable space for the creative industries**, a new **centrality** within Granollers

As a consequence of the internet and doing business on the net, local activity has become global. This in turn has created new centres in the city which act as information nodes. Roca Umbert has become one of these.

The new centrality of Roca Umbert is the key to redefining a city which is more sustainable. A city which is open to pedestrians and cyclists. A city which is committed to the fight against climate change and a reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Some practices have allowed the project to be conscious and respectful with regard to its impact on the environment. For example:

- Recovery of our industrial heritage as a resource by converting it into a useable space.
- Promotion of public art projects in open urban areas: parks, squares, empty places...
- The promotion of internet based businesses.- By grouping companies together to share the costs of services.



## Ajuntament de Granollers

But, of course, it is also a proposal to make an attractive space, which will bring in more members of the public and maybe a new audience for the cultural activities which Roca Umbert produces.

### 3. - A key element in Granollers' commitment to **peace and solidarity**

Finally, the project also incorporates a commitment to the values which are innate in culture and creativity. These values are essential in a city like Granollers, which has a long tradition in this area. In 2008 this led to the creation of a 'centre for the culture of peace': 'Can Jonch' has now become a leading centre at an international level.

In this sense the cooperative space we would like to construct at Roca Umbert will also be open to cities on the southern shores of the Mediterranean and the Balkans. Both regions have strong cultural identities and creative potential including at a local level

The objectives are threefold:

- Reinforce the link between culture, creativity, peace and solidarity.
- Introduce members of the creative and cultural community of the regions mentioned to the European market.
- Open routes into market in the Southern Mediterranean and Balkans for the European creative and cultural community.

The areas mentioned and their corresponding action plans (very briefly outlined in this document) are to be confirmed and developed by the parties interested in participating in the project

Working with the assumption that project development will have a budget of between €1-€1.5 million of co-financing (that is to say a total cost of €2-€3 million). Potential partners will have to make a contribution in line with their involvement and the co-finance provided by the European community.

The applications for funds from the Creative Europe Program, in which we would like to participate, begin in August and close at the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2014. We hope to close the partnership at the beginning of September.

Granollers, July 2014.