



# Good Practices on Regional Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation Stuttgart Region Film Commission

Stuttgart Region

September 2012

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## 1 Basic Data of the Practice

### 1.1 Title of the practice

#### **Stuttgart Region Film Commission**

The Film Commission is the central point of contact for all issues related to film-making and supports the stakeholders of the film region Stuttgart with contacts, specific advice and comprehensive information on locations and filming permits, artistic and technical professionals and young talents from the region.

### 1.2 Precise theme/issue/policy tackled by the practice

- Clusters
- Innovation friendly business environments for SMEs
- Research infrastructures, centers of competence and science parks
- Universities
- Digital Agenda for Europe
- Key enabling technologies
- Cultural and creative industries
- Internationalisation
- Financial engineering instruments
- Innovative public procurement
- Green growth
- Social innovation

In particular:

- Open innovation
- User driven innovation

Process of regional change initiated:

- Transition
- Modernisation
- Diversification
- Radical foundation of a new domain

### 1.3 Geographical range of the practice

Stuttgart Region (between NUTS level 2 and 3),  
Germany

### 1.4 Contact details

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### 1.5 Sources of information

film.region-stuttgart.de  
www.facebook.com/ficocest  
<https://www.xing.com/go/group/42540.74f832/12813372>

## 2 Introduction: Regional Smart Specialisation Background

The Stuttgart Region certainly is one of Europe's innovation hubs, having a strong industrial base and a service sector gaining importance and providing many products and services geared to the needs of the manufacturing industry. Knowledge intensive sectors account for 39% of all employment, with the industrial sector even exceeding this figure with 53% of its workforce employed in knowledge intensive domains. The most important industrial clusters, automotive and production technology, evolved over decades and today show a high level of integration comprising OEMs, suppliers and specialised service provider as well as educational and research institutions. Neighbouring sectors like ICT, electrical engineering, creative industries or financial services play an important role, too. A recent study proved the optimal orientation of the regional innovation system towards the major key sectors.

In terms of smart specialisation the economic development strategy aims at holding the leading position of the regional economy in these key sectors for the future, but also at making the regional economy less vulnerable for economic shocks through diversification, as the export-oriented industry is seen as the economic backbone of the Stuttgart Region. Many specialties evolved in the context of the industrial base of the region, which itself represents a huge market potential. Many firms were focussing on these needs at first, but are now globally active.

The implementation concept of the regional economic development strategy contains several instruments to achieve the goals mentioned above for most of the key sectors and in cooperation with relevant regional stakeholders. Worth mentioning are also the different horizontal measures, not directly related to a specific sector, but important for their future development, such as measures in connection with skilled personnel or start-up support.

### **Creative industries**

The publishing sector, which has a long tradition in the Stuttgart Region, is being challenged by new developments, such as new media technologies, distribution channels and business models. A new living lab will help the sector to go its way into the era of digitalisation. Next to animation and visual effects, the regional Film Commission will promote its new topic corporate media, which is focussing on the development of corporate communication solutions, having in mind the vast number of firms in the Stuttgart Region and beyond as potential customers. Consistently important will be the software and computer games industry as well as the advertising industry. The Popbureau is promoting the huge potential of popular music in the Stuttgart Region.

For the film business more detail on the regional significance of this sector can be found in chapter 3.

### **Other sectors of specialisation**

- Automotive engineering (regional automotive cluster, sustainable mobility, electric mobility, aeronautics)
- Mechanical engineering (production technology, energy and resource efficiency, industrial services, packaging technology, industrial component and surface cleaning)
- Green tech
- ICT (business software and solutions, open source software, virtual reality, simulation and visualization, satellite communication)
- Financial services (securitised derivatives, corporate bonds)

## 3 Description of the Practice

### 3.1 Executive summary

The Stuttgart Region Film Commission was founded in 1999 and is the central point of contact for all issues related to film-making. It is a department of the Stuttgart Region Economic Development Corporation (WRS) and is supported by the MFG Film Funding (an agency of the Federal Land Baden-Württemberg) and the City of Stuttgart. The Film Commission perceives itself as coordinator and mediator at the interface of culture, economy, administration and the public.

Core competencies include project-related assistance in finding suitable locations, obtaining film permits, cooperation with authorities as well as specific information on technical and artistic film professionals, talent, producers and service providers from the region. The Film Commission designs and implements projects for the promotion of the film business in the Stuttgart Region (such as workshop discussions or location tours) and initiates their own networks (such as a film-tourism network, the association "New Community Cinema Stuttgart" or the Corporate Media Cluster Region Stuttgart). As member of special branch networks (such as AFCI, EUFCN, GFC, AMCRS) the Film Commission is connecting the regional film industry nationally and internationally. Qualification is offered through regular seminars (Monday-seminars) and practical lectures. By presenting the film location at (inter)national film-festivals and fairs and the development of specific strategies, the Film Commission strengthens the film business in the Stuttgart Region.

For finding the right location in and around Stuttgart the Film Commission developed an online location guide ([www.locationguide.de](http://www.locationguide.de)). It provides images, detailed descriptions, and all the key contact information for over 600 sites. In addition to its own first-hand knowledge of many locations the Film Commission puts interested persons in touch with a location scout, if required. The second major tool covers all relevant topics of film production. As online database the production guide ([www.productionguide.de](http://www.productionguide.de)) contains over 800 addresses, grouped into some 100 categories, of skilled professionals in the area. For support in production planning and permits or leasing of production equipment, the Film Commission provides comprehensive advice and assistance for film production projects.

In 2011 the Film Commission was able to further professionalize and expand its counselling services. And for the first time the institution was evaluated by an external agency with regard to the quality of its services. The annual report for 2011 indicates almost 500 consultations, more than 15 own events and numerous cooperation projects.

Besides the services offered continuously by the Film Commission the current strategic focus lies on the set up of the "Corporate Media Cluster Region Stuttgart". This cluster initiative aims at highlighting opportunities for the use of audiovisual media in corporate communications. With regard of the high number of companies in the region representing potential customers, this approach seems to offer huge growth potential for the creative industries sector.

### 3.2 Key features of the practice

- Counselling: free and individual counselling as well as specific information on all issues regarding film-making in the Stuttgart Region
- Projects: design, support and implementation of projects for the promotion of the film business in the Stuttgart Region
- Networks: management of own networks as well as member in other networks for the regional, national and international connection of the regional film business
- Qualification: professionalization of (young) film-makers in the region via seminars and practical lectures
- Communication: location marketing via (digital) publications, participation in events as well as presentations at (inter)national film festivals and fairs
- Development of new strategies and concepts for the further development of the Stuttgart Region as location for film business
- The Film Commission is a permanent institution, a department of the Stuttgart Region Economic Development Corporation and gets support by several regional stakeholders
- Supports a sub-sector of the regional cultural and creative industries and aims at diversification of this sector
- Has a clear focus in its activities by serving the needs of regional companies and generating a tangible value added for them

### 3.3 Detailed content of the practice

In the regional economic development strategy the creative industries are seen as one of the key sectors for the future economic development of the Stuttgart Region. It cannot be solely regarded as a regional image factor any more, but as an independent field of growth and driver of innovation. The sector of creative industries comprises several subareas from architecture to ICT, media and publishing, but also art and culture, music and film. Thanks to the vast economic potential that represents many customers, the inspiring environment and the high quality educational landscape, the region attracted many creative companies, which form a dynamically evolving cluster. Nearly 10,000 companies are generating a turnover of 6.6 bn Euros (2008) and employ around 55,000 persons. The regional film business comprises not only movies for the cinema, but also for example documentary, various productions for television broadcasting, animation and special effects as well as commercials and business videos. Regarding the different measures of Stuttgart Region Economic Development Corporation for supporting this cluster, the Film Commission is the institution founded in 1999 for the promotion of the film business. In the implementation concept of the regional strategy there are several activities and projects related to the creative industries and in particular to the film business.

In Germany there exists no master plan for the promotion of the film business. In the federal system this topic is related to the cultural sector and therefore lies in the sphere of responsibility of the federal states. Consequently, strategies for the promotion of culture and film are designed on the federal level. The current strategies for Baden-Württemberg "Kultur 2020" and "Filmkonzeption II" serve as policy guidelines for the Stuttgart Region Film Commission. Today the European Union is also gaining in importance through its regulations and funding schemes.

The concept of Film Commissions is used nationwide if not worldwide. It has been adopted from the United States in the 1990s as an instrument to promote the film business. On this basis national and international networks and federations of Film Commissions evolved that share the same philosophy. There is a standardisation of activities through guidelines, which serves as quality feature for the services offered. Due to this the concept is easy to transfer, providing that there is film business, which offers potential for development.

Thanks to capable firms and internationally recognized fairs and festivals, the Stuttgart Region today is quite well-known as a location for film business. The region is already strong in the fields of animation and visual effects. Every year the fmx conference for animation, effects, real time and content is the meeting point for artists and producers, decision makers and newcomers, creative people, manager, distributors and TV people. It is closely connected with the International Festival of Animated Film Stuttgart (ITFS), worldwide the second largest festival of animated films. Other projects are the sector meeting "Dokville" for film-makers, editors and producers who want to promote the development of documentary films, or the film festival "Filmschau Baden-Wuerttemberg", which is an exhibition of films connected to Baden-Wuerttemberg. Some of these activities are supported by the federal agency MFG Film Funding Baden-Württemberg, which supports mainly film productions in Southwest Germany, but also finances measures of infrastructure.

Compared with other locations of the film business in Germany or Europe, the Stuttgart Region and Baden-Württemberg is not leading the field overall, especially in comparison with those regions, where the big film-studios are located. Since this market is already taken, niches had to be found. These are mainly innovative and often interdisciplinary services off the beaten track. One of these specialties is the field of animation and visual effects. Another current sector specialisation aims at setting up the "Corporate Media Cluster Region Stuttgart". The Film Commission's concept for this initiative was awarded by the Ministry of Economics Baden-Württemberg in a regional competition in 2010. Now it's a strategic main focus for the years 2012-2014. This cluster initiative aims at highlighting opportunities for the use of audiovisual media in corporate communications by setting up a new network. Thematically the initiative looks at both internal and external communication with different stakeholders (employees, customers, trainees, suppliers, etc.). Central fields of action will be networking, commercialisation and innovation.

A big asset for the Stuttgart Region is the excellent educational infrastructure that offers various courses with significance for the regional film business. The Film Academy Baden-Württemberg in Ludwigsburg is internationally acknowledged for the high quality of its study program. It is the most important educational institution for the film business in Germany and also has a very good reputation throughout Europe. Other public institutions are the Stuttgart Media University and the Academy Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart. Five other private institutions complement the regional academic offer: the Academy of Media in Stuttgart, the SAE Institute Stuttgart, the Macromedia University for Media and Communication in Stuttgart, the Lazi Academy in Esslingen and the Merz Academy in Stuttgart.

To reach its goals the Film Commission cooperates with stakeholders on regional and local level, but makes also use of funding schemes offered for example by the Federal Land of Baden-Württemberg. The main cooperation partners are the MFG Film Funding Baden-Württemberg, the Film Academy Baden-Württemberg, located in the region, as well as the public radio and TV broadcaster Südwestrundfunk (SWR). The Film Commission has a clear focus in its activities by serving the needs of regional companies and generating a tangible value added for them. In terms of internationalisation the Film Commission not only manages its own regional networks but is also a member in other networks to secure the national and international connection of the regional film business.

### **3.4 Bodies and stakeholders involved**

The design of the regional Film Commission was triggered by demand from the creative industries sector, coming up in the regional cluster initiative managed by the Stuttgart Region Economic Development Corporation (WRS). Companies asked for specific support of the film business, leading to the development of an appropriate concept by WRS and the foundation of the Film Commission as independent department. It was set up with support from the City of Stuttgart and the MFG Film Funding Baden-Württemberg and is operative in two directions. While the latter two represent the idea of cultural funding as a public task, WRS represents the idea of supporting economic development.

### **3.5 Timescale and maturity**

The Film Commission was founded in 1999. Since then it has steadily improved its services and tailored it to the needs of the regional film business. Today it can be regarded as a mature initiative, which has gathered wide knowledge in its field of action and which is accepted by the business community.

### **3.6 Legal framework**

Being a department of WRS, the team of the Film Commission works self dependent in their own office, but is employed by WRS. They coordinate their activities with the WRS creative industries branch. Finally they are responsible to the managing director and the supervisory board of WRS and to the public and political body Verband Region Stuttgart.

### **3.7 Financial framework**

Today the institution has four salaried employees, paid by the Stuttgart Region Economic Development Corporation. In addition, the Film Commission receives every year a fixed budget from the City of Stuttgart and the film funding agency of the Federal Land of Baden-Württemberg. The institution is completely financed through public sources and has no possibility to generate own income due to the international guidelines for Film Commissions. These claim that all offered services have to be free of charge.



## 4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The work of the Stuttgart Region Film Commission is monitored on a yearly basis in the context of the annual report of the WRS. This report contains the number of counselling interviews carried out during one year. They are attributed to different topics, such as animation, education, business film. That enables the counsellors to see, which topics are the most important at the moment. Another indicator is the number of events organized by the Film Commission.

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As these indicators only state the level of activity but do not allow any statement about the quality of the services, an external agency was contracted to evaluate the Film Commission. The first online evaluation was carried out in 2011 for the year 2010. In 2012 followed the second evaluation for the year 2011. The clients were asked, how they rate the Film Commission in general, the quality of the counselling and the Stuttgart Region as location for film business. This kind of evaluation has only been carried out twice, so it is not possible to anticipate already any long or mid-term developments.

In 2012 the majority (90%) of the respondents rated the Film Commission in general as very good or good. This number has gone up compared with 2011. Most of the respondents stated that they got in contact with the Film Commission through private contacts. Counselling, online databases, location marketing and networks have been stated as most important tasks. Online databases and qualification have gained in importance compared with 2011. Asked for the counselling services the majority needed assistance with finding locations and themes or with making contacts. About 75% of the respondents stated that they benefitted from the counselling. Asked for their satisfaction with the answers on their requests, 93% rated it as very good or good. These results indicate that the Film Commission is doing a good job and meets the needs of the companies in the region. Asked for the Stuttgart Region as location for film business, only 30% rate it as very good or good. In 2011 this figure was 51%. As main reasons the respondents state the lack of specialised service providers and skilled personnel (many graduates leave the region for the hubs of film business like Berlin). They call for more marketing activities to improve the regional image. The strengths of the region are seen in the manifold and 'fresh' locations, the presence of good service providers such as the Film Commission, the Film Academy as educational institution, the proximity to industry, or the availability of funding resources and sponsors.

Based on these evaluations the Film Commission is developing further its set of services. For example the design of new workshops or the relaunch of databases and websites was initiated as a result of the answers that have been received.

But the evaluation also showed the difficulties, when it comes to the measurement of the impact of initiatives like the Film Commission. It is possible to evaluate service quality or events or projects. However, when it comes to assessing the direct economic effects of cluster initiatives or networking activities, this proves to be an extremely difficult task.

## 5 Lessons Learnt

Many activities carried out by the Film Commission have a bottom-up character. The counselling services are very time consuming, but enable to work closely with the companies. That makes it possible to notice new developments or radical changes in the sector very early. Thereby new initiatives or topics can be taken up, such as "media in spaces", which brings together film, communication and architecture – presented recently on a congress organized by WRS in April 2012. On the other hand this operational approach prevents an institution from developing far-reaching own strategies like for example concepts for education, young academics or funding. This task has to be settled elsewhere, but with fruitful input from the operational level. Here a good cooperation between different stakeholders is the best basis.

A sector like the film business or other creative industries is difficult to manage from a cluster perspective as they show a high dynamic. The work is often project-oriented with new combinations of actors all the time. An institution like the Film Commission with its contact persons, service offers and events therefore can act as a moderator or serve as an 'element of stability' for the dynamic business.

Through the many years of experience and the close cooperation with businesses and other stakeholders of the film industry, following **success factors** of the Stuttgart Region Film Commission stick up:

- Professional experience of the counsellors is not only a source of know-how for the job, but also raises their credibility
- Close contact to the target group (digital via social media or email, but also personal through events or visits)
- As the film business is very fast moving, quick reactions on requests from companies are fundamental for successful work (48 hours at max.)
- As in many networks it is crucial to build trust between the counsellors and the companies, first of all with regional key players (through visits, offered help, listening), and to ask them regularly about their progress
- Having the courage for concerted linking-up of stakeholders, even as a 'neutral' public institution; very often requests for highly specialised companies occur that require a matching based on objective criteria; the filtering process leads to a few recommendations, but the decision stays with the enquiring partner