Ukraine: From Design Thinking Towards A Design Action Plan

Workshop Transcript
15 September 2017

Culture & Creativity
EU-Eastern Partnership Programme

Overview

The EU-Eastern Culture and Creative Partnership, funded by the European Commission and partners, has embarked on a three-year programme of activities championing the cultural and creative industries in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. On the 15 September 2017, as part of the Ukrainian Design Forum: Moving from Design Thinking to Design Doing, I delivered a Design Policy Workshop to 30 stakeholders. The aim of the workshop was to explore the Ukrainian Design Ecosystem, identify the strengths and weaknesses and jointly develop some potential design policy actions as a starting point.

What is design?

Design is an approach to problem-solving that can be applied to the private and public sector to develop products, processes, services and strategies by putting users first.

What is the value of design?

Companies that invest strategically in design tend to grow faster. According to research by the U.K. Design Council, for every £1 invested in design the return is £25 and £5 in exports.

What is a Design Ecosystem?

A Design Ecosystem is a theoretical construct used by policy-makers and academics to examine the interplay between actors and initiatives in a country or region and how this can inform targeted policy action to stimulate the supply of and demand for design.

What did we do?

As part of a full day workshop, a group of 30 engaged stakeholders took part in three activities to:
- Map the key organisations and initiatives in the Ukrainian Design Ecosystem;
- Explore the strengths and weaknesses;
- Generate ideas to enhance the Design Ecosystem.

This report is a transcript of the Design Policy Workshop. It represents a snapshot in time but of course a Design Ecosystem is always changing. These ideas were developed in one day so a much wider discussion needs to happen with a larger stakeholder group to gather further input. This is an early step towards the longer-term ambition for a government action plan to support design.

Dr Anna Whicher, Yaroslav Belinsky & Mykola Skyba

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Design Ed...
Ukraine

- Union of Designers of Ukraine
- Kharkiv Organization of the Union of Designers of Ukraine
- Association of Graphic Designers "the 4th Block"
- Всі Свої/ Vsi Svoi (All Ours) – Ukrainian fashion designers shop
- Varto – Youth Organization of the Union of Designers of Ukraine

- SVC (School of Visual Communication)
- Online courses – Meat studies, Prometheus, BYM/VUM, Wise Cow
- Short courses
- Game development institutes
- Pinchuk Art Center

Public Universities
- National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture (Kyiv, Ukraine)
- Kyiv State Institute of Decorative Art And Design named M. Boychuk (Kyiv, Ukraine)
- Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design (Kyiv, Ukraine)
- Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute / Faculty of Publishing and Printing (Kyiv, Ukraine)
- Kharkiv Academy of Design and Arts (Kharkiv, Ukraine)
- Lviv National Academy of Arts (Lviv, Ukraine)

Private Universities
- School of Visual Communication – SVC – (Kyiv, Ukraine)
- Kyiv Academy of Media Arts – KAMA – (Kyiv, Ukraine)
- Projector School & Coworking (Kyiv-Lviv-Kharkiv, Ukraine)

All private
- a3 / Agents of Change – signage, navigation, identity
- School of Visual Communications (SVC) – printed newspaper, published research, experimental education, international research exchange programme for students, teacher training school. For interdisciplinary projects and intercultural vectors.
- Garage Gang (NGO) – kickstarter platform on data research, visual communication, experimental design
- Teple Misto (Warm Place) – initiative dealing with housing improvements and research on energy saving and eco-housing
- Wise Cow – video lectures on theory and practice,
- Dome Tech – engineering workshop, lighting, urban ecosystems, design engineering (collaboration with Thailand)
- Ecohouses
- Impact hub – co-working space, research centre, volunteering,
- Art KB
- Kiev Politecnic Institute – materials research centre for young scientists
- VR Lab
- Ukrainian Armour – ceramic armour and accessories for the army
- Antonov Concern (Factory)
- Robotechnics
- Pinchuk Art Center

DESIGNERS

EDUCATION

RESEARCH

FUNDING

- Innovation Vouchers

cosystem

- British Council training in creative methods for businesses
- IZone workshops – incubation
- Government training in creative experiences
- Behance

SUPPORT
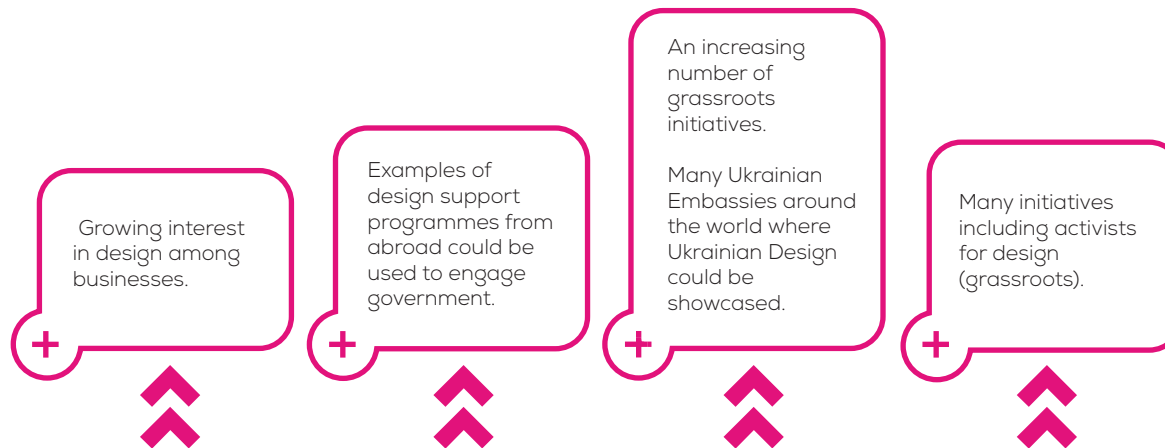
PROMOTION

ACTORS

POLICY

- Information support – magazines: Salon, SVC Seee, Telegraph, D journal, Architect and Design, Art Ukraine
- Annual events:
- festivals
- Competition
- Show
- Ukrainian fashion week
- The very best off
- SVC – festival "Typekyiv"
- SVC – exposition (student's groups)
- Kharkiv – festival of posters about ecology – "The 4th Block"
- Industart – interior festival
- Rex, T-Rex
- Book fest – Knijkoviy Arsenal
- Lviv book fair
- Creascope
- COW International Design Festival
- Kinomolodist fest
- Odessa fest: cinema, advertising

- British Council Ukraine
- Goethe Institute Ukraine
- l'Institut Français d'Ukraine (IFU)
- Polish Institute
- Chamber of Commerce – B2B networking opportunities
- Kyiv Fashion Institute
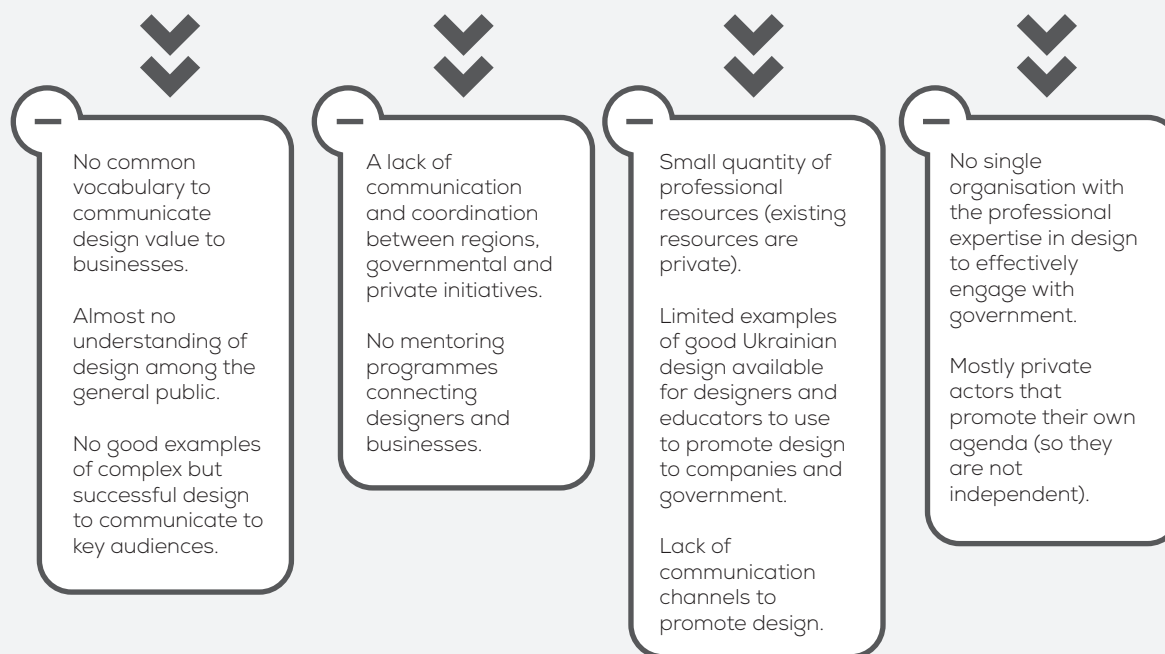- SVC (School of Visual Communication)

- Culture 2025
- Ministry of Culture of Ukraine
- Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
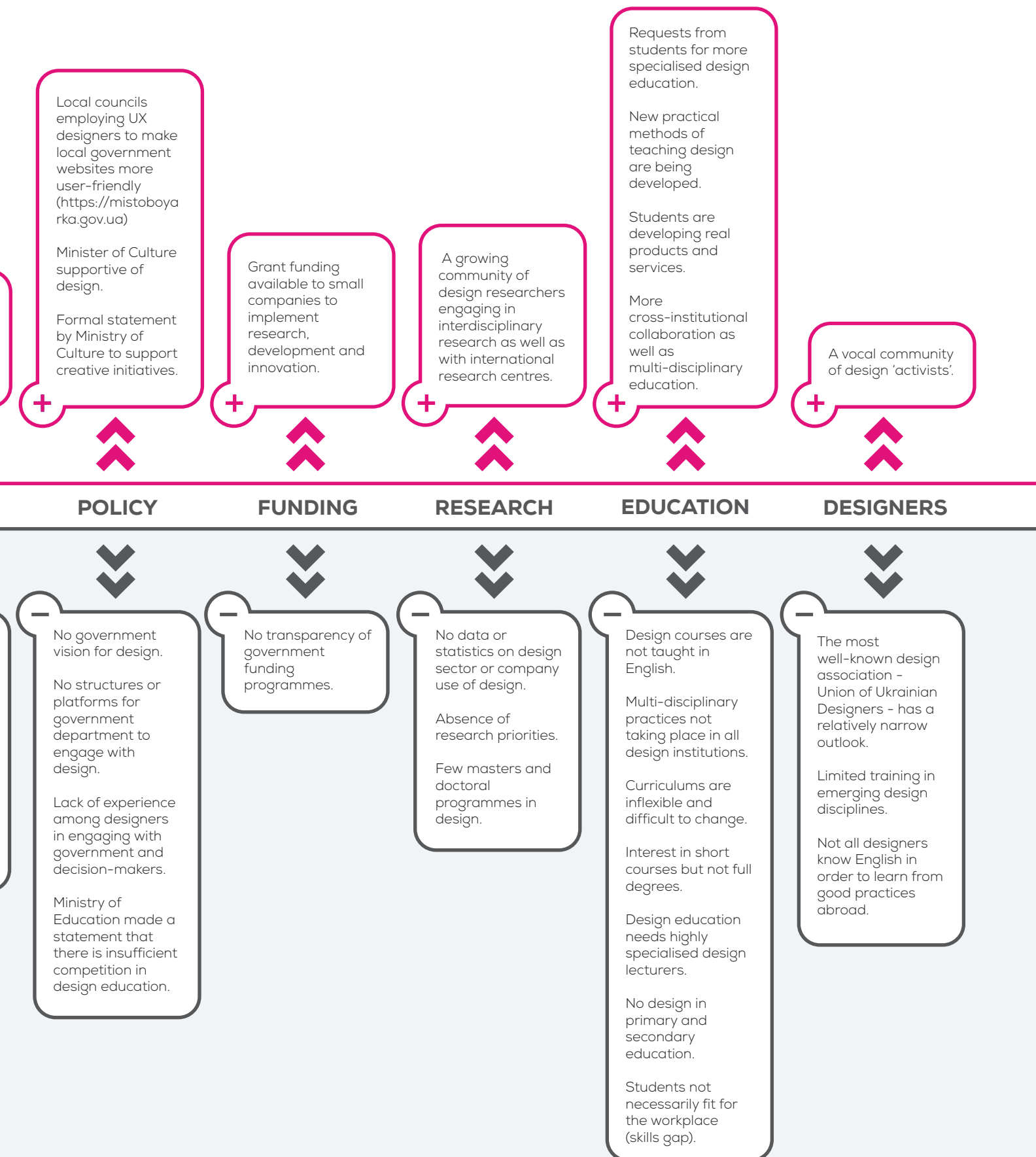- Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine

STRENGTHS

Growing interest in design among businesses.

Examples of design support programmes from abroad could be used to engage government.

An increasing number of grassroots initiatives.

Many Ukrainian Embassies around the world where Ukrainian Design could be showcased.

Many initiatives including activists for design (grassroots).

USERS	SUPPORT	PROMOTION	ACTORS

WEAKNESSES

No common vocabulary to communicate design value to businesses.

Almost no understanding of design among the general public.

No good examples of complex but successful design to communicate to key audiences.

A lack of communication and coordination between regions, governmental and private initiatives.

No mentoring programmes connecting designers and businesses.

Small quantity of professional resources (existing resources are private).

Limited examples of good Ukrainian design available for designers and educators to use to promote design to companies and government.

Lack of communication channels to promote design.

No single organisation with the professional expertise in design to effectively engage with government.

Mostly private actors that promote their own agenda (so they are not independent).

POLICY

+

Local councils employing UX designers to make local government websites more user-friendly (https://mistoboyarka.gov.ua)

Minister of Culture supportive of design.

Formal statement by Ministry of Culture to support creative initiatives.

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No government vision for design.

No structures or platforms for government department to engage with design.

Lack of experience among designers in engaging with government and decision-makers.

Ministry of Education made a statement that there is insufficient competition in design education.

FUNDING

+

Grant funding available to small companies to implement research, development and innovation.

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No transparency of government funding programmes.

RESEARCH

+

A growing community of design researchers engaging in interdisciplinary research as well as with international research centres.

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No data or statistics on design sector or company use of design.

Absence of research priorities.

Few masters and doctoral programmes in design.

EDUCATION

+

Requests from students for more specialised design education.

New practical methods of teaching design are being developed.

Students are developing real products and services.

More cross-institutional collaboration as well as multi-disciplinary education.

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Design courses are not taught in English.

Multi-disciplinary practices not taking place in all design institutions.

Curriculums are inflexible and difficult to change.

Interest in short courses but not full degrees.

Design education needs highly specialised design lecturers.

No design in primary and secondary education.

Students not necessarily fit for the workplace (skills gap).

DESIGNERS

+

A vocal community of design 'activists'.

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The most well-known design association - Union of Ukrainian Designers - has a relatively narrow outlook.

Limited training in emerging design disciplines.

Not all designers know English in order to learn from good practices abroad.

Policy Actions

- Provide training for designers in service design in the public sector.
- Provide training for government officials in design methods.
- Provide signposting and support to find and apply for grants for design.
- Provide a financial incentive to companies to take young designers into their businesses.

- Create accreditation by Ministry of Education for education courses in design to see a quality standard.
- Create a database of designers for companies to find specialist designers.
- Create a platform to share free resources on design widely among practitioners, educators and other stakeholders.
- Create professional standards or guidelines for design to set out the "rules of the game".
- Create a Council of Design Experts to champion design to government.

- Conduct research on the number of designers in the Ukraine and how businesses understand and use design.
- Integrate design mangers within innovation agencies.
- Pilot a mentoring programme connecting designers and small businesses.
- Develop a business case with specific actions to engage government.
- Integrate service design into the curriculum of design education.
- Showcase Ukrainian designers in public spaces.
- Appoint a Chief Design Officer for the City of Kiev.
- Host workshops for children on design as problem-solving.
- Open Maker Spaces so the general public can experiment with design approaches.

DESIGN'S ROLE
IN INNOVATION

Dr ANNA WHICHER / UK

Head of Design Policy,
International Design
Research Centre

Discussion

In Ukraine, conceptual changes are needed in the positioning of design in legislation, management and education. The legal field that we have today, as well as the method of training personnel is aimed at work in an industrial, vertically integrated way of production. One of the key issues is the distorted perception of the role of design. In Ukraine, manufacturers often turn to designers late in the design process when there is a need to package or restyle a product. This way designers feel "not in their place" and prefer to pacify the customer with a conventional "pretty" design than spend time proving something and educating the client. In the end, all parties take the more comfortable and safer approach, even though it narrows the prospect of development.

However, the attitude of the client can be changed. To begin with, there must be a change of discourse and the formation of expert initiatives must occur. As for the next steps, two different approaches are outlined.

1.   The first approach is a strategy of small steps. Incremental changes carried out by a private initiative at the level of one project/object, or within a single territory like a district of a city or a small town. Examples of this would be creative interventions in the form of the redesign of bus stops, signs, landscape design of common areas and the creation of sites for creative recreation. During and after implementation, these efforts should promoted on a wide scale among the local populace and wide audience. This furthers the values and ideas behind the project, provide a positive example and successful outcome, to inspire and cause a natural desire to do no worse "than the neighbors". It is worth noting that PR is sometimes disproportionate to the scale of real transformation.

2.   The other approach lies in the active cooperation between expert initiatives and the executive branch and legislators so that in a number of agencies (for example, in the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministries of Regional Development or other municipalities) there were design-ombutsmen. This would ensure that design decisions (from websites to landscaping projects) are made by competent experts in the field and not by bureaucrats in a voluntary way. In time, and perhaps in parallel to the aforementioned process, experimental programs for the preparation of designers will be introduced in several leading universities. The main condition for these programmes would be that among the teaching staff, not only theoriticians will be leading the classes, but also practicians that have successful case studies in their portfolio. The learning process needs to be built in such a way that students are able to learn about the full production chain from the generation of ideas to implementation. They should graduate with the ability not only to create, but also to sell their product to the consumer in order compete in the modern market. It is also imperative that at universities there must be fully-equipped workshops for prototyping and creative experiments. This, in turn, is hardly possible without established communication between the consumer, the producer, the investor, designers and the state.

It is obvious that both approaches do not exclude, but complement each other and equally require the prominent presentation of the essence of design. Thus, for the transformation of separate creative businesses into a sector of the creative industries, several requisites must fall into place. First of all, discourse and public demand are needed. Discussion within the industry must become a fact, on the basis of which a "mental map" of the design sphere in Ukraine will become established and develop further, including the formation of rules of the game, consolidation of players of the sector and a powerful advocacy campaign.

Top Ten Actions:

1) National campaign "Year of Design in Ukraine."

A wide-scale promotional campaign aimed at the democratization of design among the general public. This can include:
- Ukrainian Design Week;
- Ukrainian Annual Report;
- A series of educational lectures for the general public (non-designers);
- Workshops on the methodology of Design Thinking for representatives of governmental departments, ministries;
- Publication of handbooks on design (booklets, manuals) in Ukrainian. At the moment there are none;

2) Innovation Design Center

A centre should be established which would become an influential institution that could consolidate the efforts of representatives of various spheres of the design industry (graphic design, motion design, fashion, industrial and product design). This would be an organization that would inform about best practices, standards for ethical conduct and provide professional expertise. The centre would communicate to the public and business leaders the power of design and the opportunities it offers;

3) Creating an annual statistical data survey about the Ukrainian design industry. Directory of designers.

4) Launch of an online platform with regular newsletter updates, tips and suggestions on events in Ukraine and around the world.

5) Intellectual property support. Establishment of cooperation with lawyers involved in the protection of the rights of representatives of cultural and creative industries.

6) **Support of Ukrainian designers abroad through the network of embassies. In** 2017, delegations of industrial designers from Ukraine received positive reactions at Paris Design Week and Dutch Design Week, but it is worth noting that they were private initiatives.

7) Designers as part of government committees. The inclusion of designers into the process of design-making within governmental structures (for example, the implementation of Design Codes for cities or branding identities for regions);

8) Policy change. Holding a series of workshops using hands-on methods to facilitate shared learning among policy-makers;

9) Video case studies. The creation of educational and documentary films about the successful influence of design in social contexts and government;

10) Development of Design Action Plans and Road Maps for design sectors and industry with the inclusion of representatives of the creative industries and government.

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