Report on MyCreativeEdge.eu Member Survey

(Nov-Dec 2013)

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Executive Summary

In late 2013, 103 members of MyCreativeEdge (www.mycreativeedge.eu) (23% of total membership) completed an online survey on their experience of the website and their views on how their creative enterprise could be supported in future.

Respondents were largely one person enterprises (58%) or with fewer than five employees (36%) and were involved in the Arts, Crafts and Design sectors (61% combined), with Digital Media and Photography also important sectors. Local and regional markets were very important for the respondents, especially for one person businesses, with national and international markets more important for larger businesses.

Nearly three quarters of respondents discovered the website through contact with a MyCreativeEdge project partner organisation, social media[1] or word of mouth. They joined in order to access international markets by complementing their existing web presence and benefitting from MyCreativeEdge's joint marketing. Networking with other creatives, including potential employers, was another key reason, along with the site being free.

Creating a profile was considered easy or quite easy by 85% of respondents.

Responses to members' MyCreativeEdge profiles were limited (note: the site was only live five months at time of survey) and for the 28 members who reported a response this mainly involved general queries by e-mail or visits to their website, with some potential leads. A number of concrete examples of work generated through the site were given.

Half of the responses indicated members had promoted their own profile, mainly through social media.

The vast majority of respondents had looked at other profiles on the site from both their own and other regions. They had also looked in their own local area and sector. Of those who followed through to make contact with another member, most did so with someone from their own region or local area.

Views were expressed that the site should be promoted in local media, to local groups/communities within the sector, through trade-specific websites/publications, in capital cities and internationally. Promotion to non-creative buyers was seen as critical. Organising events to showcase creative talent in the regions, as well as incentives to use the website were also suggested.

Some changes to the website such as the categorisation of sectors to ease searching and adding comments, blogs and online Q&A sessions to make the site more social and interactive were suggested. Inclusion of a crowdfunding platform, allowing CVs to be uploaded and a section to facilitate members to join together to bid on international projects were also suggested.

Networking events, support for regional trade events and training in marketing skills were viewed as the top priorities for creative enterprise support. For one person businesses, mentoring, creative space and business and management skills were also important. Larger enterprises also prioritised support for overseas trade fairs and training in practical export issues.

[1] MyCreativeEdge social media and other social media.

In general, respondents felt that opportunities to network locally with creatives and buyers was very important for future support programmes, as was more information and advice on supports and online sales. Funding for professional training, packaging design and specialist equipment, as well as broadband and craft centre infrastructure development, were also seen as important.

A strong finding from the survey overall was a desire for further supports to facilitate face to face networking within the sector and also opportunities to engage directly with buyers of creative products and services. This is clearly something that future support programmes for this sector need to consider.

1.0 Background

MyCreativeEdge: The Creative Showcase for Europe's Northern Edge (www.mycreativeedge.eu) is an online export platform where businesses, freelancers and jobseekers from the creative sector can create their own profile page. It is funded under the EU Northern Periphery Programme (NPP) *Creative Edge* project (www.creative-edge.eu) and was launched in mid-June 2013.

The four regions featured on the website are Northern Finland,[2] Northern Ireland,[3] Västerbotten (Sweden)[4] and the West of Ireland.[5] It is open to those operating in one of twelve creative sectors: Advertising & Publishing; Architecture; Arts; Crafts; Design; Digital Media; Fashion & Jewellery; Film & Video; Music & Theatre; Photography; Software & Gaming; and TV & Radio.

Creative enterprises, freelancers and recent graduates from these regions and sectors can register to join the site and if approved, they login to create and publish their own MyCreativeEdge profile to showcase their creative work. By the end of 2013 MyCreativeEdge had 500 registered members, 326 published profiles and had received 37,000 website visits.

It was decided to do a short online survey of members of MyCreativeEdge during late November-early December 2013. There were several reasons for this:

1. To determine members' experience in the practical process of creating their profile on the site and any changes that may be required.
2. To determine members' experience of the website and any impact it may have had on their business (though it was recognised it was quite early to judge this).
3. To gather suggestions for how MyCreativeEdge could be developed and promoted in future.
4. To gain their views on the relative priority they would give to other forms of support for creative enterprises.
5. To feed into the reporting and evaluation of the MyCreativeEdge platform and *the Creative Edge* project by the NPP.
6. To input to the development of an application for a new project to support the creative sector, as well as input to the development of other support programmes in the NPP area.

[2] Lapland and North Ostrobothnia. The project partner for this region was Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences (now Lapland University of Applied Sciences).
[3] Council areas of Ards, Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon, Down and Newry & Mourne. The project partner for this region is South East Economic Development (SEED), led by Craigavon Borough Council.
[4] The project partner for this region is Film i Västerbotten.
[5] Counties Galway, Sligo, Mayo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Clare and Donegal. The project partners for this region are Western Development Commission and the Whitaker Institute, NUI Galway.

As the *Creative Edge* project partner with main responsibility for developing MyCreativeEdge, the Western Development Commission (WDC) created an online survey using Polldaddy (www.polldaddy.com). An e-mail was sent to all approved MyCreativeEdge members (444 at the time) on 21 November 2013 asking them to complete the survey. Two reminder e-mails were sent on 29 November and 5 December and the survey closed on 8 December. In total there were 103 respondents to the survey (23% response rate), 84 of whom had published and 19 who had not published as yet on the website.

2.0 Survey Results

The results of the survey are presented in this report under several broad headings

2.1 Characteristics of Respondents (region, sector, size, location of clients)
2.2 Joining MyCreativeEdge (how they learned of, why they joined)
2.3 Publishing MyCreativeEdge Profiles (ease of process, why they have not published)
2.4 Response to MyCreativeEdge Profile (any response, outcome of this)
2.5 Promotion of MyCreativeEdge Profile
2.6 Networking through MyCreativeEdge (viewing other profiles, making contact)
2.7 Future Development of MyCreativeEdge (website, promotion)
2.8 Other Creative Sector Supports (opinion of creative supports, suggestions)

The results from 20 questions are reported here. For each question, the overall results are presented first using a graph with the key results highlighted.

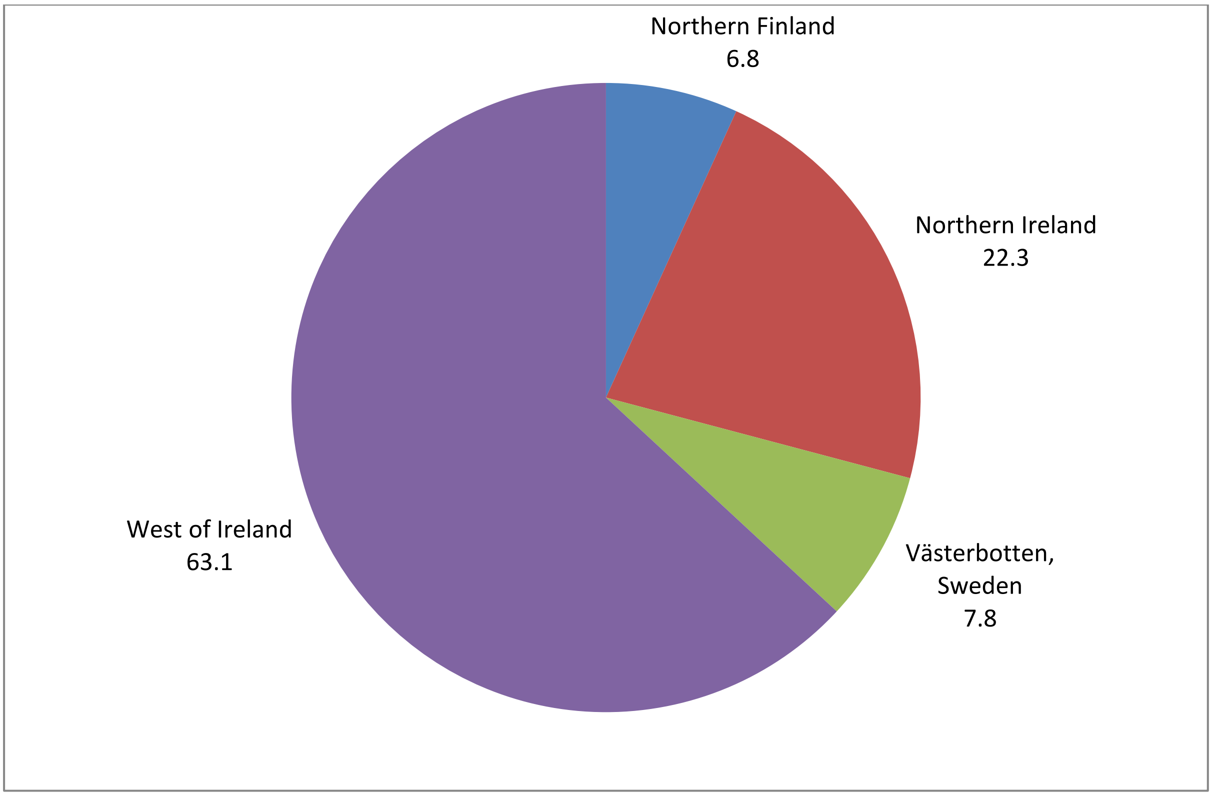
For some questions the results are also analysed by region, enterprise size and/or sector. This is done in order to identify any differences between creative businesses in the four partner regions, between different sizes of business and between creative sub-sectors. This is important for targeting creative supports to particular sub-groups. For some questions analysis by sub-groups was not possible due to small numbers or was not relevant.

Some general conclusions, based on the survey results, are drawn out in the last section.

2.1 Characteristics of Respondents

Q1. What region are you based in? (103 respondents)

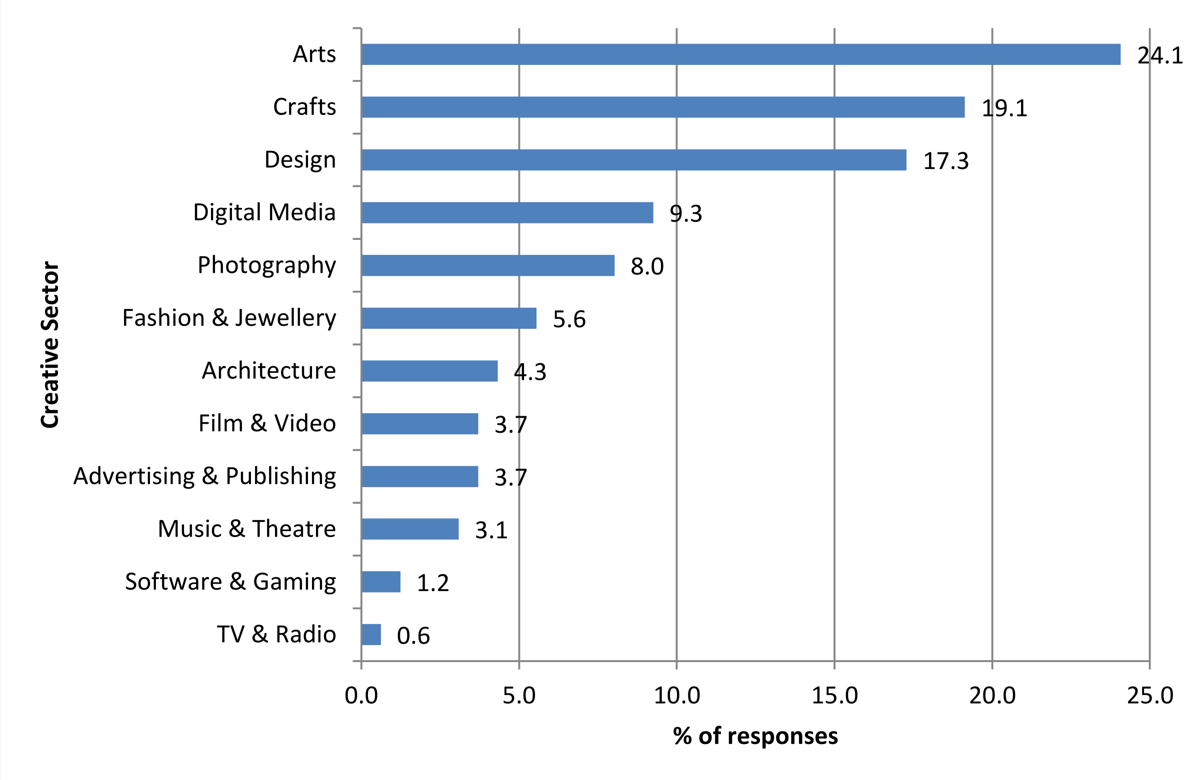
Fig. 1: The regional distribution of responses (% of responses)



The largest share of respondents was from the West of Ireland, followed by Northern Ireland. This is fairly consistent with the overall pattern of registered members on the site, though the West of Ireland is slightly over-represented and Northern Ireland slightly under-represented in the survey sample (see Fig. 26, Annex 1).

Q2. What is your main activity? (162 responses from 103 respondents)

Fig. 2: Sectoral distribution of responses (% of responses)



Arts, Crafts and Design were by far the most common sectors, combined they accounted for 60.5% of responses. Digital Media and Photography accounted for the next highest shares. Software & Gaming and TV & Radio were the smallest categories.

While the survey sample is relatively consistent with the overall sectoral distribution of members of the site, the Arts and Crafts sectors were both over-represented in the sample, while Advertising & Publishing, Film & Video and TV & Radio were under-represented (see Fig. 27, Annex 1).

It is notable that over half of respondents identified two creative sectors as their main area of activity. This shows the close inter-relationships between sectors and the tendency for many businesses to be engaged in multiple activities.

Fig. 3: Sectoral distribution of responses by region (% of responses)

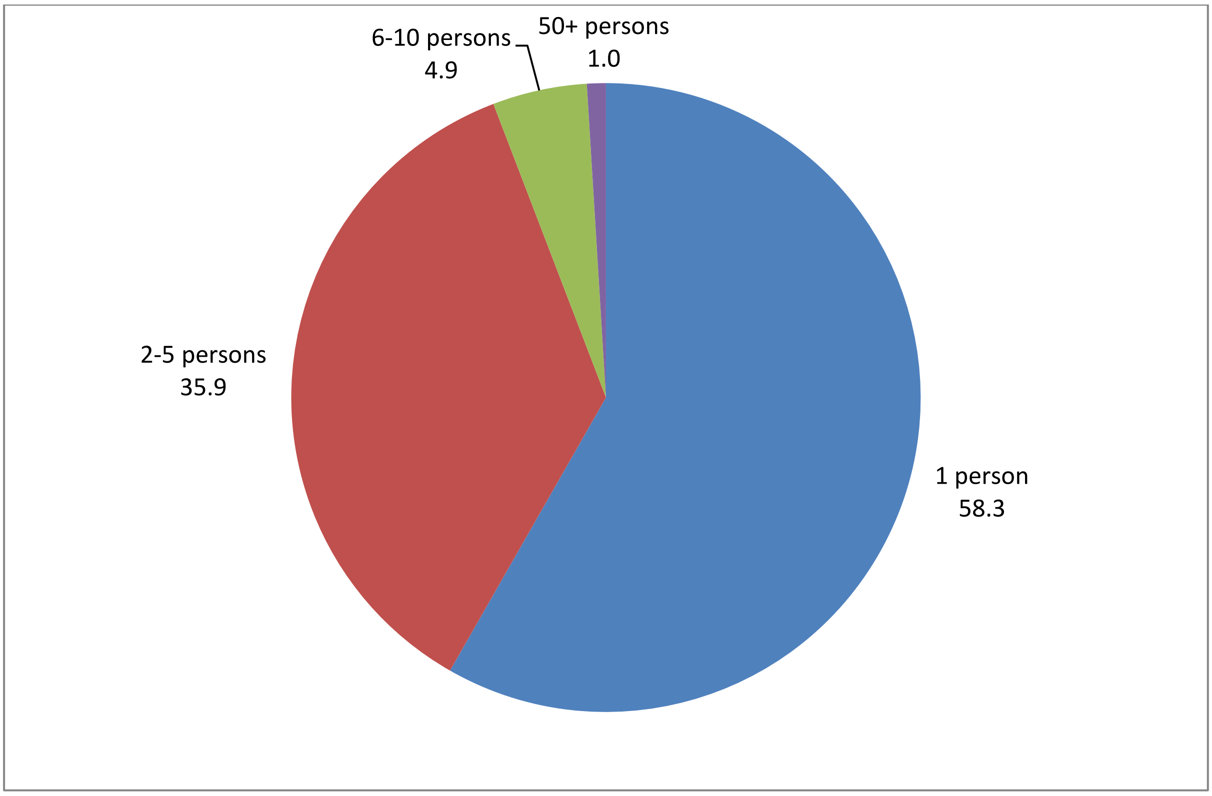
The sectoral distribution of responses by region shows some differences (though the number of responses for Northern Finland and Västerbotten are small).

As the West of Ireland had the largest number of responses its sectoral mix is most varied. Arts, Design and Crafts were the largest sectors followed by Digital Media. In Northern Ireland, Arts and Crafts are by far the dominant sectors with Design in third place.

As the partner organisation in Västerbotten is a film organisation is it unsurprising that Film & Video is the largest sector for responses followed by Arts and Digital Media. Arts and Design are the most important for Northern Finland, again influenced by the fact the partner organisation is a university for fine art and design.

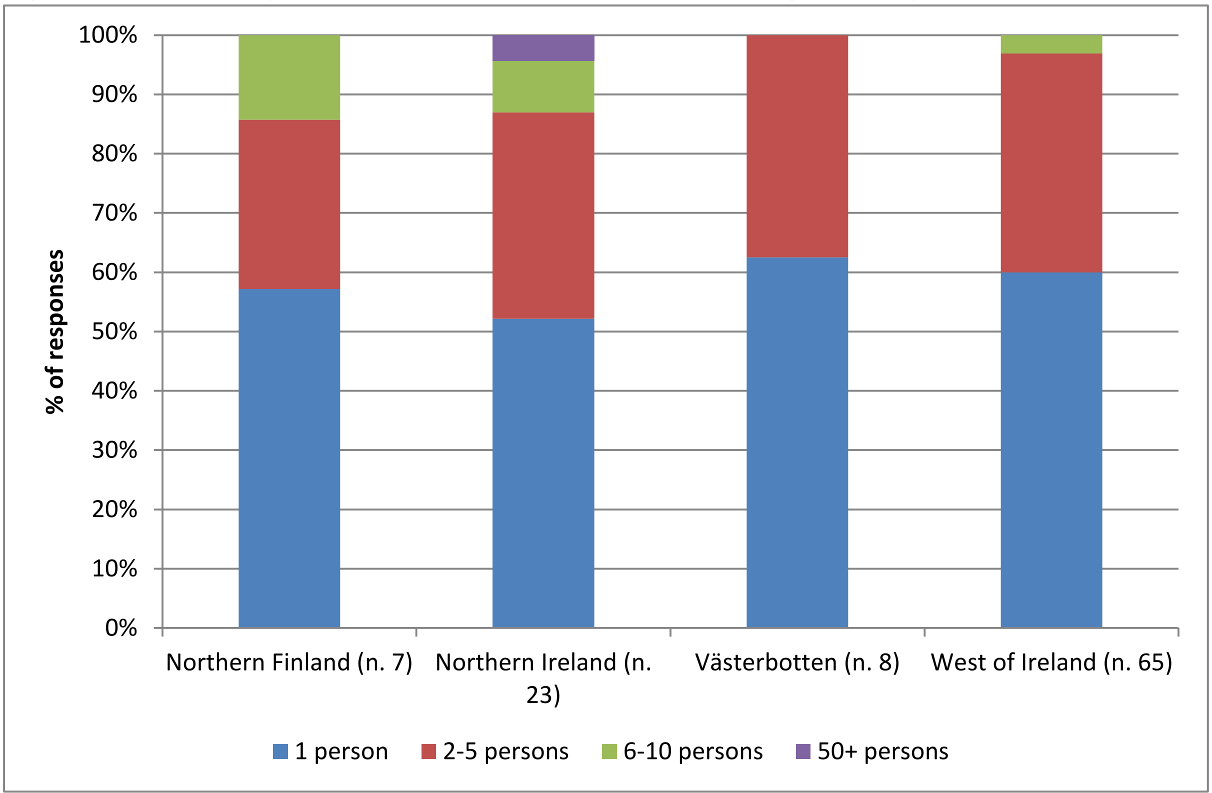
Q3. How many people work in your business (including yourself)? (103 respondents)

Fig. 4: Distribution of responses by enterprise size (% of responses)



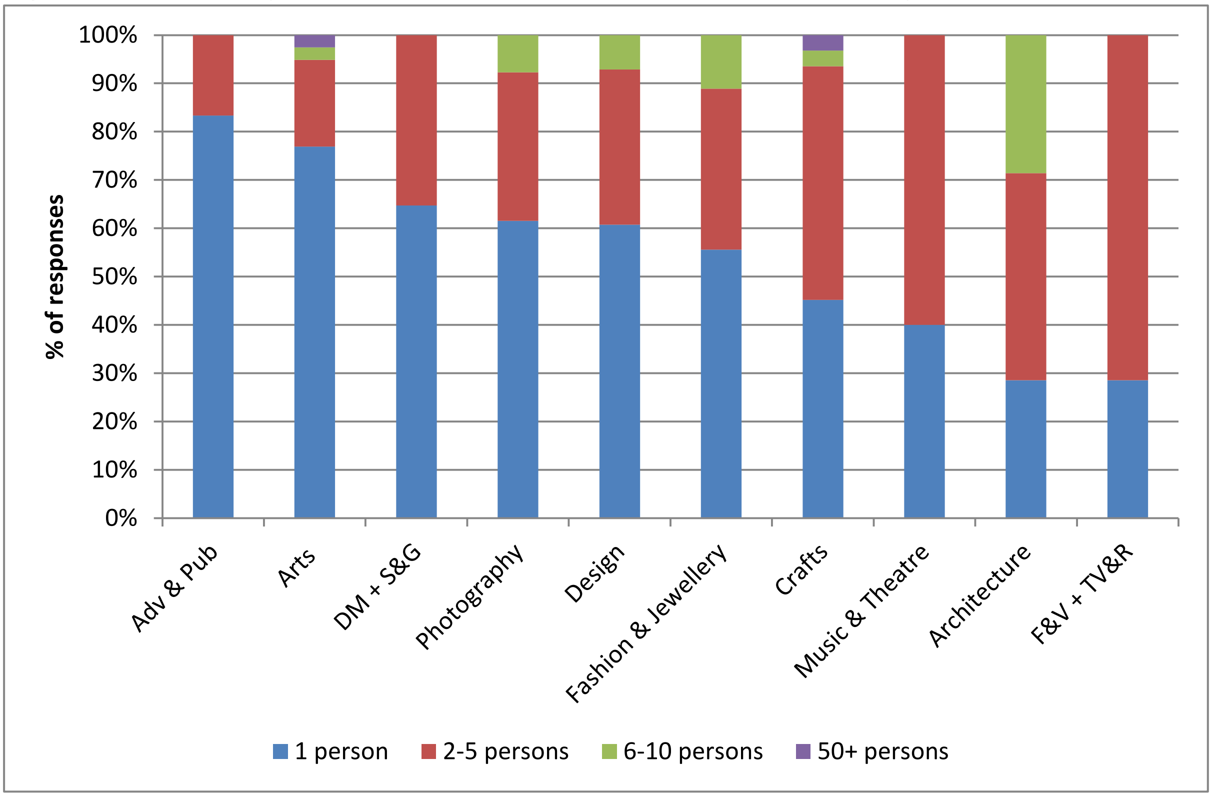
Almost 60% of respondents were working alone. This is a common feature of the creative sector and a characteristic with important implications for the design of support programmes for the sector. Indeed 99% of respondents would be categorised as micro-enterprises with fewer than 10 employees.

Fig. 5: Distribution of responses by enterprise size and by region (% of responses)



Single person businesses were the most common across all four regions, accounting for close to 60% in most regions. Västerbotten was the region where such enterprises were most dominant. Respondents from Northern Ireland tended to be the largest on average with the smallest share of single person businesses.

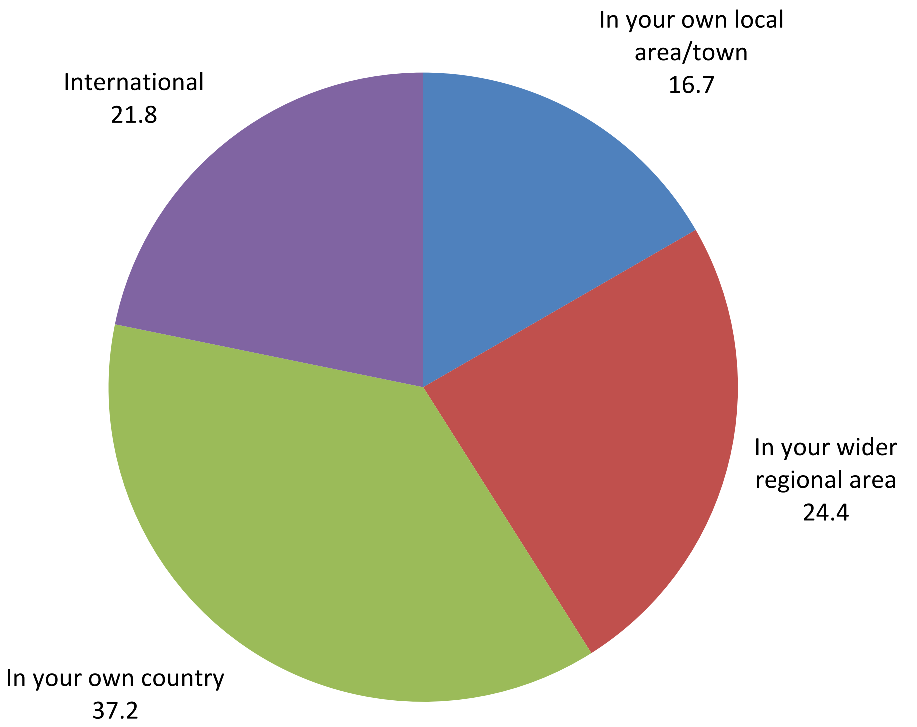
Fig. 6: Distribution of responses by enterprise size and by sector (% of responses)



The size of the respondents' enterprises varied across sectors. Advertising and Publishing and Arts had the highest shares of one person businesses with Digital Media, Photography, Design and Fashion & Jewellery also having over 50% of responses in one person businesses. Architecture was the sector with the highest share of businesses with a larger number of employees (6-10).

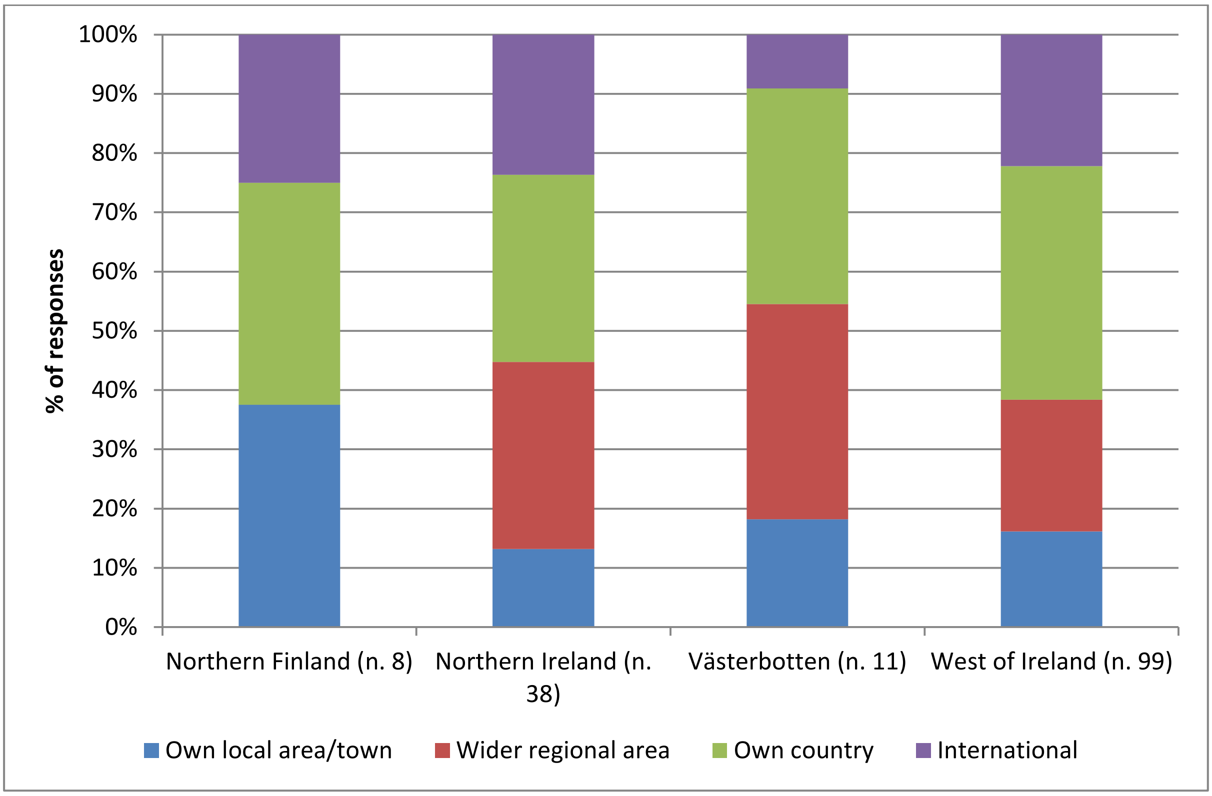
Q4. Where are most of your customers or clients based? (156 responses from 103 respondents)

Fig. 7: Distribution of clients' location (% of responses)



Most respondents rely on national markets for their products and services. The respondents' own country (beyond their local/regional area) was the most common location for their clients. This is likely influenced by a lot of business being focused in their capital cities. The respondents' own regional area was the next most common. Of all responses, 22% indicated international clients. As respondents were limited to giving two responses to this question, international clients were among the top two locations of these 34 respondents.

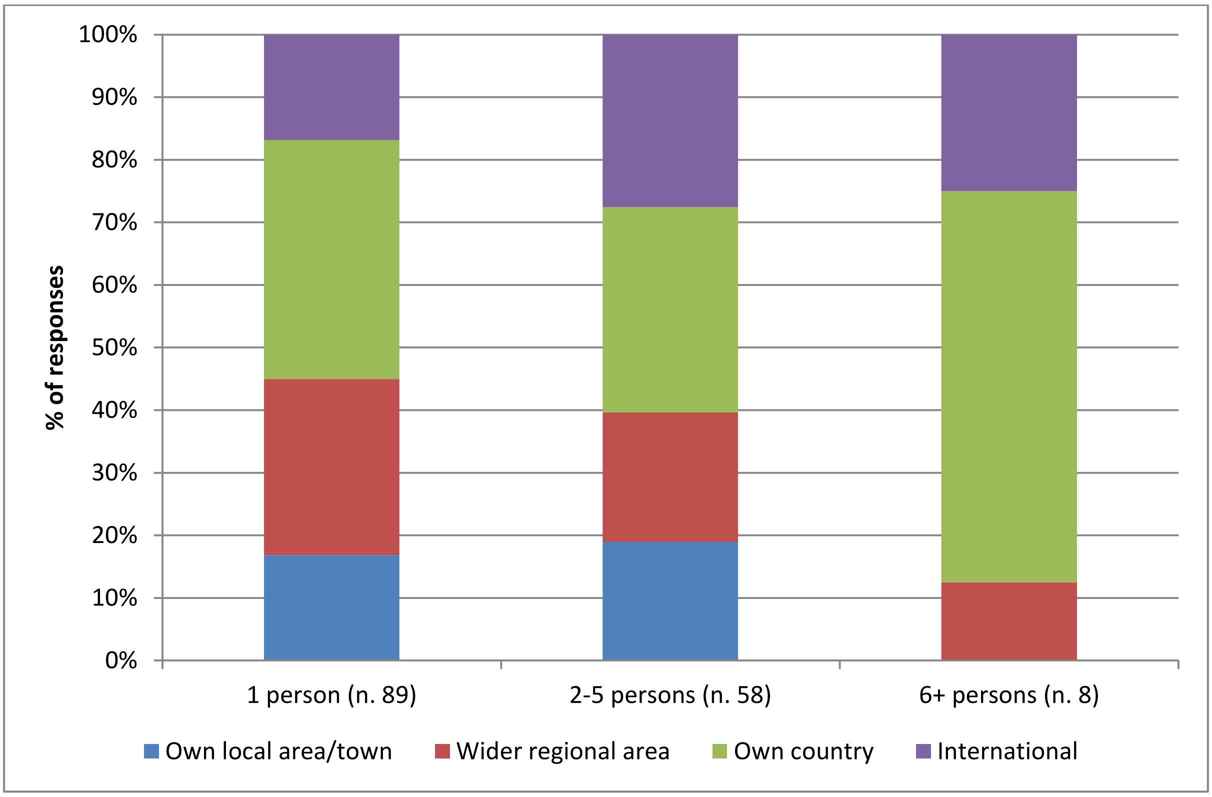
Fig. 8: Distribution of clients' location by region (% of responses)



Clients in their local area and own region were most important in Västerbotten. For the other three regions, national and international clients accounted for 50-60% of clients.

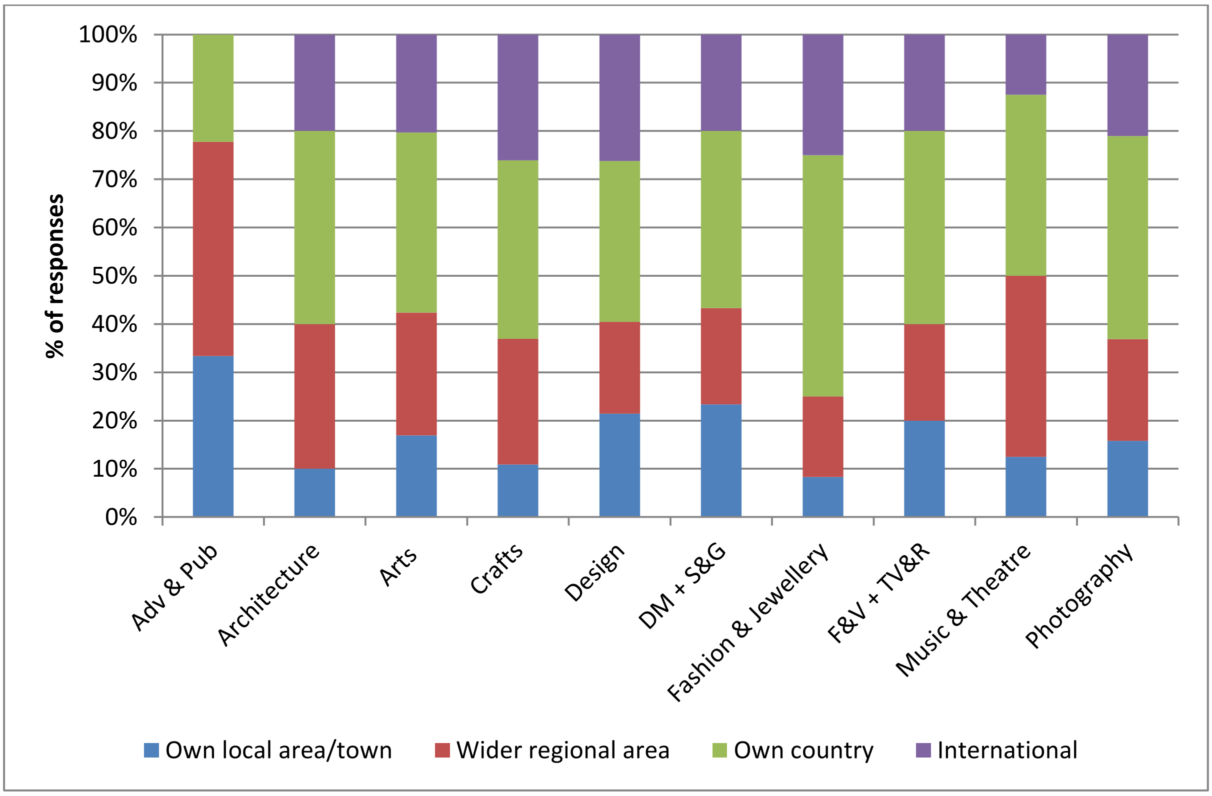
Northern Finland, Northern Ireland and the West of Ireland had the highest share of responses for international clients.

Fig. 9: Distribution of clients' location by enterprise size (% of responses)



The clearest pattern is that smaller businesses are more reliant on their local market and their general regional area. Larger businesses are more active in their national markets and internationally.

Fig. 10: Distribution of clients' location by sector (% of responses)

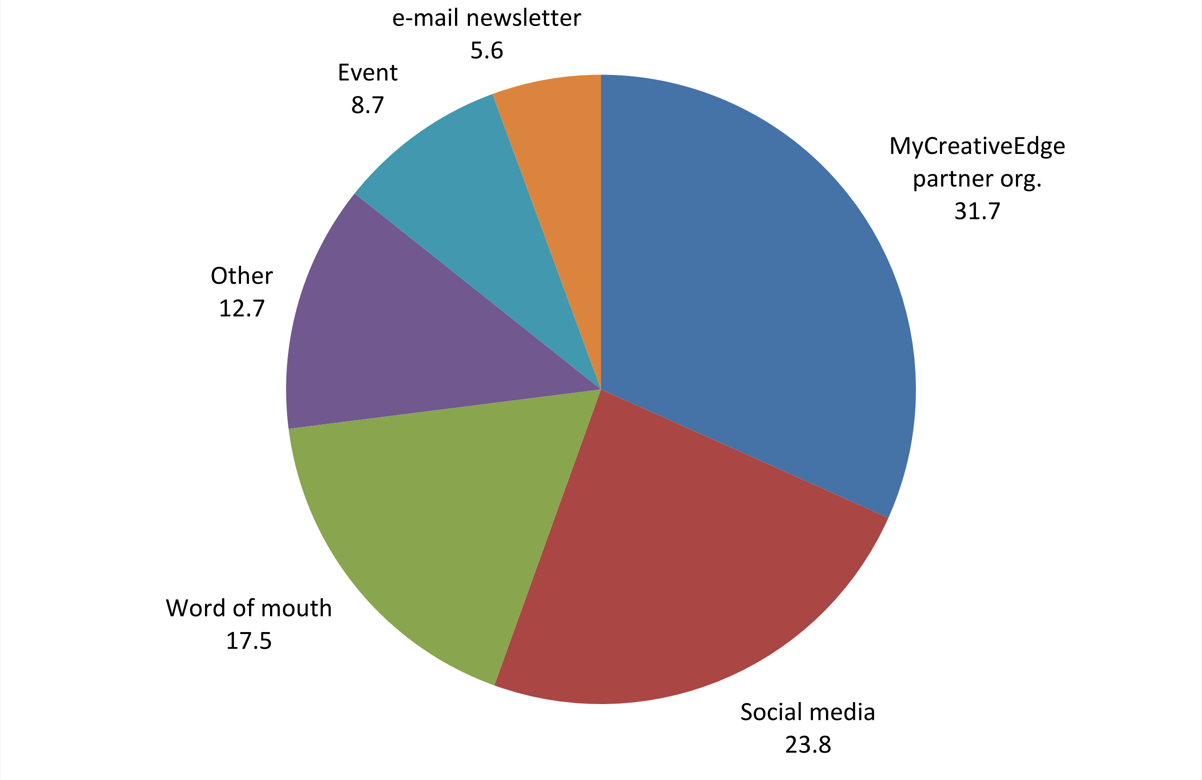


Local and regional markets were most important for Advertising and Publishing, Music and Theatre, Digital Media and Arts. The Crafts, Design, Fashion & Jewellery and Photography sectors had the highest share of responses with international clients.

2.2 Joining MyCreativeEdge

Q5. How did you hear about the MyCreativeEdge website? (126 responses from 103 respondents)

Fig. 11: How respondents heard of MyCreativeEdge (% of responses)

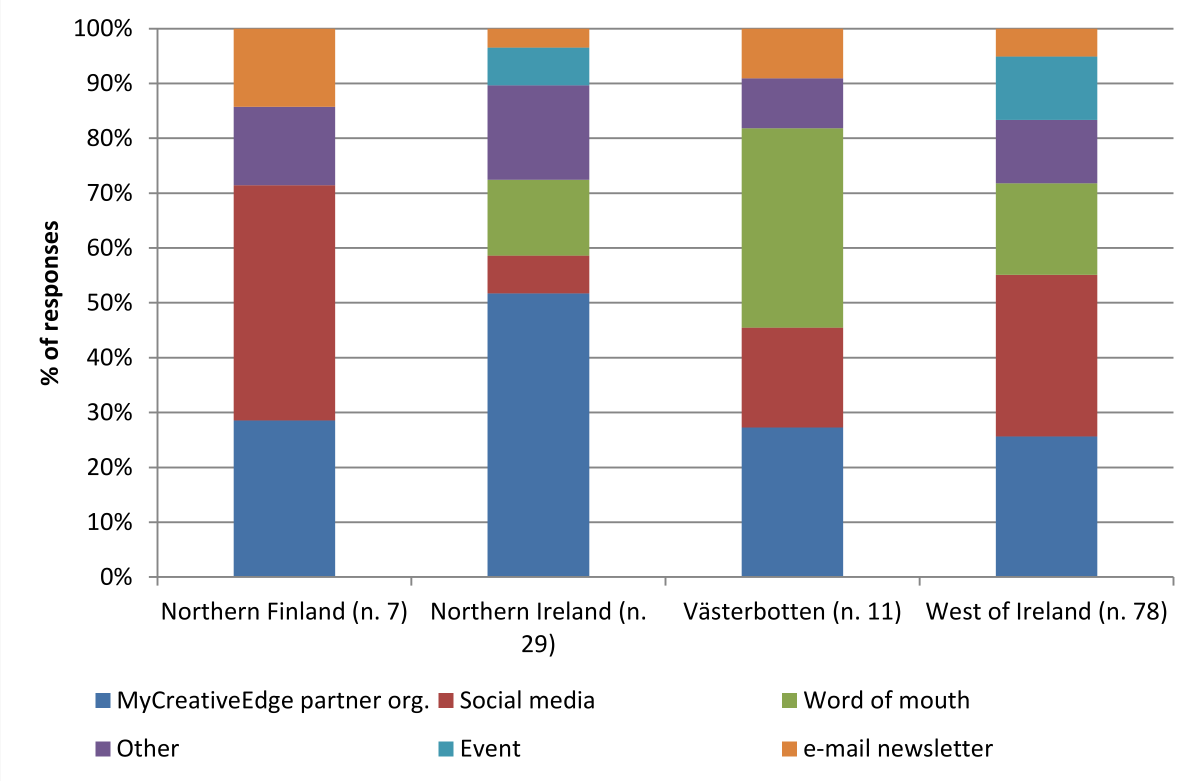


The most important way in which respondents learned about MyCreativeEdge was directly from the project partner organisations (32%). This may have involved a direct e-mail, phone call or meeting with one of the project partners.

Social media was the next most important source with nearly a quarter of responses. Within social media, Facebook was most important with 18.3% hearing from a Facebook post or ad. LinkedIn and Twitter were the other channels.

Word of mouth accounted for 17.5% of responses which indicates support and growing recognition for MyCreativeEdge within the sector in the regions. The Other category included learning from creative trade and industry associations and third level institutions showing the importance of other stakeholders informing their networks.

Fig. 12: How respondents heard of MyCreativeEdge by region (% of responses)

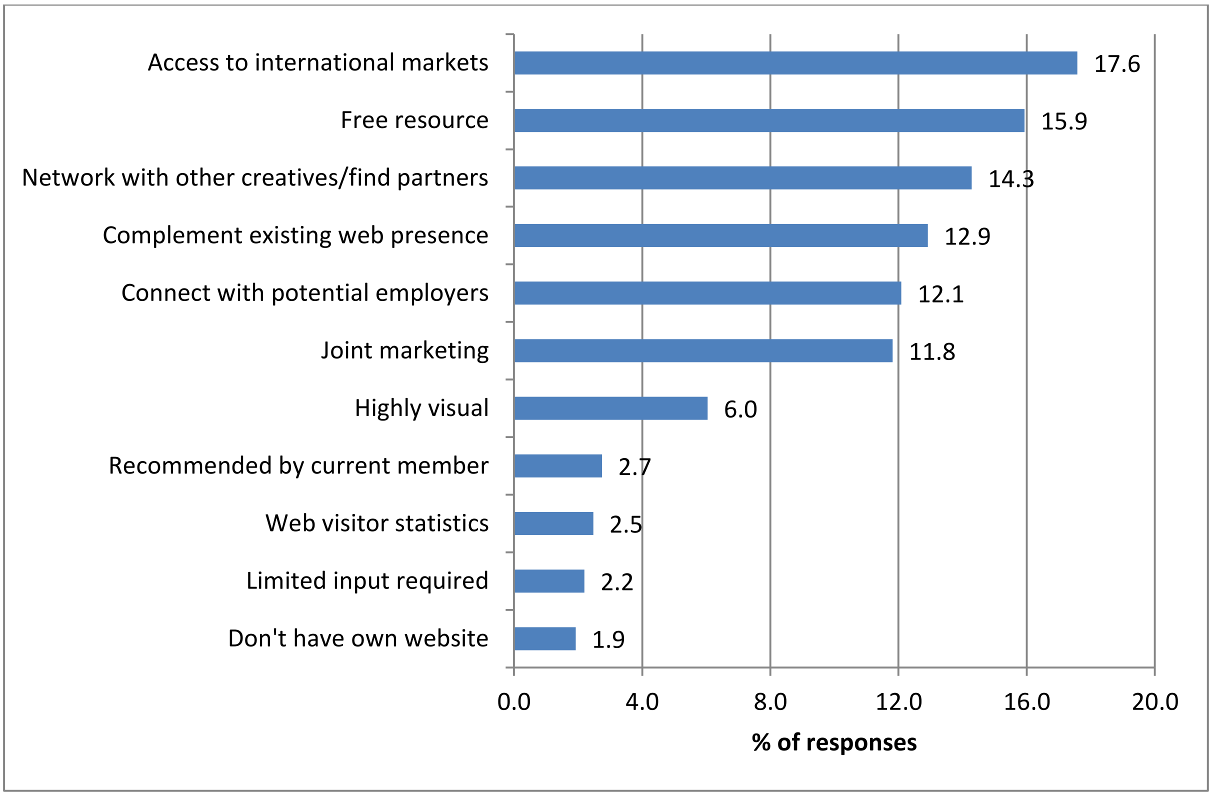


The main way in which respondents heard of MyCreativeEdge varied by region. Social media had the highest response in Northern Finland and the West of Ireland, while contact from a MyCreativeEdge partner organisation was the main way respondents from Northern Ireland heard about it. In Västerbotten word of mouth was most important.

Direct contact from a MyCreativeEdge organisation was an important source of information across all regions, while word of mouth was also important in the West of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Other sources, including trade associations and colleges, were quite important in Northern Ireland and Northern Finland.

Q6. Why did you register on MyCreativeEdge? (364 responses from 103 respondents)

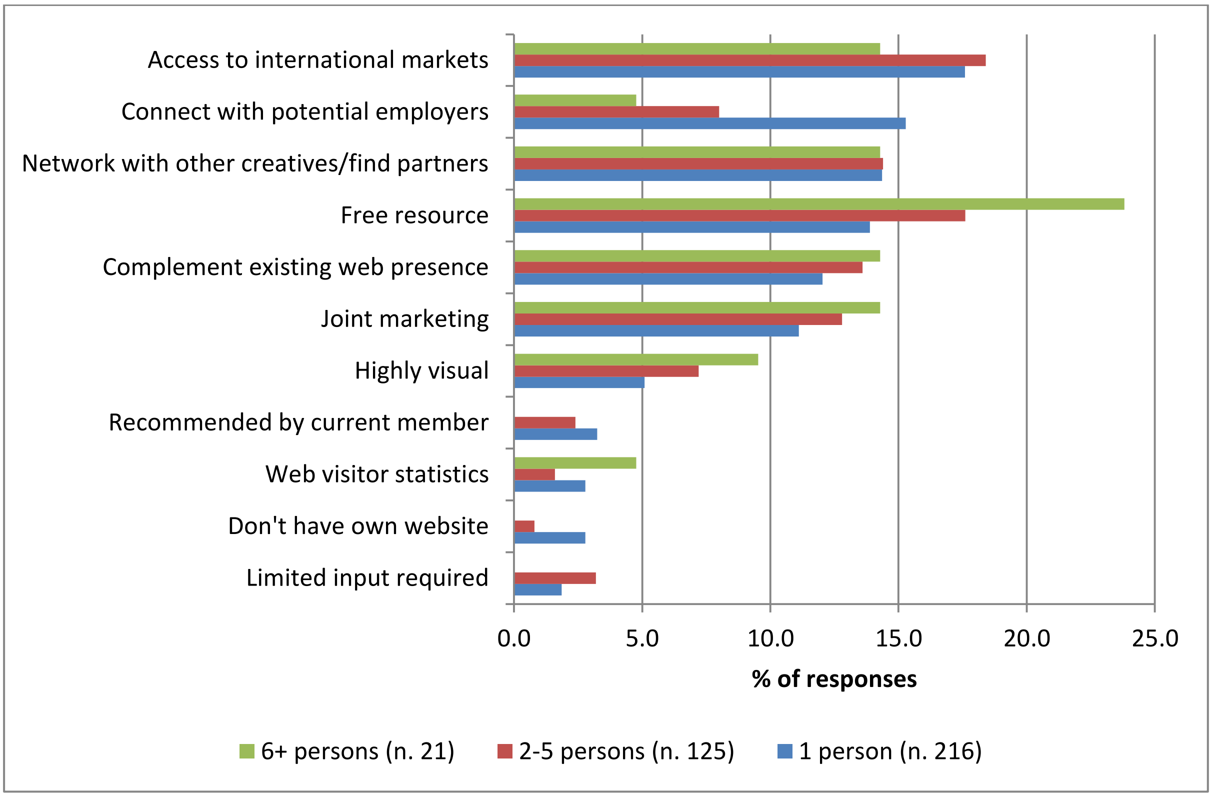
Fig. 13: Reasons for registering on MyCreativeEdge (% of responses)



Most respondents gave multiple reasons for joining MyCreativeEdge. Access to international markets, the fact it was a free resource and networking with other creatives were the most important reasons, accounting for nearly half of responses.

An opportunity to complement their already existing web presence, to connect with potential employers and the joint marketing provided by MyCreativeEdge were also important factors. These six reasons were by far the most important.

Fig. 14: Reasons for registering on MyCreativeEdge by enterprise size (% of responses)



Comparing the reasons given by respondents for why they registered on MyCreativeEdge among different enterprise sizes shows some interesting differences.

Connecting with potential employers was significantly more important as a reason among one person businesses than for larger companies. This group would include emerging creative talent who are using the site to showcase their portfolios to potential employers. Not having their own website was also far more common among one person businesses.

The fact the site was a free resource and its being highly visual were notably more important reasons among businesses with six or more employees.

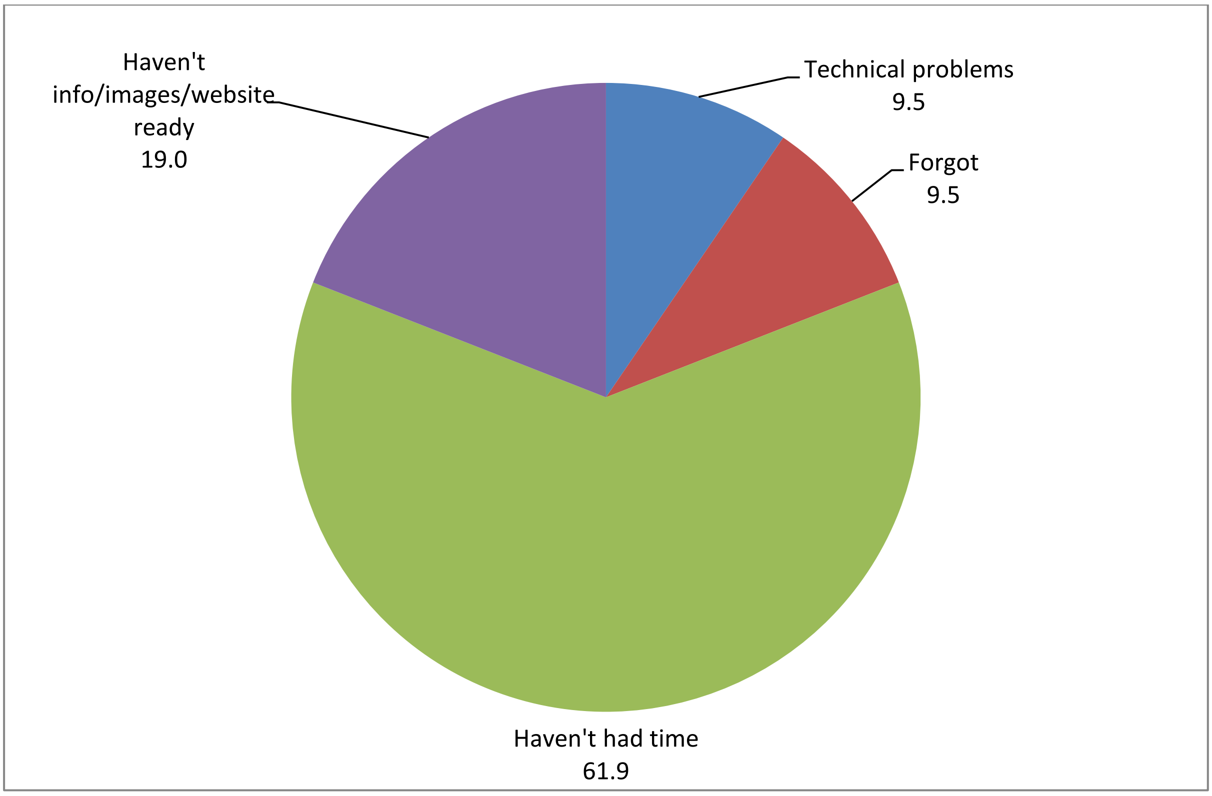
Access to international markets was the most important reason for both one person businesses and those with 2-5 employees with it being a free resource being the second most important reason for businesses with 2-5 employees.

Networking with other creatives was considered equally significant among all business sizes and was the third most important reason for all three.

2.3 Publishing MyCreativeEdge Profiles

Q7. Why have you not published? (21 responses from 19 respondents)

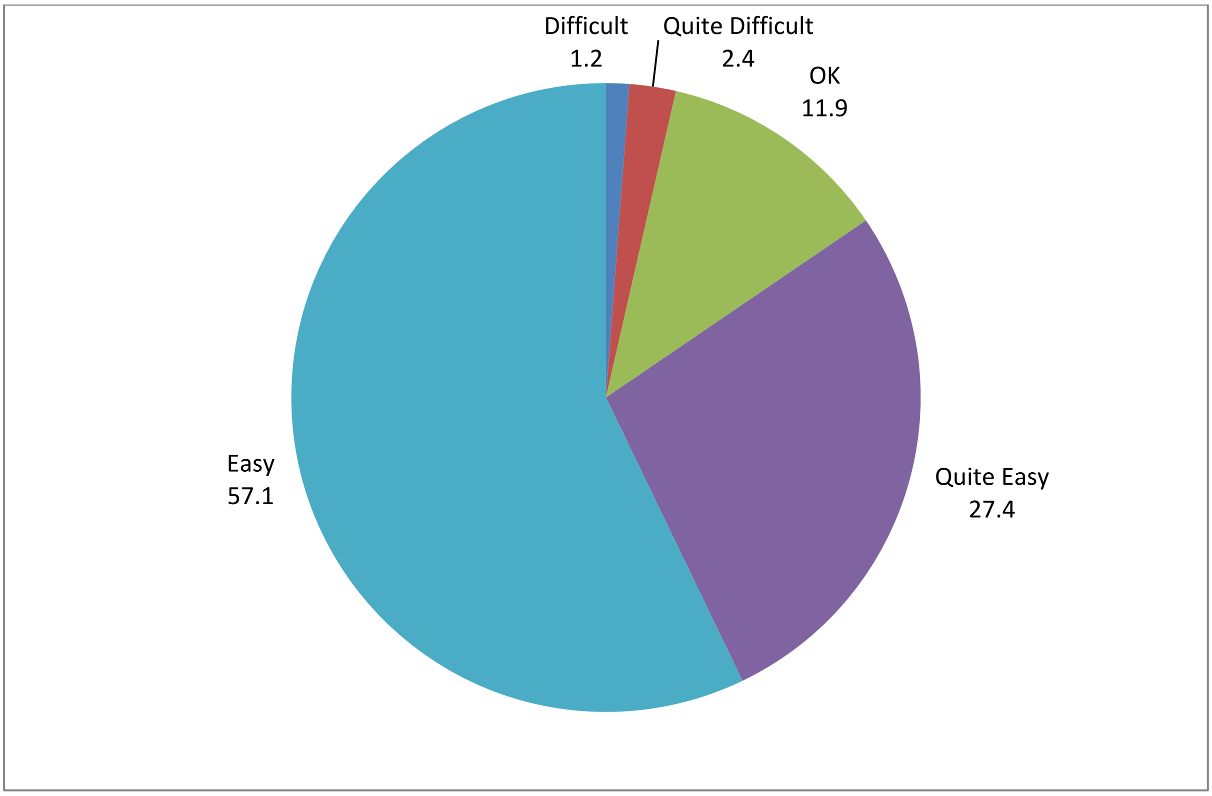
Fig. 15: Reasons for not publishing profile (% of responses)



Of the 103 respondents, 19 were approved members of the site but had not yet published their profile. The main reason cited was that they had not had the time. The next most important reason is that they do not have the material required or are working on developing their own website.

Q8. Was the process to create your profile … (84 respondents)

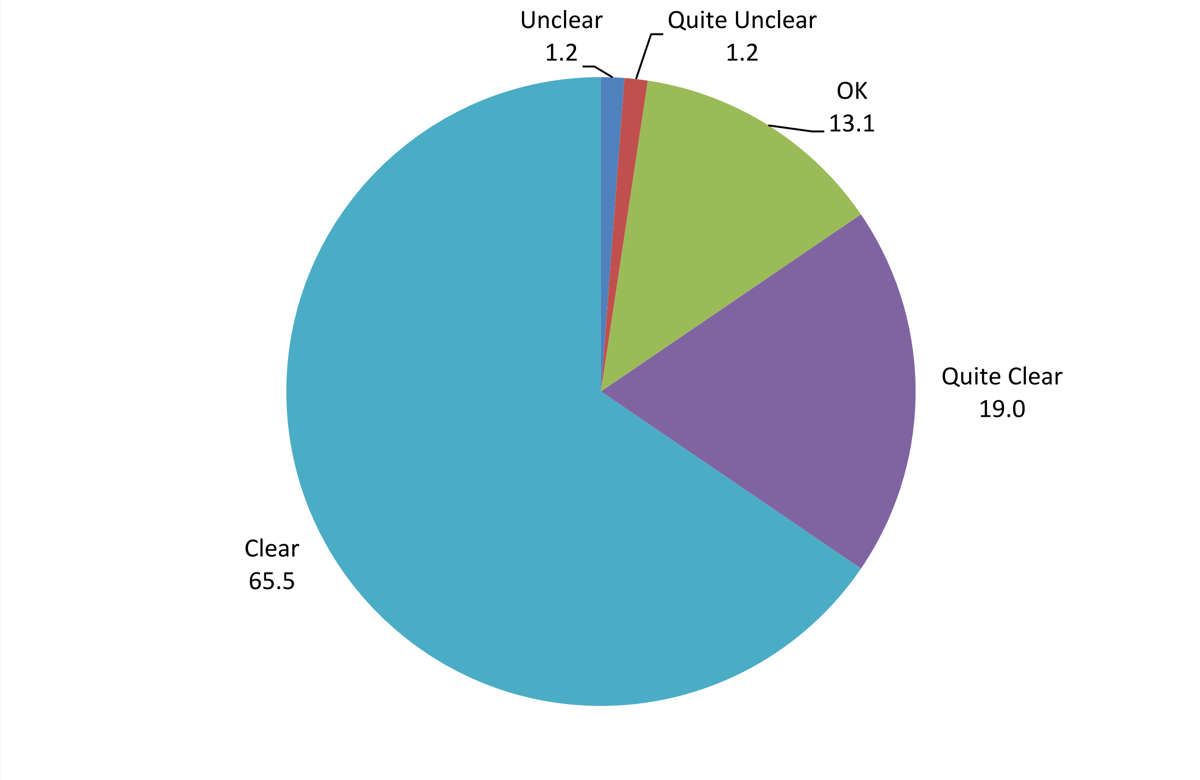
Fig. 16: Opinion of the process to create a MyCreativeEdge profile (% of responses)



Of the 84 respondents who had published their profile, 57% said the process was easy with a further 27% saying it was quite easy. This meant 84.5% ranked the process as easy or quite easy. Only 3.6% of respondents felt the process was difficult or quite difficult.

Q9. Were the explanations and directions for creating your profile … (84 respondents)

Fig. 17: Opinion of the instructions for creating a MyCreativeEdge profile (% of responses)



65.5% of those who had published their profile felt that the explanations and directions during the process were clear with a further 19% saying they were quite clear. Only 2.4% of respondents felt the explanations were unclear.

Q10. If you had any problems publishing your profile, what were they?

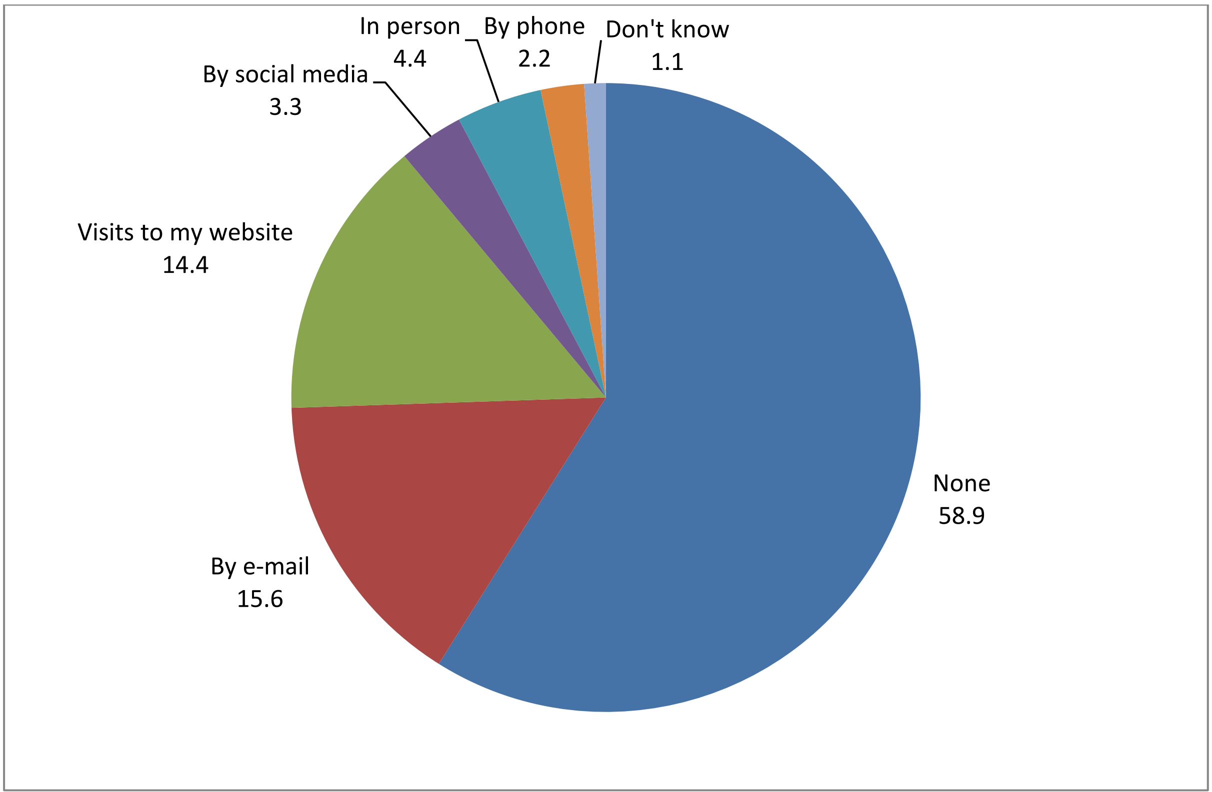
There was an open ended question asking if respondents had had any difficulty creating their profile. In total there were 17 responses to this and among the issues which arose were:

- Difficulties with uploading the video links to the gallery.
- It is not possible to upload audio files to the profile pages.
- The fact that the description text appears overlaid on the images in the slideshow was raised as a concern.
- Some technical issues were raised but it was noted that most of these bugs had been fixed when they contacted the website's support.
- A problem with the site going down when uploading images (the site has since been moved to a different hosting server.)
- A concern that the username format was not user friendly.
- An issue with logging into the site.
- Issues of incompatibility with the Internet Explorer browser.
- That the 'publish' button was difficult to find.

2.4 Response to MyCreativeEdge Profile

Q11. Have you received any response to your MyCreativeEdge profile page? (90 responses from 84 respondents)

Fig. 18: Details of any response to MyCreativeEdge profile page (% of responses)

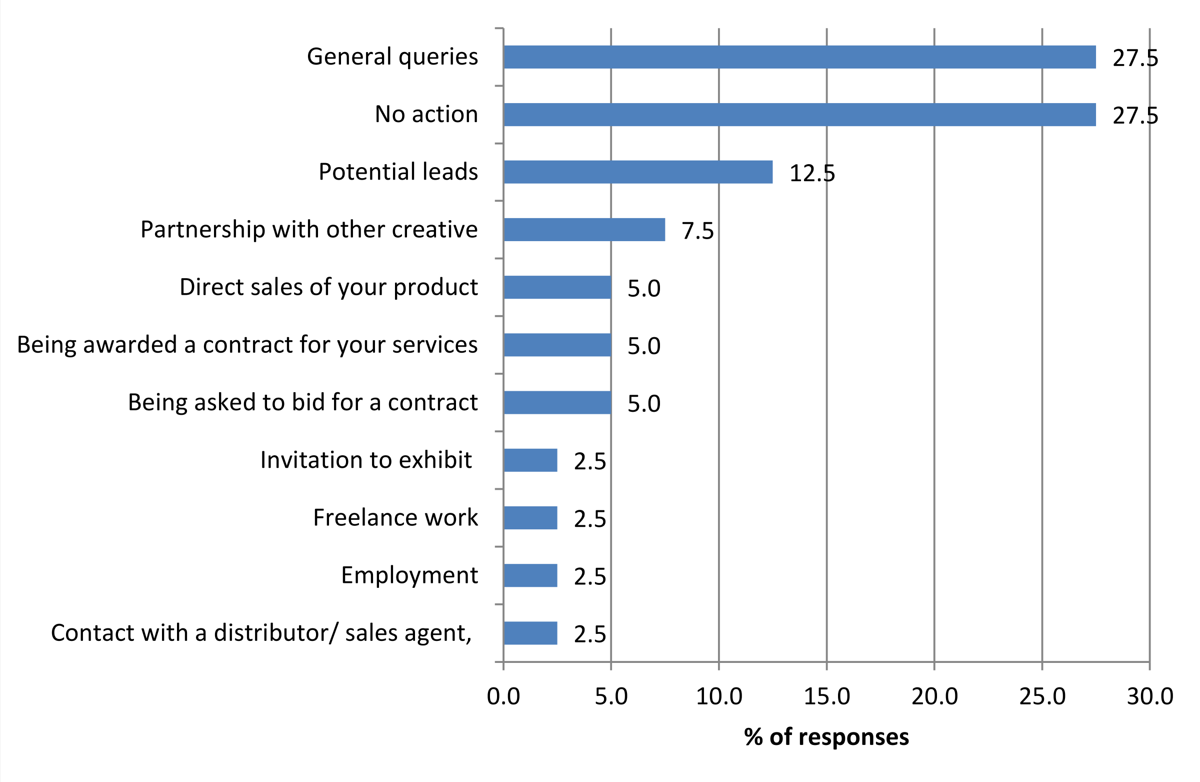


The largest share of responses, close to 60%, reported no response to their profile page. While this is likely true in most cases, it is also possible there was some response in terms of MyCreativeEdge visitors clicking through to the respondent's own website or Facebook page but they may not be aware of this.

In total 28 respondents reported being aware of some response to their profile, 16% referred to receiving e-mails with 14% reporting visits to their own website.

Q12. Has this led to ... (40 responses from 31 respondents)

Fig. 19: Outcome of response to profile



The two most common outcomes were general queries and no further action. Potential leads was next highest. This partly reflects the short time period that the site and respondents' profiles would have been online at the time of the survey. The next highest was partnership with another creative (3 respondents) which is important in the context of networking through the site.

Q13. If you have had a response, can you please give details

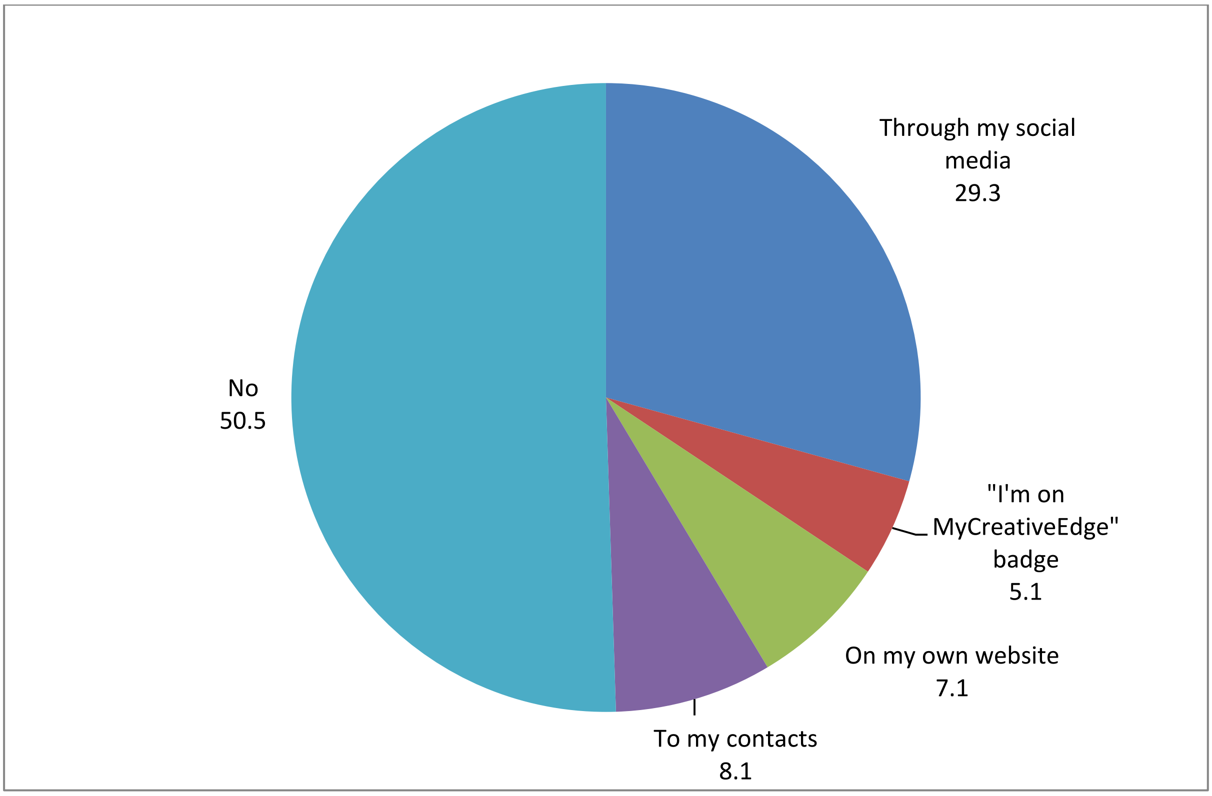
There were 17 responses to this question including:

- Receiving e-mails regarding their work from other members of MyCreativeEdge.
- Working directly with another member of MyCreativeEdge under the Creative Edge Talent Voucher Scheme.
- Being contacted by another member of MyCreativeEdge in relation to the Talent Voucher Scheme, and though they did not work together under the scheme, were going to work together in future.
- Contacting several artists from the site with a view to working together on publishing their work.
- One noted that an image of her work had been used in some promotional material for the website and this raised her profile among potential clients.
- Connecting with another creative business at a networking event and working together.
- Several artists on the site had been contacted by the director of an art fair in Chelsea, London enquiring if they were interested in exhibiting at the fair.
- Being asked to quote for work.

2.5 Promotion of MyCreativeEdge Profile

Q14. Have you promoted your MyCreativeEdge profile page? (99 responses from 84 respondents)

Fig. 20: Promotion of MyCreativeEdge profiles by members (% of responses)



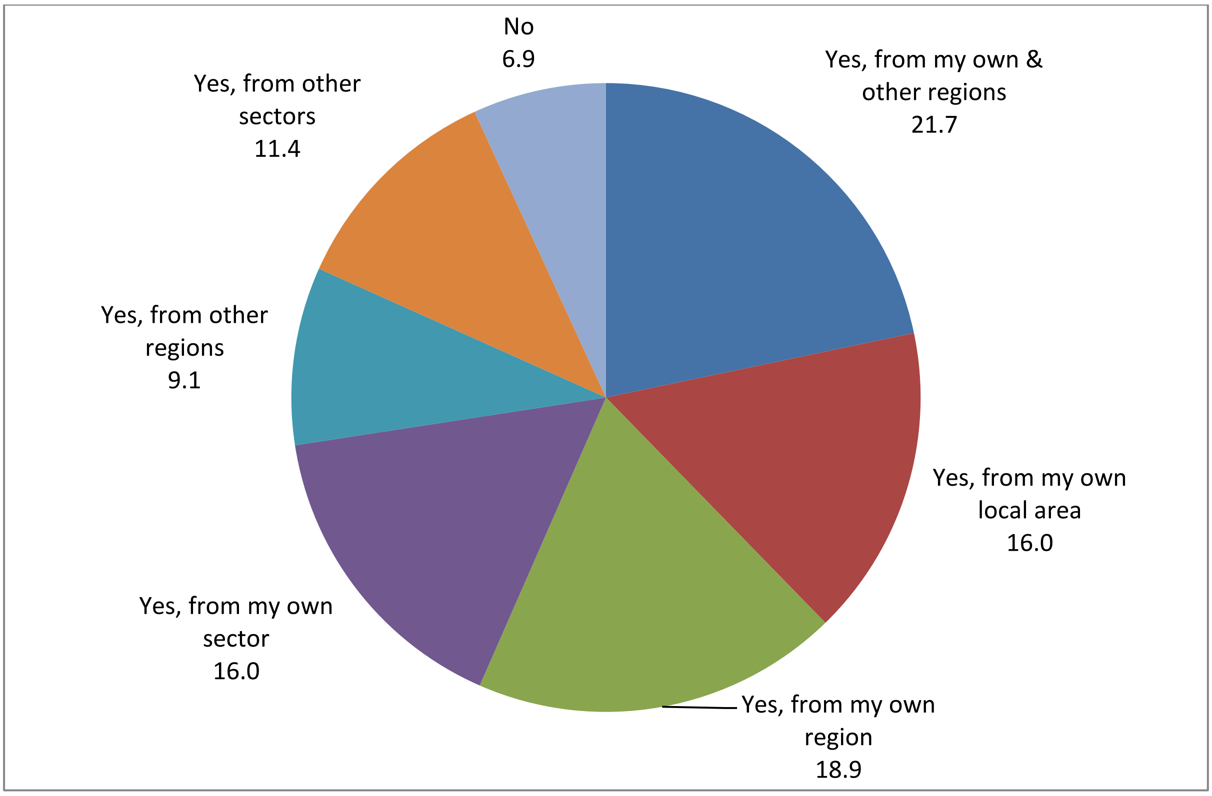
Half of respondents had not taken any action to promote their MyCreativeEdge profile.

Of those who had, social media was by far the most common method. The importance of social media in raising awareness of the site (see Q. 5) and its importance in promoting profiles is significant in terms of future promotion of the site. Promoting to the respondents' contacts was next highest, followed by promotion on their own website.

2.6 Networking through MyCreativeEdge

Q15. Have you used MyCreativeEdge to look at other creative profiles? (175 responses from 103 respondents)

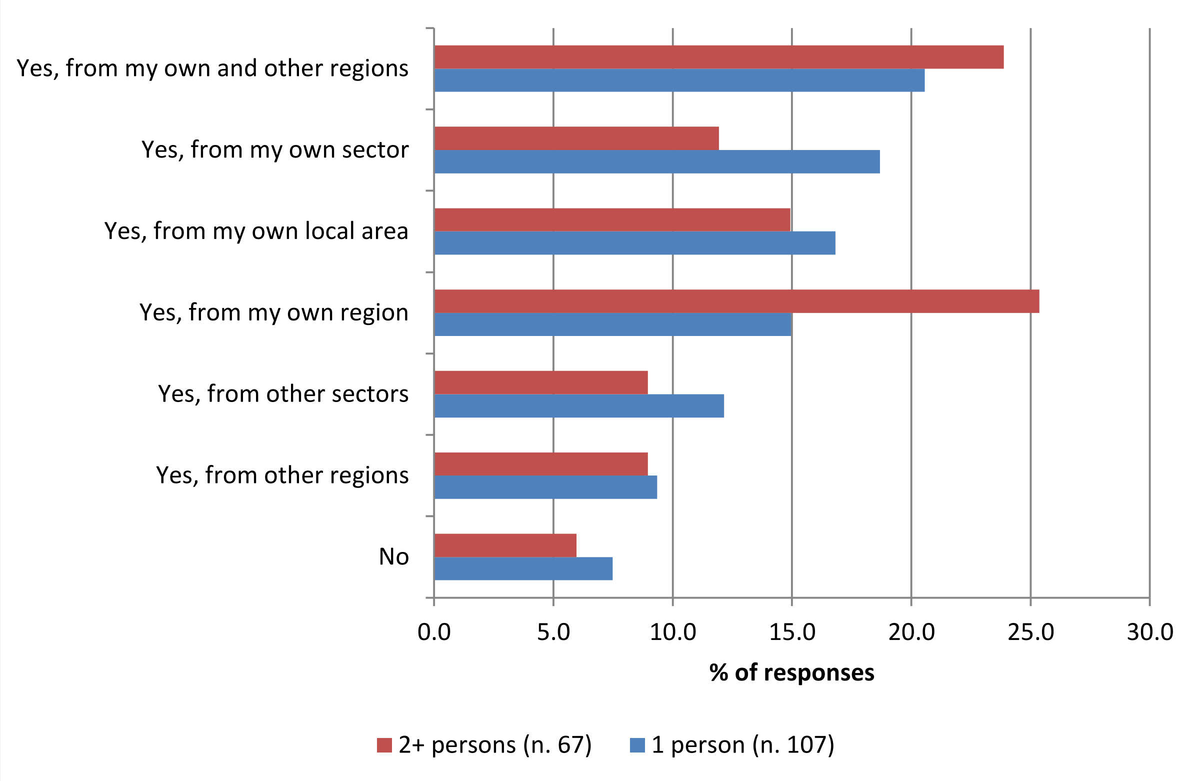
Fig. 21: Use of MyCreativeEdge to view other members' profiles (% of responses)



91 respondents indicated they had used MyCreativeEdge to look at other creative profiles. This is an indication of the importance of the site in potential networking within the sector.

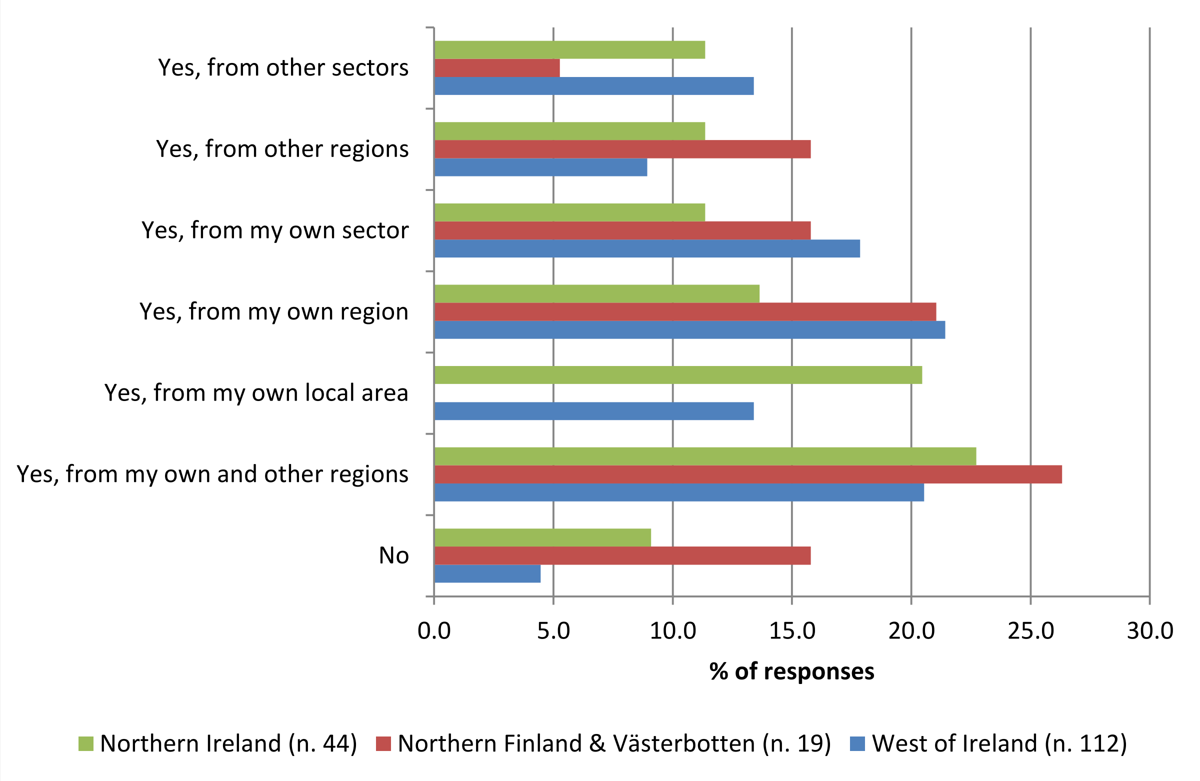
The two most common responses were that they had looked at profiles from their own and other regions or had looked at profiles from their own region. That they had looked at profiles just from their own local area or just from their own sector were next highest.

Fig. 22: Use of MyCreativeEdge to view other members' profiles by enterprise size (% of responses)



The use of the site to view other profiles varied by size of the business. For single person businesses the most common activity was to view profiles from their own and other regions, followed by profiles from their own sector and own local area. For businesses with more people, viewing profiles from their own region was by far the most common followed by from their own and other regions.

Fig. 23: Use of MyCreativeEdge to view other members' profiles by region (% of responses)



The use of MyCreativeEdge to view other creative profiles also varied by region. Respondents from the West of Ireland had the highest share using the site for this purpose, while those from Northern Finland and Västerbotten (combined due to small numbers) had the lowest share.

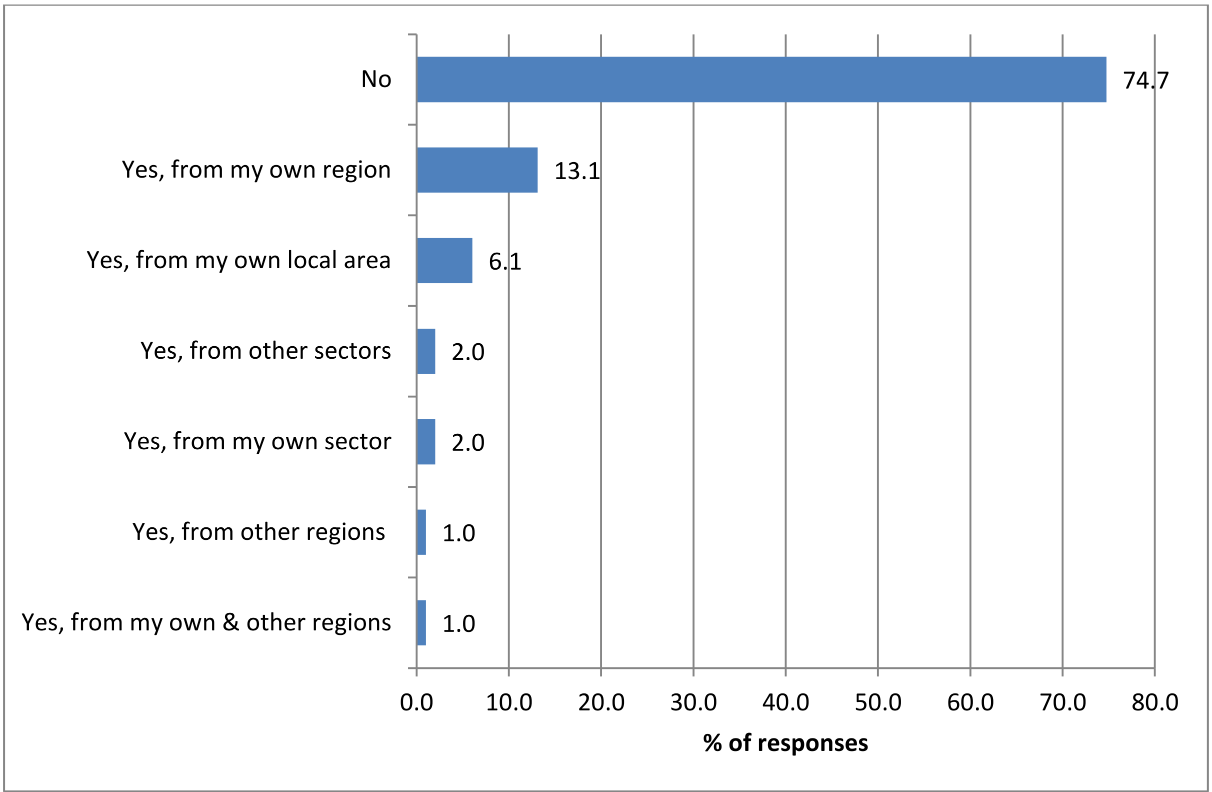
For respondents from Northern Ireland, looking at profiles in their own and other regions was most common, followed by looking in their own local area, which was much more common there than in any of the other regions.

For the West of Ireland, looking at profiles from their own region was most common, followed closely by from their own and other regions, and from their own sector.

Looking at their own and other regions was the most common for respondents from Northern Finland and Västerbotten, followed by from their own region only.

Q16. Have you made direct contact with anyone you discovered on MyCreativeEdge? (99 responses from 91 respondents)

Fig. 24: Direct contact made with other MyCreativeEdge members (% of responses)



Three quarters of responses indicated they had not made direct contact with anyone they found on the site.

There were 25 responses indicating contact had been made, some respondents indicated they had made contact with multiple people. The most common was making contact with someone from their own region, followed by making contact with someone from their own local area.

The limited number of responses indicating they had made contact with creatives from other regions indicates that international networking may be an area in need of further support.

2.7 Future Development of MyCreativeEdge

Q17. Do you have any ideas for how potential consumers and clients for your business could be attracted to MyCreativeEdge in the future?

There were 27 responses to this query, which is a positive sign of the level of engagement and interest among members of MyCreativeEdge in its future development. While some of the suggestions may not prove possible, all suggestions will be investigated by the project partners. In general the most common themes were:

- Promotion of the site:
    - Targeting of online advertising to the location of the majority of clients, often the capital city of the partner region. Continuing advertising the site in the four partner regions.

- Advertising in trade-specific magazines/newsletters and also at trade specific fairs and events.
    - Using the local media (newspapers, radio) more to promote the website, not focusing solely on digital advertising and promotion.
    - Promoting to community groups, facebook groups and other groups/communities with an interest in the sector.
    - Linking with arts agencies and organisations and asking them to promote to members and clients.
    - Creating a LinkedIn group.
    - Linking with / sponsoring tourism initiatives such as the Wild Atlantic Way in the West of Ireland.
    - Building links and co-operation with international art fairs and galleries.
- Website changes:
    - A blog featuring creative businesses e.g. 60 second interviews with creatives from the site.
    - A dedicated section on the site for each of the partner regions.
    - Adding an e-commerce element to allow direct sales through the website.
    - Increasing the gallery size to allow more images.
- Events:
    - Organising events such as a 'creative fair day' or creative festival to showcase creative talent.
    - Organising trade shows and inviting retail trade buyers.
- Incentives:
    - Having some form of 'voucher' system to allow purchases from any of the members of the site.
    - Running the Creative Edge Talent Voucher scheme again but opening it to allow enterprises from outside of the creative industries to apply.
    - Provision of some form of incentive for collaboration among members.

Q18. Do you have any ideas for how MyCreativeEdge can be improved?

There were 38 responses to this question. The most common themes emerging from these responses were:

- Categorisation of sectors:
    - The creative sector categories could be more specific to make searching easier e.g. for a web designer. Particularly a concern for the broad 'design' category.
    - Restrict the number of categories a member can select to one or two. Members selecting too many sectors, some of which are not core to their services, means website visitors may get many irrelevant search results discouraging them from visiting the site again.
    - Create categorisation for 'architectural staff' where person is not a registered architect.
- Technical/website development:
    - Download speeds could be increased, the site can be slow at times.
    - Simplify the message and navigation.
    - Make 'Creative Showcase' section the homepage.
    - Allow a 'comments' section on each profile page with any comments left on the site also posted to the members' Facebook page.
    - A blog where members can showcase their work to other members.
    - Text should be under the image in the gallery rather than overlaid on it.

  - Could purchase the .com address (note: this is not available for purchase).
- More interaction with members:
  - More active posting on the site including notifications to members of upcoming offers.
  - Feedback to members of any projects that have resulted from the site.
  - The members' Forum needs to be moderated and more active.
  - Provide more information and advice to members on how to promote their own profile page and get the most out of it.
  - Hold online Q&A sessions. This could include regular online mentoring clinics via Skype/Google Hangouts.
  - Expand the resources section with more varied sources.
  - Provide a mentoring programme.
  - Advice and information for members on how to exploit social media and present their work online.
- Joint opportunities for tendering:
  - Create an international projects section with details of projects that members could bid for. This could incorporate a facility to allow members to collaborate to pool resources to bid for larger projects.
- Organise events:
  - Organise more meetings and seminars so members can network in person.
  - Hold specific seminars for different sectors / professionals.
  - Organise international trade fairs.
- Promoting the site:
  - Increased promotion to non-creative businesses as a directory of creative providers. Attend business networking/conference events where businesses would be looking for creative providers. More promotion among commissioners of work.
  - Recruit 'reps' from the sector to promote the site in their own communities of interest and encourage others to join up. Link with local groups in the sector across the regions.
  - More international advertising including promoting the uniqueness of local raw materials in design.
  - More marketing in trade-specific websites and magazines.

2.8 Other Creative Sector Supports

Q19. On a scale of 1-5 (where 1 is Not Important and 5 is Very Important), how important would the following supports be in assisting you to grow your creative business? (103 respondents)

Table 1: Importance given to selected creative sector supports and average score for each support

	Very Important 5	Important 4	Moderately Important 3	Not Very Important 2	Not Important 1	Average Score
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	
Support to attend overseas trade fairs	31	19	27	16	10	**3.4**

	Very Important 5	Important 4	Moderately Important 3	Not Very Important 2	Not Important 1	Average Score
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	
Support to attend trade events in my region	44	22	26	7	4	**3.9**
Networking events in my area	39	35	21	7	1	**4**
Voucher for initial design of new product/service	36	28	18	12	9	**3.7**
Micro-finance loan	21	20	24	26	12	**3.1**
Access to creative space	34	26	18	13	12	**3.6**
Training & advice on practical export issues	33	25	22	16	7	**3.6**
Support to develop new creative talent	31	16	28	16	12	**3.4**
Training in business, financial & management skills	23	31	25	17	7	**3.4**
Training in marketing skills	36	30	22	11	4	**3.8**
Training in technical skills for online sales	32	29	24	12	6	**3.7**
Mentoring support	38	25	20	15	5	**3.7**

Fig. 25: Average score for importance of each proposed creative sector support

In terms of importance, the highest average score was given to networking events in your own area, followed by support to attend trade events in your own region and training in marketing skills. Networking and opportunities to market their goods and services seem to be the areas where members consider support to be most needed.

The next highest were mentoring support, a voucher for initial design of a product and training in technical issues around online sales.

While these are the results for all responses, it is interesting to consider how the relative importance of different creative support measures is viewed by different sub-groups.

Table 2: Average score for importance of each proposed creative sector support by enterprise size

	1 person (n. 60)	2+ persons (n. 43)
	Average Score	Average Score
Support to attend overseas trade fairs	3.3	3.7
Support to attend trade events in my region	4.0	3.9
Networking events in my area	4.1	3.9
Voucher for initial design of new product/service	3.4	4.0
Micro-finance loan	3.1	3.2
Access to creative space	3.7	3.2
Training & advice on practical export issues	3.5	3.7
Support to develop new creative talent	3.4	3.3
Training in business, financial & management skills	3.5	3.3
Training in marketing skills	3.8	3.8
Training in technical skills for online sales	3.7	3.7

	1 person (n. 60)	2+ persons (n. 43)
	Average Score	Average Score
Mentoring support	3.8	3.7

Comparing one person businesses with those with more than one person raises a few notable differences. For one person businesses the most important supports are networking events, support to attend trade events in their region, training in marketing skills and mentoring support. For businesses of more than one person, a voucher for product development, networking events, support for trade events in their region and training in marketing skills were most important.

Access to creative space, training in business and management skills and networking events in their own area were considered more important by one person businesses than by larger enterprises. This reflects the needs of early start ups and the importance of making local connections for those working alone.

For larger businesses a voucher for product development, support to attend overseas trade fairs and training on practical export issues were more important than for one person businesses. This would reflect the more export and product development focus among larger companies.

Table 3: Average score for importance of each proposed creative sector support by region

	West of Ireland (n. 65)	Northern Finland & Västerbotten (n. 15)	Northern Ireland (n. 23)
	Average Score	Average Score	Average Score
Support to attend overseas trade Fairs	3.5	3.9	3.0
Support to attend trade events in my region	4.0	4.1	3.6
Networking events in my area	4.0	4.2	3.8
Voucher for initial design of new product/service	3.8	3.2	3.6
Micro-finance loan	3.4	2.3	2.8
Access to creative space	3.7	3.6	3.2
Training & advice on practical export issues	3.6	3.9	3.6
Support to develop new creative talent	3.5	3.2	3.0
Training in business, financial & management skills	3.6	3.5	3.0
Training in marketing skills	3.9	3.5	3.8
Training in technical skills for online sales	3.8	3.7	3.4
Mentoring support	3.8	3.7	3.5

At a regional level, the most important creative supports for respondents from the West of Ireland were support to attend trade events in their area, networking events and training in marketing skills.

For respondents based in Northern Finland and Västerbotten (these were combined because of small numbers) networking events, support for trade events, support to attend overseas trade fairs and advice on practical export issues were most important.

For Northern Ireland respondents, networking events, training in marketing skills, advice on practical export issues and support to attend trade events were most important.

While it is difficult to compare across regions, particularly as Northern Ireland respondents seem to have marked lower across the board than the other regions, some differences can be seen. For example support to attend overseas trade fairs was considered more important in Northern Finland and Västerbotten than the other regions. Micro-finance was regarded as considered considerably more important in the West of Ireland than elsewhere.

Q20. Do you have any other suggestions for how your business can be supported?

There were 27 responses to this question, several of which are extremely useful and will be explored in further detail. In summary the key themes from the responses were:

- Networking and trade events:
    - Networking events that allow creatives to discover others in the region who they may be able to work with. Often it can be difficult to find people with particular skills to collaborate with, as they are not known to each other. Finding people can be a problem as creatives in these regions may be quite isolated.
    - An annual or bi-annual event (like Web Summit or TechFest) for the creative technology sector.
    - Casual / informal regular creative meetups in different areas across the regions to allow networking.
    - Facilitating collaboration between creative businesses to work together on larger projects to open up new markets and sources of work.
    - Networking events which include buyers of creative services, not only for the sector itself. ‘Meet the buyer’ type events.
    - Support to attend international networking / trade events, organising group trade missions.
- Funding / financial supports:
    - Funding for training in technical skills in the creative technology sectors e.g. web design, photoshop. Technology evolves very quickly and there is a need to constantly upskill to remain competitive. Financial assistance to fund this training would be useful.
    - Support for the design of packaging and marketing for creative businesses.
    - An equipment discounting scheme negotiated with a supplier for discounted rates for members of MyCreativeEdge.
    - Loans for specialist equipment.
    - Reduced tax rates on craft products.
- MyCreativeEdge website:
    - Hosting a crowdfunding platform exclusively for members of MyCreativeEdge.
    - Some form of quality control for contacts made through the site.
    - MyCreativeEdge as a repository for CVs for jobseekers looking for work in the sector.
- Information and advice:
    - Newsletter for members with details of available support programmes.
    - Advice about web presence and how a business can make connections abroad.

- A MyCreativeEdge magazine (online / print) targeted at buyers of creative products and services with a focus on profiling members, a lot of imagery, advertising space etc.

- Infrastructure:
    - Broadband infrastructure and upload speeds are a constraint in many rural areas.
    - Small regional craft centres where craft enterprises can operate together and provide a pleasant visitor experience for customers.
    - A centrally located craft gallery in every capital city.

3.0 Conclusions

Close to a quarter of all registered members of MyCreativeEdge took the time to complete this survey, with very many making specific suggestions through the open ended questions. This response points to a relatively high level of engagement among members of the site and the value they place on their inclusion on the platform.

The survey provided a good insight into the characteristics of members of the site, in particular the prevalence of individuals and very small businesses, as well as their reliance on local and regional markets. The number of respondents with international clients was also an interesting finding.

The survey results provided some very positive feedback in terms of the experience of creating a profile on the site and the use of it to view profiles of other creatives. It also showed the effectiveness of efforts to recruit members to join and the key reasons motivating them to join.

The reported response to profiles however was low. This is partly due to the short timeframe that the site was live, but also points to a need for more work to increase conversions from website visits to tangible impacts for the businesses featured. A number of encouraging examples were provided and these need to be built on. Some very practical suggestions for amending /adding to the site to make it more user friendly for visitors and more useful for members were also made.

A very strong finding from the survey was a desire for further supports to facilitate face to face networking within the sector and also opportunities to engage directly with buyers of creative products and services. This is clearly something that future support programmes for this sector need to consider.

Annex 1: Comparison of regional and sectoral distribution of survey sample with all registered members of MyCreativeEdge

Fig. 26: Comparison of regional distribution of survey respondents with membership of website as a whole

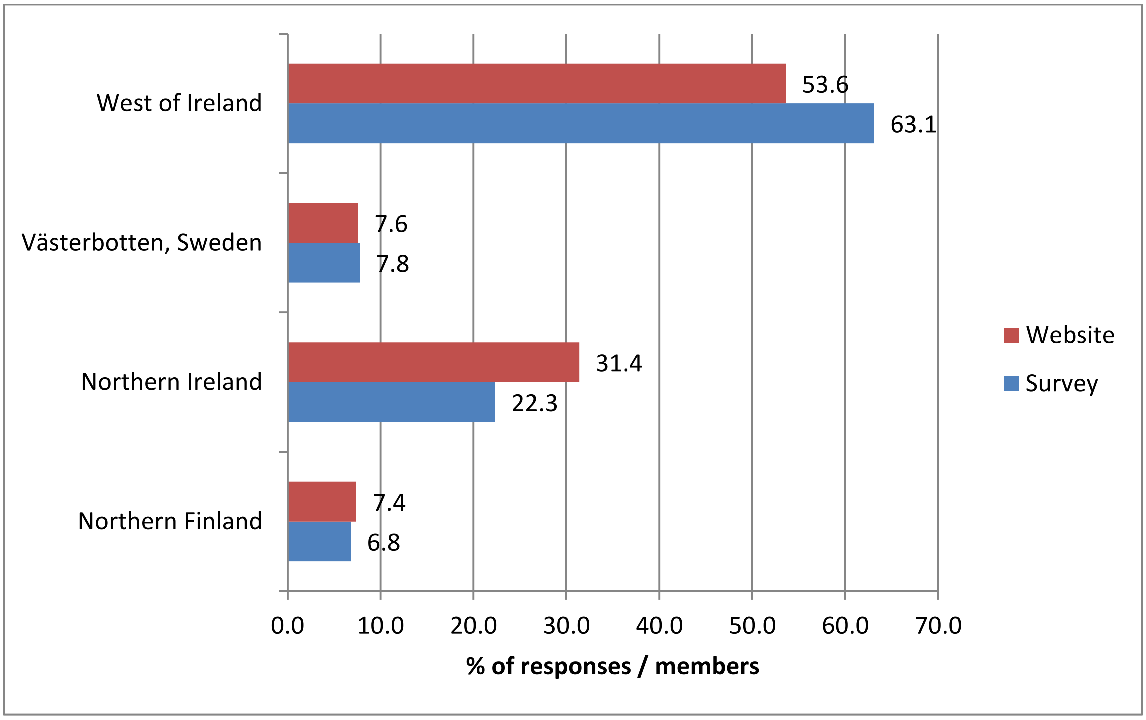


Fig. 27: Comparison of sectoral distribution of survey respondents with membership of website as a whole