

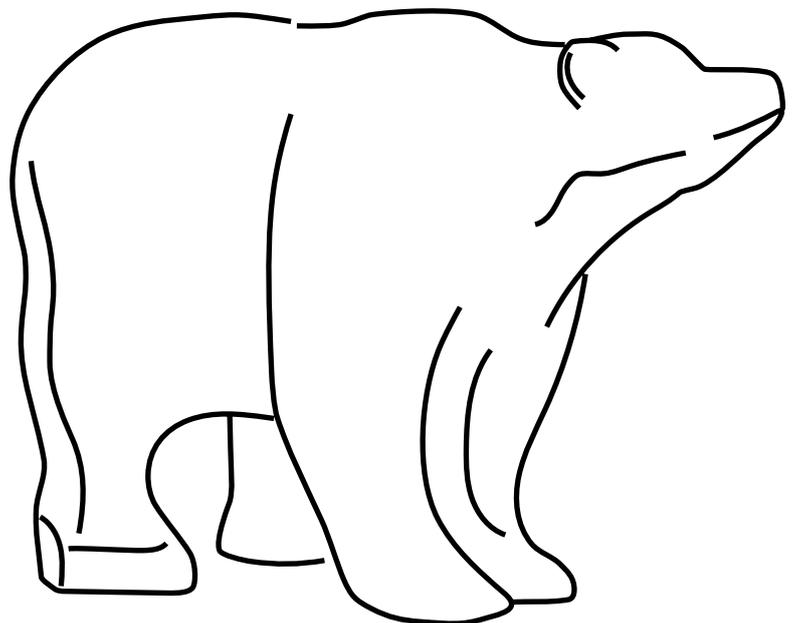
Towards the Design Action Plan for Berlin

January 2025



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SUMMARY

The year 2025 marks two decades since Berlin's designation as a UNESCO City of Design (CoD). This milestone provides a timely opportunity to celebrate achievements while reflecting on the city's design identity and ambitions for the future. Central to these discussions is the question: "What are Berlin's design successes, and what requires collective action for improvement?" This theme brought together a diverse group of design stakeholders in December 2024 for a workshop organised by Berlin's Senate Department for Economy, Energy and Public Enterprises and facilitated by PDR, the International Centre for Design and Research.

The workshop served as a deliberative space for

participants to examine the strengths and weaknesses of Berlin's Design Ecosystem, envision a desirable future for the sector, and co-develop actionable proposals to achieve those aspirations.

The discussions highlighted that Berlin has always been a city in transition, where strengths and weaknesses are often intertwined. For example, the diversity and niche specialisations within the design community foster innovation but can also lead to fragmentation and disconnected silos. While Berlin is recognised as a hub for design research in Germany and home to innovative public design initiatives like the Digital Service, these successes are hindered by the absence of cohesive design leadership

and strategic continuity in funding programs. The city balances grassroots energy with some top-down initiatives, yet lacks the connective tissue needed to unify efforts. Berlin's legacy as one of the first UNESCO Cities of Design remains underutilised, presenting an opportunity to reinvigorate its global recognition.

A key takeaway was the need to leverage the UNESCO City of Design designation, ensuring it becomes a widely recognised and impactful framework for Berlin's design identity and leadership. Participants also emphasized the importance of showcasing clear data and impact metrics to demonstrate the economic, social, and environmental value of design in Berlin.



Main Actions for the Short Term

To address these priorities, the workshop identified several key actions:



By focusing on these short-term actions, Berlin can build momentum to strengthen its design ecosystem and maintain its creative prowess. The workshop

outputs provide a foundation for broader stakeholder collaboration, setting the stage for Berlin to reaffirm its status as a UNESCO City of Design and

a global hub for innovation and creativity. We look forward to further support Berlin's Design Community in this effort.

CONTEXT & APPROACH

Berlin has a long and storied history in design, dating back to the creation of Bauhaus by Berlin-born Walter Gropius. This legacy continues to evolve and expand. According to the Projekt Zukunft study (2022), in 2020, more than 38,000 VAT-registered companies were part of Berlin's ICT, media, and creative industries cluster, generating €40.6 billion in sales and employing over 232,000 people. The design sector is a significant component of this cluster, with nearly 9,000 firms contributing €5.5 billion in sales, representing 23.6% of entities and 13.7% of sales in the cluster.

Despite these impressive figures, the general public often underestimates the scope and impact of Berlin's design economy, perhaps due to the city's broader creative identity encompassing film, music, literature, all forms of art, and even the culture of nightclubs, a recent UNESCO heritage list addition.

Globally, many countries have leveraged their design ecosystems through creation of policies and strategies to drive growth and innovation. Countries such as Denmark, Finland and South Korea have pioneered national design policies, while regional and city-level initiatives have also emerged in places like Lapland, Galicia, Silesia and Montreal.

In recent years, Germany has also taken steps toward integrating

design into its national policy framework. The Deutscher Designtag, as the professional design umbrella organisation representing 360,000 designers and 60,000 design companies, has played a pivotal role in advocating for the value of design as a driver of progress across business, society, and culture. In 2021, Deutscher Designtag published its Manifesto "Towards a New Approach", outlining a comprehensive vision for a design policy that prioritises sustainability and positions design as a key tool for addressing future societal challenges.

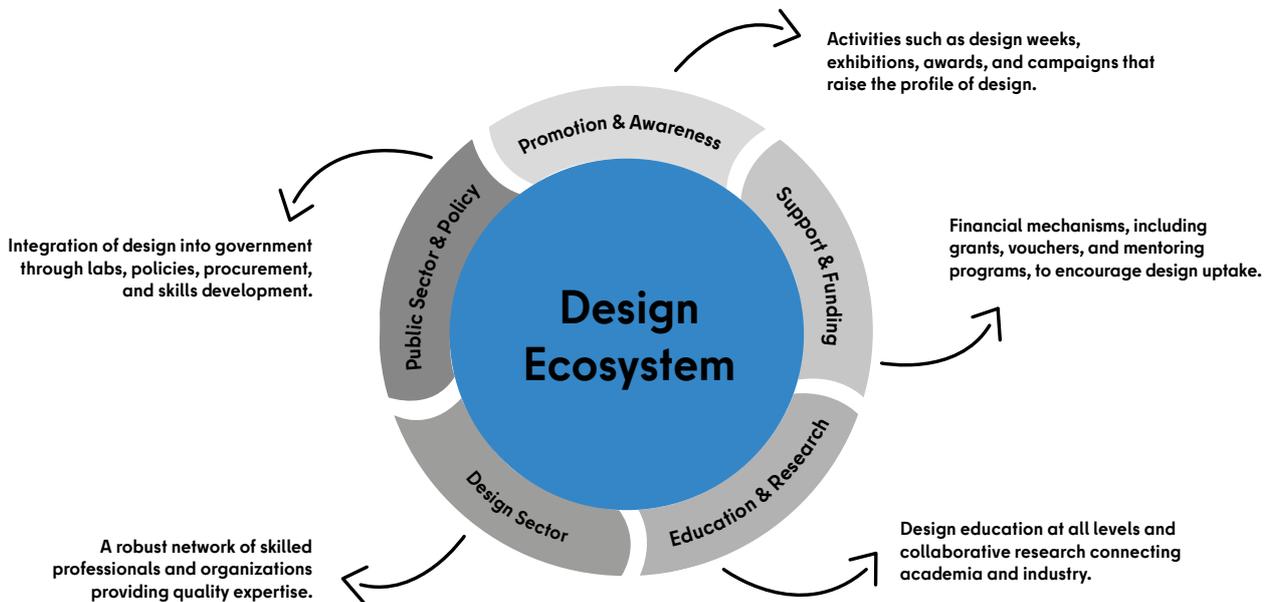


The manifesto emphasizes the need for structural changes to fully harness design's potential, including the appointment of design representatives at the federal level to integrate design perspectives into government actions. It advocates for reforms in public procurement, ensuring sustainability is prioritised in tenders and that design professionals are engaged in fair and transparent processes. The proposal also calls for systematic support for design-driven sustainability innovations, the revision of norms and standards to align with circular economy principles, and the establishment of co-creation laboratories for interdisciplinary experimentation and innovation.

Furthermore, the manifesto highlights the importance of design education and skills development, recommending the integration of sustainability-focused design perspectives into curricula at all levels, from schools to professional upskilling programs. By framing design skills as future skills, Deutscher Designtag positions design as essential for addressing critical societal, environmental, and economic challenges. These efforts signal Germany's commitment to embedding design in national strategies and provide inspiration for other regions to follow. For Berlin, this presents a timely opportunity to shape its design future by analysing its own design ecosystem and leveraging

these insights to strengthen its role as a design leader.

A Design Ecosystem refers to the enabling factors within a location that collectively foster a vibrant and sustainable design environment. It encompasses both supply-side components, such as skilled professionals, design education, and robust industry networks, and demand-side factors, like funding mechanisms, public sector integration, and promotional activities. An ideal ecosystem balances these elements to promote growth, innovation, and impact. Based on PDR's framework, five key elements of a thriving design ecosystem include:



To explore opportunities for improving the design ecosystem, the Berlin's Senate Department for Economy, Energy and Public Enterprises orchestrated a collaborative gathering, bringing together diverse stakeholders from across the spectrum of the ecosystem. The workshop took place in December 2024 and was facilitated by PDR, the International Centre for

Design and Research at Cardiff Metropolitan University. The methodology included mapping the current ecosystem, identifying strengths and weaknesses, visioning the future, and co-developing a prioritised action plan. Participants engaged in interactive exercises to refine their collective understanding of Berlin's design landscape, set ambitions for the future, and

propose concrete actions to achieve those goals.

This report captures the insights and outcomes of the workshop, offering a roadmap for stakeholders to further refine and implement strategies that will position Berlin as a global leader in design, building on its rich heritage and vibrant creative community.

EXPLORING BERLIN'S DESIGN ECOSYSTEM

Examining Berlin's design ecosystem offers a structured lens to understand the city's dynamic design landscape, its stakeholders, and the factors shaping its growth. During the workshop, participants engaged with a pre-populated ecosystem map to identify critical stakeholders and initiatives across five core categories:

Promotion & Awareness: Activities and initiatives that raise the profile of design, including campaigns, events, and platforms.

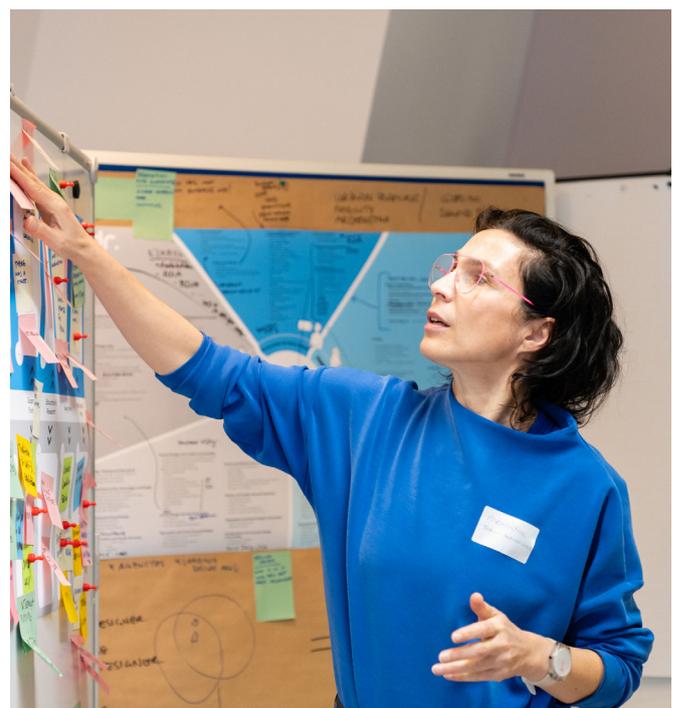
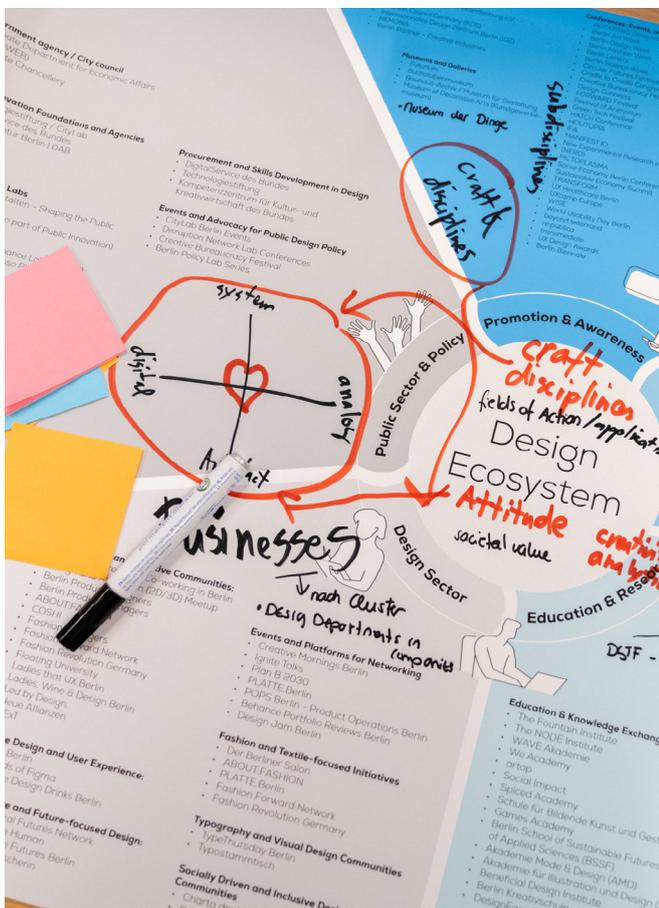
Support & Funding: Mechanisms that provide financial and institutional support for design, such as grants, subsidies, and mentorship programs.

Education & Research: The role of academic institutions, vocational training, and research initiatives in developing design talent and advancing knowledge.

Design Sector: The composition and capabilities of Berlin's design professionals, studios, and industries.

Public Sector & Policy: The integration of design into government practices, policies, and public services.

Participants used hands-on poster tools to delve deeper into these categories, analysing the ecosystem's strengths, weaknesses, and key enabling factors. This collaborative exploration highlighted Berlin's unique position as a diverse and talent-rich design city while identifying opportunities to strengthen its ecosystem.



Promotion & Awareness

Berlin is widely perceived as a creative hub, with a strong international image and brand. However, within that image design is perhaps not as prominent as it should be or represented mainly by fashion design. Despite Berlin's wealth of promotional initiatives, such as festivals, design weeks, and award schemes, public understanding and appreciation of design remain limited, with its broader value insufficiently communicated to the wider community.

The city's vibrant design scene attracts a diverse range of creative talent, driven by its multicultural character and the passion and self-motivation of individuals. Community-driven collaboration thrives through numerous meet-ups and networking events, supported by strong cross-disciplinary promotion. Yet, the ecosystem faces challenges of fragmentation and misalignment, lacking a cohesive strategy or flagship event to anchor its identity. This, combined with lack of clear sectoral leadership, and limited integration between industry and politics, hampers Berlin's potential to fully capitalise on its design identity.

Support & Funding

Berlin's support and funding landscape for design offers a broad array of options, with resources available at federal and local levels. Programs such as the Design Transfer Bonus and funding for non-technical innovations (currently paused on the Berlin city level) reflect efforts to address sector needs. Furthermore, institutions such as Berlin Partner offer guidance and consultancy, supported by workshops aimed at improving funding literacy. Networking opportunities and informal education initiatives, such as bootcamps and job office programs, contribute to skills development, enhancing access to funding and career opportunities.

The public funding falls under public scrutiny therefore needs to follow certain rules and ensure public value creation. There is a perception that these structures often prioritise 'developed' ideas over experimental projects, limiting the scope for funding more exploratory, innovative or artistic projects and creating a tension between creative ambitions and the structured nature of available funding opportunities. The funding rules and processes are also seen as difficult for freelancers and solo entrepreneurs to be

eligible in funding schemes. Despite the broad funding landscape, bureaucracy and complexity hinder accessibility, and low attendance at workshops highlights a skills gap in navigating funding systems. Workshop participants noted also an "always broke" reputation - a perception that Berlin lacks resources, leading to calls for 'more funding' even though existing schemes are often underutilised.

While programs exist, the lack of strategic vision and coordination limits their impact. Overemphasis on tech-focused funding leaves other areas underserved, and many designers struggle to identify and access the right opportunities. Additionally, support for teachers, mentors, and capacity-building initiatives is insufficient, leaving the system fragmented and underutilised.

Education & Research

Berlin is perceived as Germany's hub for design education and research with highly respected institutions and a vibrant learning environment. However, this ecosystem often operates in a closed "bubble", with limited collaboration across institutions, disciplines, and cities, and insufficient connections to industry. While the city attracts a diverse and talented new generation of design students, graduates face limited career perspectives, as the industry demands seniors while alumni often lack business skills, practical experience and pathways for apprenticeships.

Efforts to establish design as a recognised research discipline are growing, reflecting Berlin's role as an important hub for innovation. Yet, persistent funding gaps and the lack of recognition of design research as a scientific discipline undermine these advancements. The city's education programs offer dynamic opportunities, such as active recruitment events and increasingly intersectional approaches, but invisible outcomes make it harder to demonstrate the tangible impact of design education. Additionally, while

Berlin's educational options are abundant, design is not integrated enough into early education at elementary schools or vocational training.

Design Sector

Berlin's design sector thrives on its diversity and international appeal, attracting a rich talent pool and unique players across disciplines such as UX, digital, and product design. However, while this diversity fosters creativity, the sector struggles with coordination and communication, as designers often work in silos without a unified strategy or strong interconnections. This lack of cohesion hinders effective advocacy and prevents the design sector from leveraging its collective potential.

The city's self-organised and passionate community is a significant strength, with grassroots initiatives leading innovation and providing visibility. Yet, the absence of corporate representation and lighthouse players to showcase design leadership limits the

sector's ability to make a broader impact. Despite being recognised as a UNESCO Design Capital since 2005/06, many ordinary citizens remain unaware of the sector's contributions, and its identity remains fragmented. Questions such as "What does design in Berlin stand for?" persist, reflecting a need for clearer collective goals and shared purpose.

While the sector places a strong emphasis on quality assurance and has tremendous growth potential, challenges in business acumen and funding constrain its progress. Few start-ups have design at their core, and limited resources – both financial and temporal, restrict the ability of designers to pursue ambitious projects beyond day-to-day work. Weak business connections and a restricted local clientele further exacerbate these challenges, creating barriers to expanding the sector's influence both within and beyond Berlin.

Public Sector & Policy

The public sector and policy landscape in Berlin could position the city as a role model for design and policy integration, supported by local and federal initiatives and dedicated individuals within the public sector who champion design integration.

Strong leadership from committed individuals plays a crucial role in driving change and fostering innovation, and young hires bring fresh potential to the sector. Yet,

these promising efforts are often stalled by bureaucratic procedures, including slow, paper-based processes and an overall slow progress with digitalisation.

While Berlin's public sector is "getting there" with the implementation of such initiatives like CityLAB, the awareness of design's potential impact for policy making still remains limited. Stakeholders perceive the decision-making processes are often

untransparent, and the absence of a cohesive long-term vision restricts the sector's ability to plan strategically.

The lack of data and successful examples is a major factor in failing to effectively showcase the value of design. Additionally, design stakeholders feel they lack influence compared to stronger sectors lobbying for competing priorities.





Platforms and Networks

- Creative City Berlin
- Beneficial Design Institute
- Extended Reality Berlin-Brandenburg e.V. (XRBB)
- Fashion Council Germany (FCG)
- Internationales Design Zentrum Berlin (IDZ)
- NEMONA
- Berlin Partner – Creative Industries
- Visit Berlin
- Berlin Design EV

Museums and Galleries

- Futurium
- Buchstabenmuseum
- Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung
- Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstgewerbemuseum)
- Museum der dinge

Berlin Design e.V. – Advocacy for design-focused initiatives.

Conferences, Events, and Festivals

- Berlin Art Week
- Berlin Design Week
- Berlin Fashion Week
- Berlin Letters
- Berlin Science Week
- Circular Futures Festival
- Cradle to Cradle Congress
- Creative Bureaucracy Festival
- Design Connects
- FORWARD Festival
- Festival of Animation
- Green Tech Festival
- HATCH Conference
- HOLUTOPIA
- IFA
- MANIFEST:IO
- New Experimental Research in Design (NERD)
- PICTOPLASMA
- Social Economy Berlin Conference
- Sustainable Economy Summit
- TRANSFORM
- UX Healthcare Berlin
- UXcamp Europe
- WISE
- World Usability Day Berlin
- beyond tellerrand
- republica
- transmediale
- UX Design Awards
- Berlin Biennale
- BDE
- SDD
- Stammtisch
- DDC Salon
- Policy DDT
- Bauhaus stiftung

Media and Campaigns

- PAGE Magazine
- Design made in Germany
- Creative Berlin Blog
- Home
- FLARE

Training, Mentoring, and Networking

- HATCH Conference
- UXcamp Europe
- UX Healthcare Berlin
- Deutscher Werkbund Berlin
- Open Design City
- Betahaus Berlin

Trade Missions and (Inter)national Representation

- German Design Council (Rat für Formgebung) (VDI)
- Verband Deutscher Industrie Designer (VDID)
- Deutscher Designtag (DT)
- Deutscher Design Club (DDC)
- Allianz deutscher Designer (AGD)
- Sender Design Network
- The Institute for Design Research and Appliance (IDRA)
- DSTF based at UdK
- IDZ
- BDG
- IGDN
- AGD

Government agency / City council

- Senate Department for Economic Affairs (SenWEB)
- Senate Chancellery

Public Innovation Foundations and Agencies

- Technologiestiftung / CityLab
- DigitalService des Bundes
- Digitalagentur Berlin | DAB

Policy and Design Labs

- Öffentliches Gestalten – Shaping the Public Sector's Future
- CityLab Berlin (also part of Public Innovation)
- TimeLab
- Spatial Media Lab
- Collaborative Governance Lab (CO:LAB)
- Disruption Network Lab
- Betterplace Lab
- Smart Cities Berlin

- innoBB 2025 (Innovation policy of Berlin and Brandenburg)
- gemeinsamDigital (digital policy for Berlin)
- NEXT

Procurement and Skills Development in Design

- DigitalService des Bundes
- Technologiestiftung
- Kompetenzzentrum für Kultur- und Kreativwirtschaft des Bundes

Events and Advocacy for Public Design Policy

- CityLab Berlin Events
- Disruption Network Lab Conferences
- Creative Bureaucracy Festival
- Berlin Policy Lab Series

Digital Service

- Work for government

Kammern

- Architekten
- BDA
- BDIA
- 40+ in design only

Public Sector & Policy

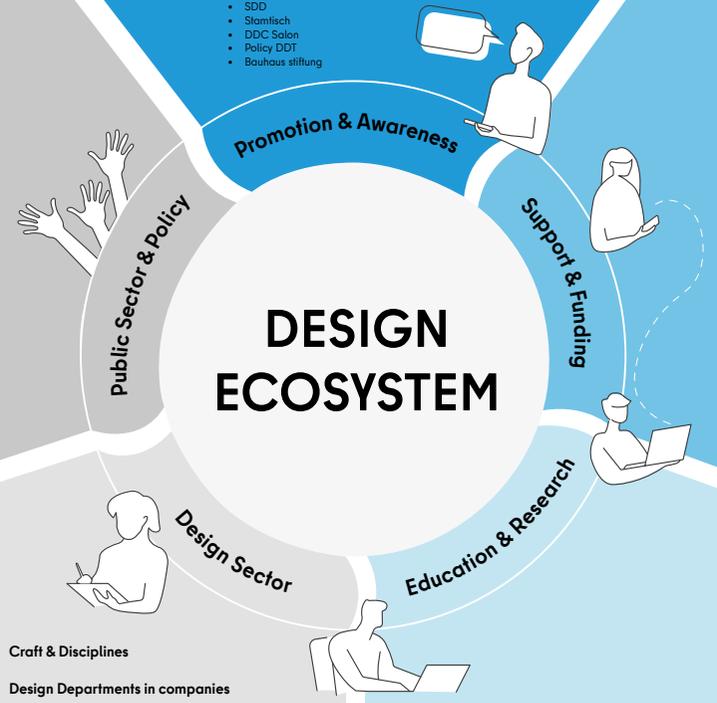
Promotion & Awareness

Support & Funding

DESIGN ECOSYSTEM

Design Sector

Education & Research



Support Organisations, Mentoring and Connecting

- Berlin Partner für Wirtschaft und Technologie – Economic and technology support.
- Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft, Energie und Betriebe (SenWEB) – Policy and financial programs.
- IHK Berlin – Business support, including mentoring and funding advice.
- Kreativ Kultur Berlin – Support for creative industries.
- Kompetenzzentrum Kultur- und Kreativwirtschaft des Bundes – National-level support for creative industries.

Funding

- TransferBONUS Design
- TransferBONUS Gamification
- ProNTI (Program for the promotion of Non-technical Innovations)
- ProFIT – Call for Circular Economy
- Funding Databases: KreativKultur Förderdatenbank BMWK
- Creative Europe
- Horizon Europe
- IBB subcontractors (funding programmes)

Incubators & Accelerators

- Betahaus Berlin
- Factory Berlin
- Avant Now Accelerator fem track (female led start-ups)
- DesignFarm Berlin (discontinued)

Foundations

- iF Design Foundation
- Allianz Foundation

Umweltbundesamt (Bundespreis Eco)

Design Research Labs

- Interdisciplinary research
- Design reasearch lab - UdK
- Open Lab - UdK
- Seen Lab + KHW

Universities and Higher Education Institutions

- Weißensee kunsthochschule berlin (WKH)
- Berlin International University of Applied Sciences (bi)
- Code University of Applied Sciences
- Fachhochschule Potsdam (FHP)
- Freie Universität Berlin (FU)
- German International University (GIU)
- Hasso-Plattner-Institut (HPI)
- Hochschule Macromedia
- Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft (HTW)
- Hochschule für nachhaltige Entwicklung Eberswalde (HNEE)
- Institute of Electronic Business (IEB)
- Internationale Hochschule (IU)
- Media University of Applied Sciences (MU)
- Mediadesign Hochschule für Design und Informatik (mdh)
- SRH Berlin University of Applied Sciences
- Technische Universität Berlin (TU)
- University of Europe for Applied Sciences (UE)
- Universität der Künste (UdK)
- Hertie School - While policy-focused, it integrates design methods in governance and innovation.
- Vocational schools
- BIRD

Research Centers and Institutes

- Matter of Activities
- Fraunhofer IZM
- Fraunhofer CeRRI (Center for Responsible Research and Innovation)
- Berlin Center for Advanced Design Studies (CADS)
- Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society (HIIG)
- Technologiestiftung Berlin
- Helmholtz Zentrum Berlin (HZB)

Academia-Industry Collaboration

- Weißensee kunsthochschule berlin (WKH) + Fraunhofer IZM
- Technische Universität Berlin (TU) + HPI
- Matter of Activities: Research that often partners with local designers.
- HTW Berlin + Berlin Partner
- UdK + Bauhaus Dessau

Craft & Disciplines

Design Departments in companies

- Creative Mornings Berlin
- Ignite Talks
- Plan B 2030
- PLATTE.Berlin
- POPS Berlin - Product Operations Berlin
- Behance Portfolio Reviews Berlin
- Design Jam Berlin

Fashion and Textile-focused Initiatives

- Der Berliner Salon
- ABOUT:FASHION
- PLATTE.Berlin
- Fashion Forward Network
- Fashion Revolution Germany

Typography and Visual Design Communities

- TypeThursday Berlin
- Typostammtisch

Socially Driven and Inclusive Design Communities

- Charla der Vielfalt
- Sozialheld*innen
- Social design club

General Design and Creative Communities

- Artists and Creatives Co-working in Berlin
- Design and Animation (2D/3D) Meetup
- Berlin Product Designers
- Berlin Product Managers
- ABOUT:FASHION
- COSH!
- Fashion Changers
- Fashion Forward Network
- Fashion Revolution Germany
- Floating University
- Ladies that UX Berlin
- Ladies, Wine & Design Berlin
- Led by Design.
- Neue Allianzen
- Community of Makers
- ODC
- Dauhaus stiftung

Service Design and User Experience

- IxDA Berlin
- Friends of Figma
- Service Design Drinks Berlin
- SDN Berlin

Speculative and Future-focused Design

- Conjectural Futures Network
- Driving the Human
- Speculative Futures Berlin

Design Thinking and Operations

- Global Design Thinking Alliance
- DesignOps Assembly
- Design Thinking Berlin

Intersections of Art, Technology, and Design

- Art Laboratory Berlin (ALB)
- New Practice in Art and Technology
- EDGE neuroscience & art
- Light Art Space (LAS)
- Haus der Materialisierung
- Haus der Statistik

Gaming and Virtual Reality

- BerlinGameScene
- Game Collective
- Games Capital Berlin
- VRBLN

Sustainability and Circular Economy

- Cradle to Cradle (C2C)
- Circular Together
- CIRCE



Global reputation

- Berlin is an International Node, recognised as a city with a strong creative image and brand.

Community and networking

- Community-driven with many meet-ups, networking events, and easy-to-start communities.
- Strong internal cross-promotion across disciplines.

Diversity and passion

- Diverse and multicultural environment.
- Individuals show strong passion and self-driven creativity.

Interdisciplinary connectivity

- Design connects industries, with strong players across all disciplines.

Self-success and energy

- Positive stories of self-success and resourceful creativity.
- Vibrant club culture and public creative energy.

Diverse options

- Many options for support and funding exist.
- Federal-level initiatives provide resources and opportunities.

Guidance and advice

- Plenty of good advice is available from various institutions.
- Strong consultancy options exist (though solutions don't always fit).

Skills development

- Job office opportunities support study and reskilling.
- Informal education and bootcamps contribute to skills growth.

Networking

- Strong networking opportunities enhance access to support and funding.

Germany's hub for design education & research

- Berlin is recognized as a key hub for design research, with growing efforts to establish design as a formal research discipline. The city boasts well-respected educational institutions and a vibrant learning environment, supported by a wide range of educational options.

Attractive for future talent

- Strong draw for new generations of design students.
- High diversity in design studies and programs.

Dynamic opportunities

- Active design recruitment events support talent pipelines, highlighting Berlin's potential for growth and innovation. Education and research are increasingly intersectional, fostering collaboration and new ideas.

Diversity of talent

- Berlin boasts a variety of disciplines, players, and approaches, with a unique and diverse talent pool. The city attracts global talent, drawing new creatives and designers from around the world.

Self-Organisation & networking

- Berlin's design community is highly self-organized and driven by passion, with a strong networking culture where designers are well-connected. Active grassroots lighthouses lead innovation and increase visibility.

Established reputation

- Recognized as a UNESCO Design Capital since 2005.
- Strong UX, digital, and product design scenes.

Quality and potential

- Emphasis on quality assurance in the sector.
- Strong potential for further growth and development.

Berlin as a role model

- Seen as a role model for other cities in terms of design and policy integration.

Support and dedication

- Both federally and locally supported initiatives.
- SenWEB (Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft, Energie und Betriebe) has dedicated CI people, fostering a strong commitment to design integration.

Potential for growth

- Young hires bring potential but are frustrated by current inefficiencies.
- The public sector is "getting there", showing promise for future improvements.

Leadership

- Strong leadership from individuals [like Alina & Julia] who play a key role in driving change.

Promotion & Awareness

Fragmentation and misalignment

- Berlin's design ecosystem is fragmented and disorganized, making it hard to track initiatives and events. There's no clear strategy to support creativity.

Lack of leadership

- There is a lack of design leadership, limited collaboration, and weak connections between industry and politics, with poor design advocacy.

Limited public awareness/understanding

- The public doesn't understand design's value or its broader impact, and its definition and value beyond the discipline are unclear.

Focus and perception issues

- Berlin's design scene is mainly focused on fashion and interior design, overshadowing other areas. The term "creative" is often seen as artsy or playful, limiting how design is understood.

Resource gaps

- There are not enough resources, no main event to anchor the ecosystem, and a lack of professionalism and advocacy to raise design awareness.

Insular communication

- Designers mainly communicate within their own community, not with the broader public. Berlin's strong design image exists on its own, despite political support.

Transparency

- There is a lack of transparency in initiatives, and the design lobby is weak or nonexistent.

Support & Funding

Gaps in support

- Funding mainly goes to finished ideas, with less support for unconventional projects. Freelancers and solo entrepreneurs get less funding than commissioned work.

Structural issues in support

- Bureaucracy makes accessing funding difficult, and the complex landscape makes it hard to find funding and mentoring programs. There is also a lack of unified funding strategies.

Biases and limitations

- There is too much focus on tech-based funding, low awareness of available funding options, and a tradition of self-exploitation in creative industries.

Lack of strategic vision for support

- There is a lack of long-term, strategic thinking for funding and no coordinated strategy for funding initiatives.

Systemic constraints

- Berlin's image of being 'always broke' affects funding opportunities, and limited funding doesn't reach stakeholders effectively. There isn't enough funding to meet the city's needs.

Skills and knowledge gaps

- There's not enough focus on helping people navigate funding systems, and there's limited support for teachers and mentors.

Education & Research

Limited collaboration in education

- Missing exchange & collaboration across institutions and disciplines.
- Limited cross-city collaboration opportunities.
- Education operates in a closed "bubble", isolating it from industry and other sectors.

Funding and recognition issues

- Persistent missing funding for design education and research.
- Design research is still not recognized as a scientific discipline.

Gaps in practical training

- Limited career perspectives for graduates.
- Alumni are juniors, but the industry demands seniors - not enough pathways for job experience and apprenticeships.

Insufficient early design education

- Design is not present enough in elementary schools and vocational education.

Mindset and impact

- Need for a stronger learning mindset to encourage innovation.
- Design education struggles with invisible outcomes, making its impact harder to demonstrate.

Design Sector

Business acumen and funding challenges

- There's a lack of economic and funding skills in the sector, limited resources for projects beyond core work, and few ambitious design-focused start-ups. The private sector is also underrepresented.

Coordination and communication

- Poor communication and coordination within the design sector.
- Not interconnected - designers work in silos rather than collaboratively.

Visibility and representation

- There's a lack of corporate representation and design leaders. Despite lots of activity, the public is unaware, and it's hard to see the sector's impact, limiting advocacy.

Clientele and connections

- Clientele is limited within Berlin, restricting growth opportunities.
- Weak business connections and broader industry ties.

Identity and purpose

- It's unclear what design in Berlin stands for. Focus on individuality limits progress, and design is seen as disconnected from community needs.

Public Sector & Policy

Inward focus and limited exposure

- Possibly too local/Berlin-focused, limiting broader impact.
- Lack of exposure and access to funding for initiatives outside of Berlin.

Integration challenges

- There is difficulty integrating industry and politics, with design not being long-term integrated at a structural level. There is also resistance to change and a lack of awareness about design's potential impact on policy.

Communication and transparency issues

- Decision-making processes are cliquey and opaque, with design's value not showcased in public media or policymaking. There's limited transparency and collaboration in the public sector, and lobbying negatively influences policy and priorities.

Operational and bureaucratic challenges

- Slow bureaucracy, with paper-based processes hindering digitalisation.
- Lack of data to support design-related policies.
- Slow progress in implementing policies.

Missing long-term vision

- Corporates aren't involved, there's no long-term growth plan, some areas lack professionalism, and it's difficult to keep creative talent and spaces in the city.

ENVISIONING THE FUTURE DESIGN ECOSYSTEM

During the workshop, participants engaged in a visioning exercise to imagine the future of Berlin's design ecosystem over the next 2, 5, 10, and 15 years. This exercise produced a broad spectrum of ideas for the 'ideal state', highlighting aspirations for Berlin to evolve into a globally recognised and well-integrated hub for design. A recurring theme was the need to build on Berlin's UNESCO City of Design designation, leveraging it as a central framework to coordinate and amplify efforts across the ecosystem.

Participants advocated for the establishment of a dedicated UNESCO CoD office, which would act as an agile and independent entity, although initiated and overseen by public administration, largely free from administrative constraints. This office would play a critical role in implementing key initiatives such as the branding of Berlin as "Designed in Berlin," creating flagship awards, appointing ambassadors, and enhancing the global

visibility of Berlin's design achievements. By serving as a coordination hub, this office would align stakeholders, foster collaboration, and ensure the city's design efforts are cohesive and impactful.

The visions also highlighted the importance of cross-sector integration, sustainable funding systems, education reforms, and public sector innovation as recurring paths toward success.



Vision for Berlin's Design Ecosystem in **Two Years**

Global Recognition and Identity:

Berlin retains its UNESCO Design City status, with the establishment of a UNESCO CoD Office to coordinate efforts, drive initiatives, and enhance the city's global reputation. The city develops a proud and unified design identity, celebrated through high-profile events like the Berlin Design Awards and an internationally recognised design event.

Enhanced Funding and Support:

Transparent, goal-oriented funding systems support community-driven initiatives, B2B matchmaking, and strategic events, with increased adoption of design innovation programs like TransferBONUS Design. Funding workshops and clearer processes improve access and participation.



Education and Research Excellence:

Pilot programs integrate service design into schools, supported by benchmarking policies from other cities. A comprehensive study of the design sector and its broad impact establishes clear KPIs to measure Berlin's design footprint and inform strategic planning.

Strengthened Design Sector:

The sector develops common values and aligns with business to foster mutual growth, supported by standardised tracking of contributions such as job creation, tax impact, and innovation metrics.



Innovative Public Services and Strategic Vision:

A strategic design plan and roadmap for digital public services are implemented, led by Chief Design Officers and supported by the UNESCO CoD Office. This is complemented by monthly workshops to enhance collaboration, and innovative regulations are introduced to reward creativity and foster systemic change.



Vision for Berlin's Design Ecosystem in Five Years

Global Recognition and Visibility:

Berlin's UNESCO City of Design status is prominently visible through public space - "design cathedral" a statement of commitment to good design, as well as major international events, and flagship initiatives such as public pavilions and design awards.

Enhanced Support and Coordination:

Establishment of a Berlin Design Council and Design Centre to provide mentorship, coordination, and networking. A design hub and maker space supports innovation, and funding structures are well-aligned with market and industry needs.

Education and Research Leadership:

Design education is accessible and structured, with initiatives like aDesign MBA and a dedicated design education department. Events such as design research festivals foster collaboration and showcase ideas.

Empowered Design Sector:

A strong design advocacy positions designers as leaders, disseminating their value. Enhanced international recognition and lighthouse projects solidify Berlin's role as a global design leader.

Public Sector Integration:

Chief Design Officers lead public organisations, implementing co-created public service roadmaps and fostering collaboration with private sectors. Big data systems track design's impact and contributions, supporting informed decision-making at city, regional, and EU levels.



Vision for Berlin's Design Ecosystem in **Ten Years**

Global Design Identity:

Berlin's design identity, "The Berlin Dream," radiates globally, supported by the widely recognised "Designed in Berlin" label.

Thriving Job Market and Economic Contributions:

A 50% reduction in precarious design jobs and a 50% increase in design-related jobs reflect Berlin's commitment to improving design's contribution to GDP, value creation, and efficiency.

Innovative Education and Knowledge Building:

Cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary design education fosters innovation, with a strong focus on entrepreneurial and economic knowledge to equip designers for evolving industry demands.

Empowered and Organised Design Sector:

The sector achieves synergy with business, defined quality standards, and global leadership. A professional design lobby and the growth of a Berlin Design Union ensure strong representation and advocacy.

Inclusive and Citizen-Centric Public Services:

Public services are co-created with citizens for relevance and inclusivity, supported by external design consultants and a public voting system to determine funding priorities for design projects.



Vision for Berlin's Design Ecosystem in **Fifteen Years**

Global Design Leadership:

Berlin is firmly established as the German Design Capital and an international design hub, celebrated worldwide for its excellence, specialization, and thriving design tourism. High design literacy among citizens, companies, and administrations fosters widespread understanding and pride in design's value.

Integrated Education and Research:

Design education begins in primary schools, integrating design thinking from an early age. Strong connections between business and education ensure alignment with industry needs, while Berlin leads in developing new design disciplines to address societal and environmental trends.

Vibrant and Accessible Design Sector:

Berlin becomes a highly accessible hub for global design talent, balancing digital and analogue practices. The underground design scene thrives, driving innovation and experimentation, and design roles in industry are well-defined, respected, and integrated.

Design-Driven Public Sector:

Urban planning and public services exemplify design best practices, with design integral to infrastructure, buildings, and politics. Co-designed services effectively meet citizen needs, supporting democracy and enabling people- and planet-centred solutions.

Future-Focused Innovation:

The Berlin mindset becomes a global model for innovation, collaboration, and inclusion. Designers adapt to evolving demands, leading in human-eco-friendly design and shaping future job profiles and disciplines.



IMAGINE THE DESIGN ECOSYSTEM IN 2 YEARS...

Promotion & Awareness

1. UNESCO Design City title retained and celebrated.
2. Berlin is recognised globally as a thriving design capital.
3. Creation of a proud and unified Berlin design identity, moving from "Me" to "We".
4. Clear representation of Berlin's design scene through shared values, coordinated efforts, and networks of design leaders.
5. Berlin has an internationally recognised event.
6. Establishment of Berlin Design Awards, fee-free and inclusive.
7. Increased outreach to design organisations, emphasising design's value and role.
8. Regular publication of the Berlin Design Digest and trend report.
9. Development of Berlin representatives to act as design ambassadors.
10. Integration of design-related questions into Berlin's naturalization tests to promote public awareness.

Funding & Support

1. Goal-oriented funding systems, with less restrictive categories.
2. Increased take-up of design-innovation programmes such as TransferBONUS Design.
3. Increased transparency in funding processes and their creation.
4. Support for community-run design events and B2B matchmaking formats.
5. Introduction of lobby financing to advocate for design interests.
6. Basic funding structures for strategic initiatives and design events.
7. Funding workshops by funders to provide clarity and guidance.

Education & Research

1. Comprehensive mapping of design policies from other cities for benchmarking.
2. Establishment of KPIs and clear metrics to measure Berlin's design footprint.
3. Regular case study research to capture learnings and success stories.
4. Initiation of pilot programs to integrate service design methods in schools.

Design Sector

1. Creation of common values and shared standards for the design sector.
2. Stronger alignment between business and design, fostering mutual growth.
3. Standardized tracking of the design sector's contributions, such as job creation and tax impact.

Public Sector & Policy

1. Development of a strategic design plan with defined goals and actions.
2. Creation of a roadmap for digital public services, supported by labs and citizen engagement.
3. Implementation of innovative regulations to reward creativity and innovation.
4. A vision for Berlin's design ecosystem is being prepared, led by strategic actors such as Chief Design Officers (CDOs).
5. Support for pilots in public services, such as service design integration in schools.
6. Monthly workshops to foster networking and collaboration within the ecosystem.

IMAGINE THE DESIGN ECOSYSTEM IN 5 YEARS...

Promotion & Awareness

1. UNESCO City of Design is highly visible in public spaces and celebrated through major international events.
2. Berlin Design Identity: "Made in Germany, Designed in Berlin," with clear design deliverables and a strong PR strategy.
3. Success stories of Berlin's design scene are widely collected and shared.
4. Collaborative, cross-disciplinary international signature events gain global attention.
5. Clear understanding and awareness of design's economic value and contributions.
6. Rent-free meetups and public pavilions provide spaces for design-focused interaction and exposure.
7. Flagship awards with prize money recognize and promote excellence (broad social and environmental good) in design.

Funding & Support

1. Funding structures are well-recognised and evolve with market/industry needs.
2. Available budget reflect the economic importance of design to the city.
3. Creation of a design hub and maker space to support the sector.
4. Establishment of Berlin Design Council and Design Centre for coordination and mentorship.
5. Mentorship and learning opportunities strengthened by expert reviews acting as "door openers."

Education & Research

1. Design education opportunities are accessible and well-structured, including a free Design MBA program.

2. Founding of a dedicated design education department to drive clarity and focus in the sector.
3. Establishment of design research festivals to showcase and exchange ideas.
4. Increased collaboration between design and education for better integration and career pathways.

Design Sector

1. Strong design lobby: Designers actively advocating for their value, moving from contributors to leaders.
2. Cross-disciplinary design transfer supports collaboration and innovation.
3. Clear design circles and communities foster recognition and alignment.
4. Enhanced international recognition and easier relocation for global talent.
5. Lighthouse projects and flagship initiatives define Berlin's role in the design world.

Public Sector & Policy

1. CDOs (Chief Design Officers) established in public organisations'
2. Defined public service roadmaps co-created with the design community.
3. Public organisations actively reach out to private sectors, fostering collaboration.
4. Development of design-friendly regulations and policies.
5. Big data on the design ecosystem, including a directory of players and their contributions, to inform decisions and highlight Berlin's impact at city, regional, and EU levels.
6. Alignment with German Classification of Economic Activities (WZ-Klassen) to formalize and support design-related industries.

IMAGINE THE DESIGN ECOSYSTEM IN 10 YEARS...

Promotion & Awareness

1. Berlin's design identity, "The Berlin Dream," radiates globally.
2. Label "Designed in Berlin" is fully rolled out and widely recognized.
3. Creation of a Berlin Design Museum to showcase the city's design achievements.
4. Results of Berlin's design efforts and impact are publicised regularly, reinforcing its global reputation.

Funding & Support

1. Reduction of precarious design jobs by 50%, with a 50% increase in design-related jobs in Berlin.
2. Funding structures reflect the city's commitment to improving design's contribution to GDP, value creation, and efficiency.

Education & Research

1. Integration of cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary design education, enabling broader innovation.
2. Strong focus on entrepreneurial and economic knowledge in design education.

Design Sector

1. Enhanced synergy between business and design, strengthening economic contributions.
2. Quality attributes of Berlin's design sector are clearly defined and upheld, positioning it as a global leader.
3. A professional and powerful design lobby exists, matching the economic significance of the sector.
4. Berlin "Design Union" grows to 1,000,000,000 members, providing strong representation.

Public Sector & Policy

1. Public services are co-created with citizens, ensuring inclusivity and relevance.
2. External design consultants improve public services, ensuring high-quality outcomes.
3. Introduction of a public voting system to determine funding priorities for design projects.

IMAGINE THE DESIGN ECOSYSTEM IN 15 YEARS...

Promotion & Awareness

1. Berlin is firmly established as the German Design Capital and an international design hub, known worldwide as a City of Design.
2. Design tourism thrives, attracting creative minds and showcasing the city as a design destination.
3. The Berlin Design brand is globally recognised, with "Design in Berlin" reflecting specialisation and excellence.
4. Berliners are proud of their design heritage, fostering a sense of ownership and celebration of design.
5. High "design literacy" exists among citizens, companies, and administrations, with widespread understanding of design's value.

Funding & Support

1. Structural implementation of design at all levels of governance and infrastructure, with robust systems supporting its growth.

Education & Research

1. Design education begins in primary schools, integrating design thinking from an early age.
2. Strong connections between business and education ensure alignment with industry needs.
3. Berlin leads in researching and developing new design disciplines, reflecting future trends and societal needs.

Design Sector

1. Berlin has become a highly accessible and international hub for design talent and innovation.
2. Design roles in industry are well-defined and respected, and industry actively integrates design into its operations.
3. The underground design scene thrives, ensuring innovation and experimentation.
4. A balance between digital and analogue design practices enriches the sector.

Public Sector & Policy

1. Urban planning and public services exemplify design best practices, with design integrated into new infrastructure and buildings.
2. Design is integral to politics, with services designed to meet citizen needs effectively and efficiently.
3. Design supports democracy, contributing to people- and planet-centred solutions.

Future Focus

1. The Berlin mindset emerges as a model for innovation, collaboration and inclusion in design.
2. Berlin pioneers human-eco-friendly design, balancing environmental and societal impact.
3. Designers adapt to evolving demands, shaping future job profiles and disciplines.

DEVELOPING DESIGN ACTIONS

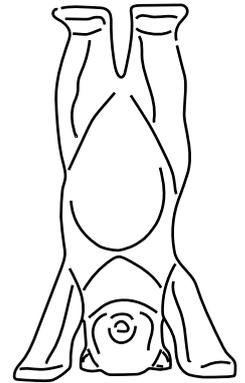
Having analysed the strengths and weaknesses of Berlin's design ecosystem and envisioned its future, workshop participants collaborated to develop practical and actionable proposals for improvement. These proposals are designed to build on existing strengths, address current challenges, and create a thriving environment for innovation, collaboration, and creativity.

Central to the proposed actions is the establishment of a UNESCO City of Design office to coordinate efforts, streamline initiatives, and drive the revitalization of Berlin's UNESCO designation. This office would serve as a focal point for implementing key initiatives, including enhancing the city's global visibility, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and ensuring Berlin's design ecosystem remains agile and forward-looking.

The proposed actions span all ecosystem categories to address the ecosystem's diverse needs. Designed for implementation within the

next two to three years, the action plan is flexible and can be refined with input from a broader group of stakeholders to adapt to emerging

challenges and opportunities, ensuring Berlin's design ecosystem is resilient and sustainable in the long term.



Main Actions for the Short Term

Leverage the UNESCO City of Design Status:

Berlin's UNESCO City of Design designation offers a powerful platform to coordinate and amplify efforts across the design ecosystem. Establishing a dedicated UNESCO CoD Office would create an active environment to drive and coordinate key initiatives while serving as a hub for collaboration among stakeholders.

Define Berlin's Design Identity:

Host a series of workshops to define what design means to Berlin, building on the UNESCO City of Design designation and defining Berlin's unique selling proposition in design to establish shared values and priorities for the design ecosystem.



Explore Leadership through a Chief Design Officer:

Evaluate the feasibility of appointing a Chief Design Officer to provide strategic leadership, integrate design into decision-making processes, and foster cross-sector collaboration.

Perform a Study on Design's Impact:

Conduct a study on the economic, social, and environmental impact of design on companies in Berlin, supported by a series of case studies that showcase successful design-driven initiatives.

Map International Design Policies and Practices:

Review design policies from other countries and UNESCO Cities of Design, identifying good practices and exploring their viability and applicability in Berlin's context.

Demonstrate Design for Policy Innovation:

Implement a series of design for policy demonstrators to address priority policy challenges in Berlin. These initiatives should include training programs for public officials in design for policy to build capacity and drive innovation.

Position Berlin as a Design Destination:

Collaborate with tourism and business development authorities to position Berlin as a premier global design destination, promoting its unique identity and attracting talent, visitors, and investment.

Raise Awareness of Design in Berlin:

Support high-profile activities, such as "What Design Can Do," alongside hosting a flagship event unique to Berlin - on the scale of the Venice Biennale, to elevate the city's design profile.

Potential Actions for the Long Term

In the long term, Berlin's design ecosystem should be anchored by the establishment of a dedicated physical space – such as a Design Pavilion, Design Centre, Design Hub or “Design Cathedral” as referred to by the workshop participant. That space would serve as a statement of the city's commitment to design. This space would act as a central hub for dissemination, collaboration, innovation, and the celebration of design as a core value of Berlin's identity. To further strengthen the ecosystem, the city must advocate for a clear and authoritative mandate for design, positioning it as a critical element of Berlin's

development and ensuring sustained government support for projects aligned with the UNESCO City of Design designation.

Sustainable funding mechanisms are essential for the sector's growth. Berlin should identify potential sponsor institutions and funding partners, explore new fundraising approaches, and co-create strategic funding goals and processes that meet the needs of both businesses and education. Long-term investment in education and future skills is also key, with the introduction of fellowship programs and initiatives to prepare the next generation

of design professionals for emerging opportunities and challenges.

A problem-solver platform could be developed to connect real-world challenges with designers and other innovators, fostering solutions that address societal and environmental needs. By building an alliance between administration, schools, companies, and initiatives, Berlin can create a thriving design community capable of driving sustainable growth, reinforcing its global reputation, and ensuring the design ecosystem's resilience and impact for generations to come.



SHORTER-TERM

HIGHER PRIORITY

- 1. Create a comprehensive Berlin Design Strategy**
 - Develop a unified design strategy that empowers Berlin's design sector while fostering cross-sector collaboration by integrating politics, economy, and industry authority, with clearly defined stakeholders and target groups.
- 2. Define what Design means to Berlin**
 - Establish a cross-disciplinary group to define Berlin's unique design identity, promote ambassadors, and position design as a driver of growth and sustainability, aligning storytelling with political and economic agendas while uniting stakeholders around shared goals.
- 3. Raise awareness of Design in Berlin**
 - Elevate Berlin's design profile through high-profile events, a flagship festival, and a dedicated communication platform, while promoting best practices, branding initiatives, and data-driven insights on design's economic impact.
- 4. Guide Design by Berlin's example**
 - Establish Berlin as a model city for design, showcasing its best practices as a template for others.
- 5. Leverage the UNESCO City of Design status**
 - Leverage Berlin's UNESCO City of Design status through research, workshops, and a dedicated office to coordinate initiatives and reinforce Berlin's global leadership in design.

LONGER-TERM

- 1. Establish a strong mandate for Design**
 - Advocate for a clear, authoritative mandate to prioritise design as a critical element of Berlin's development.
- 2. Create a flourishing Design Community**
 - Create a dedicated design hub to foster collaboration, secure government support for UNESCO City of Design initiatives, and build an alliance between administration, education, and industry to strengthen Berlin's design community.
- 3. Develop sustainable funding mechanisms**
 - Establish sustainable funding for design initiatives by identifying sponsors, implementing effective fundraising mechanisms, and streamlining application processes for accessibility and transparency.
- 4. Problem-Solver Platform**
 - Develop and mature a platform that connects problems with designers and other solvers, facilitating innovation and real-world impact.

LOWER PRIORITY

- 1. Raise awareness of Design in Berlin**
 - Promote design's role in Berlin's identity and economy through a marketing campaign, increased presence in business fairs, and a best-practices map highlighting successful design projects.
- 2. Initiate public sector engagement**
 - Collaborate with City Lab to pilot public service improvements and conduct needs mapping to identify design opportunities.
- 3. Facilitate co-creation and pilot education projects**
 - Support local co-creation initiatives to foster collaboration and engage with pilot schools and organizations like SDN to drive design-led education projects and expand their impact.

IMPRINT

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