

## **Developing the Creative and Cultural Industries Through Cross Border Collaboration between South Africa and France, presented by Tshimologong Digital Content Hub**

The South African Cultural and Creative Industries Cluster, the Digital Content Hub (DCH), is in Paris to meet its partners and present its development plan at the Expertise France headquarters in the 5th arrondissement.

Founded by Wits University's Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct in partnership with the **Agence Française de Développement (AFD)**, the **French Institute in South Africa (IFAS)**, DCH is proof of the dynamism and renewal of exchange between the African continent and France in the ICC sectors. AFD invested EUR 950,000 to launch the DCH in 2018 and due to its success, extended it to a further EUR 450,000 in 2022. The total funding raised in addition to AFD development funds is 1,15 million Euros to date.

The collaboration between French and South African partners provides a model of best practice on excellence that can be achieved with inclusive growth for the Pan-African digital creative industries by providing a series of skills and entrepreneurship development programming designed for the sector. Digital creatives in animation, video gaming, music, digital arts and immersive technologies like XR (VR and AR) also benefit from Tshimologong's larger digital innovation ecosystem of public and private partnerships committed to growing entrepreneurs.

From inception, the hub has partnered with a blend of global and French expertise, taking digital creatives on a journey from skills development, refining their production skills to building a business around their project and creating access to market opportunities through relevant intermediary linkages and showcasing their work at international festivals in their sector. Various partners with key players in the French CCI and French international cooperation networks have collaborated with DCH, including Gobelins, INA, SACEM, FOCUS, the Annecy Festival, CICLIC, New Images, Pictanovo, ARTE, etc. Our partners provide either finance or expertise and ensure that the talent is developed to a world class standard.

For **Aurélien Lechevallier**, Director General of Globalisation, Culture, Education and Development at the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs:

"The potential of the creative sectors on the African continent is immense and the structuring of the cultural and creative industries ecosystems must be accelerated in order to accompany the growth of African CCIs on the international level. Based on a public/private partnership, the Digital Content Hub project is a response to these challenges and an example of innovative cooperation carried out primarily by the African partners, with France as a supporter. This project allows us to explore new forms of cooperation between Africa and France by collectively aiming for excellence, diversity and innovation."

Digital Content Hub also attracts major public and private institutions in Africa, including Telkom, META, Gauteng Film Commission and the National Film and Video Foundation in South Africa. With an investment of more than 500,000 euros in South Africa in 2022 alone, the cluster has proven the relevance of its development model: analysing market needs and development opportunities and proposing tailor-made programmes to meet them by joining forces with professional partners at the cutting edge of their field.

For **Virginie Leroy**, Deputy Director of the Sustainable Development Solutions Department at AFD:

"We can say today that our gamble has paid off in terms of the major achievements and impacts visibly over the last four years. Among these successes, we can mention the graduation of the wonderful Mollo animation academy, in partnership with the Gobelins school of animation, the

superb innovations of the annual Innovation Festival, the mentoring residencies that the winners of the Digital Lab Africa competition in France have been able to carry out, and the magnificent artistic animated shorts that you can see again. "

The cluster currently comprises 4 departments:

1. Mollo Animation Academy and Studio is a 12 month 2D animation programme that offers internationally accredited training in collaboration with Gobelins, Ecole de l'Image.
2. Tshimologong Video Game Hub is a 9 month incubation programme that provides entrepreneurial and technical skills to young black SMMEs in South Africa. This programme is supported by the Wits School of Arts and Telkom.
3. Digital Lab Africa is a pan-African incubator for emerging talent with 50 participants in the South Saharan region. The programme is supported by expertise and funders in the African and French region.
4. Fak'ugesi Digital Innovation Festival is the recipient of the 2022 Business and Arts South Africa (BASA) Chairperson's Award and will be celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2023. The festival provides a platform for African Digital Creatives to showcase, pitch their work and network with industry peers and decision makers across the digital sector.

DCH will be presenting its impact analysis report and future strategic plans performance indicators 5 year strategy. The strategic focus will be geared towards developing a sustainable financial model, presenting opportunities for investment as well as future developments, including the creation of a development fund for digital creatives in animation and video gaming, and developing the XR (AR and VR) sector and how these immersive technologies can be applied to cultural preservation and heritage.

**Lesley Donna Williams**, CEO of Tshimologong Precinct says, "There is a wealth of digital creative talent across Africa who often go unseen and exit the sector. Digital Content Hub creates the platform for them to be identified, get the necessary refinement of skills and give them deserving exposure to get their work into the market. This can only happen through critical partnerships that see the value of African digital content and are committed to advancing inclusive growth of the sector. We started this journey with AFD and IFAS, and now extend an invitation for further collaborations to scale our solutions, extending the impact we wish to create."

With a 100% placement rate for its animation students, the visibility of its alumni on international markets that is growing rapidly; the hub is at a turning point where it needs to perpetuate its model and financial structure with France, based on a common interest, shared expertise and complementarity needs to be reinforced and diversified. It is on this basis that Tshimologong wishes to exchange with its current and future French partners.

The presentation will be moderated by **Liz Gomis**, Préfiguratrice Maison des Mondes Africains alongside 3 representatives of the project's key partners: **Aurélien Lechevallier**, Director General of Globalization, Culture, Education and Development at the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, **Virginie Leroy**, Deputy executive director - Human development & Social progress of AFD, and **Nthabiseng Makuwa**, Minister Plenipotentiary, South African Embassy in France.

**Lesley Donna Williams**, CEO of Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct will present the strategy of the cluster and together with **Joy Mawela** - Head of the Digital Content Hub and **Erika Denis** - ICC Consultant at Tshimologong. **Bokang Koatja**, **Feben Elias**, **Razakh Issaka** and **Lwazi Msipha** alumni of DCH programmes will be in attendance to share their experience.

A South African delegation of public and private partners of the Hub will also be present.

Links :

Tshimologong - Digital Innovation Precinct

Fakugesi 2022

Digital Lab Africa