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Design Policy Mapping in Europe

The following content is drawn from the “Design Policy Mapping in Europe” report. Access and download the complete report using the link:

https://madres.beda.org/en/publications/design-policy-mapping-in-europe/

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Sep 2025

Country Profile: United Kingdom

Country Size: 244,381 sq km
Citizens: 69,281,400 (2024) | Tendency: rising
GDP per Capita: 52,636.80 $ (2024) | Tendency: rising
EU Innovation Scoreboard: Innovation Leader (2025) | 142,1%
BEDA Member Organisations: Design Business Association (DBA), PDR - International Centre for Design & Research, UK Desing Council

Dedicated design policy status

No standalone national design policy has been adopted. However, the UK has a strong tradition of design-focused initiatives, including the *Innovate UK Design in Innovation Strategy (2020–2024)* and sectoral programs under the Creative Industries agenda.

Design in other policy agendas

- **CCI Strategy** – The *Creative Industries Sector Plan (2025)* places significant emphasis on design. It includes actions such as reviewing the design curriculum, attracting design talent and investing in initiatives like the British Fashion Council's NEWGEN program and the World Design Congress 2025. The plan highlights design's role in sustainability, the net-zero transition and consumer behaviour change, supported by investments such as UKRI's £15 million the Future Observatory: Design the Green Transition. It also promotes international trade through delegations and business exchanges focused on sustainable design. [Championed]
- **Innovation Strategy** – The *UK Innovation Strategy: Leading the Future by Creating It (2021)* dedicates an entire chapter to the value of design, stating: *"Design is core to successful innovation."* It recognizes design as integral to the innovation system and includes case studies showcasing its impact. Between 2020–2024, the **Innovate UK Design in Innovation Strategy** aimed to embed human-centred design in innovation processes, improve SME competitiveness, and maximize value from design investments. [Championed]
- **Industrial / Development Strategy** – The UK's industrial policy references design in the context of attracting talent and supporting advanced sectors such as semiconductors and shipbuilding. The Creative Industries Sector Plan, linked to industrial strategy, reinforces design as a growth driver for exports and green innovation. [Mentioned]

ADDRESS

c/o BEDA The Bureau of European Design Associations c/o Wallonie-Bruxelles Design Mode (WBDM) - AWEX, Place Sainctelette 2, 1080 Brussels, Belgium | www.madres.beda.org

ACCOUNT DETAILS

The Bureau of European Design Associations | BNP Paribas Fortis
IBAN: BE97 0019 8615 7549
BIC: GEBABEBB

CONTACT

office@beda.org

REGISTRIES

RPM: Bruxelles
Union des Associations Internationales Org ID: BE 0844.127.553
Transparency Registry Number: 71 028 143 474-84

- → **Circular Economy Strategy** – No formal national circular economy policy yet, though sectoral initiatives such as the *Design for Life Roadmap* for medical technology promote circular design principles.
- → **Digital Strategy** – The *UK Digital Strategy* (2022) promotes digital design education and apprenticeships, while the *Digital Development Strategy 2024–2030* highlights human-centred design for public services, AI processes, and digital democracy, alongside safety-by-design principles. The Government Digital Service also provides national design principles and a design system for digital delivery. [Championed]
- → **Architecture Strategy** – No dedicated architecture strategy identified.
- → **Design for Scotland** – in 2024 V&A Dundee led a programme exploring how to develop a strategic and focussed approach to supporting design nationally, concluded with a recommendations report.

Observations

The UK demonstrates one of the most advanced and institutionalized approaches to design integration, particularly through its innovation and creative industries strategies. The explicit recognition of design as “core to successful innovation” and substantial investments in design-driven sustainability initiatives underscore its strategic importance. While the absence of a unified design policy leaves efforts somewhat dispersed, the combination of strong sectoral programs, export promotion and green transition measures positions the UK as a global leader in leveraging design for economic growth, innovation and climate goals.

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