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CRAFTS+ Toolkit

Policy Recommendation Paper for
Enhancing the Ceramic Crafts Sector

New educational prospects for adult learners
in crafts' sector

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Introduction

The ceramic crafts industry holds significant cultural, economic, and social value in both Greece and North Macedonia. Rooted in ancient traditions and rich histories, ceramic crafts are not only a form of artistic expression but also a vital part of the heritage and identity of these nations. Despite the inherent potential and beauty of ceramic crafts, artisans in both countries face numerous challenges in transforming their craft into sustainable micro-businesses. To address these challenges, policymakers must develop and implement strategies that enhance market access, foster innovation and modernization, promote education and skills training, and encourage sustainability and environmental practices.

Objectives

1. Promote economic growth and employment within the sector.
2. Encourage innovation and adaptation to modern market demands.
3. Enhance education and skills training for artisans.
4. Foster sustainable and environmentally friendly practices.

Economic Importance of Ceramic Crafts

Ceramic crafts contribute to the economies of Greece and North Macedonia by generating employment, stimulating tourism, and fostering local entrepreneurship. In Greece, the ceramics sector is intertwined with the country's tourism industry, which attracts millions of visitors annually. Tourists seek authentic and traditional products, making ceramics an appealing purchase that supports local artisans. Similarly, in North Macedonia, ceramic crafts are an integral part of the local culture and economy, with many artisans relying on the sale of their products to sustain their livelihoods.

Current Challenges

Despite their cultural and economic importance, ceramic artisans in Greece and North Macedonia face several challenges. Limited access to markets, both local and international, hinders their ability to reach a broader audience and generate sufficient income. Additionally, many artisans lack the financial resources needed to invest in modern technology and marketing strategies, which are essential for competing in today's market. Furthermore, there is often a gap in education and skills training, making it difficult for artisans to learn new techniques or enhance their business acumen. Lastly, sustainability practices are not widely adopted, which poses environmental concerns and limits the industry's long-term viability.





Key Recommendations

1. Economic Growth and Employment

- **Market Access:** Develop platforms and initiatives that facilitate local and international market access for ceramic artisans.
- **Trade Fairs and Exhibitions:** Organize national and international trade fairs to showcase ceramic products and connect artisans with buyers.
- **Microfinance and Loans:** Provide microfinance options and low-interest loans to support small and medium-sized ceramic enterprises.

2. Innovation and Modernization

- **Technology Integration:** Support the adoption of modern technologies in the production and marketing of ceramic products.
- **Research and Development:** Fund R&D initiatives focused on innovative materials, techniques, and sustainable practices in ceramics.
- **Design Collaboration:** Encourage collaborations between traditional artisans and contemporary designers to create products that appeal to modern markets.

3. Education and Skills Training

- **Vocational Training Programs:** Develop vocational training programs tailored to ceramic crafts, covering both traditional and modern techniques.
- **Apprenticeship Schemes:** Implement apprenticeship schemes to facilitate knowledge transfer from master artisans to the next generation.
- **Artisan Schools:** Establish specialized schools or centers of excellence focused on ceramic crafts.

4. Sustainability and Environmental Practices

- **Eco-friendly Materials:** Promote the use of sustainable and eco-friendly materials in ceramic production.
- **Waste Management:** Encourage proper waste management and recycling practices within the industry.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Support initiatives that enhance energy efficiency in ceramic production processes.





Policy Recommendations Overview

To address these challenges, this policy recommendation study outlines strategic actions across four key areas: market access, innovation and modernization, education and skills training, and sustainability and environmental practices. By focusing on these areas, the goal is to support ceramic artisans in transforming their craft into thriving micro-businesses, thereby preserving cultural heritage and contributing to economic development.

Market Access

Subsidies and Grants: One of the primary barriers for ceramic artisans is the high cost of participating in trade fairs and exhibitions. Providing financial support through subsidies and grants can help artisans cover these costs, enabling them to showcase their products to a wider audience. For Greece, leveraging its strong tourism industry can amplify the impact of such support, particularly in regions with high tourist footfall. In North Macedonia, targeted financial support programs can help emerging ceramic businesses establish themselves and access new markets.

Organized Delegations: Facilitating organized delegations to international craft fairs can significantly enhance the visibility of Greek and Macedonian ceramics. These delegations should receive logistical and promotional support to maximize their impact. For Greece, focusing on EU-based events can leverage its membership in the European Union to ease market entry. For North Macedonia, regional collaborations within the Balkans can provide valuable exposure and networking opportunities.

Local Exhibitions: Increasing the frequency and scale of local exhibitions can boost the domestic market for ceramic crafts. In Greece, integrating ceramic exhibitions with major tourist events can attract a diverse audience. In North Macedonia, community-based events can help artisans connect with local buyers and enhance their visibility.

Cultural Promotion: Promoting ceramic crafts through cultural festivals and international cultural centers can highlight their significance and attract interest from global audiences. Greece can utilize its extensive network of cultural festivals and international centers to promote ceramics as part of its cultural exports. North Macedonia can leverage its cultural heritage by organizing exhibitions and workshops at cultural centers abroad.

In sum:

For Greece:

- **Market Infrastructure:**

Greece benefits from a more established market access infrastructure due to its robust tourism industry. The influx of tourists creates a steady demand for local crafts, including ceramics, providing artisans with numerous sales opportunities. The presence of established cultural institutions and galleries in cities like Athens and Thessaloniki offers additional venues for artisans to display and sell their work.





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- **Trade Fairs and Exhibitions:**

Greece hosts a higher number of local and international trade fairs and exhibitions, thanks in part to its well-developed cultural promotion strategies. Events such as the Athens Art Fair attract significant attention and provide valuable networking opportunities for artisans.

- **Online Marketplaces:**

Greek artisans have better access to online marketplaces and e-commerce platforms. Some government and private sector initiatives have helped artisans establish an online presence, although this is still an area with room for growth.

For North Macedonia:

- **Market Infrastructure:**

North Macedonia has a smaller and less internationally recognized market, which limits the exposure of local artisans to broader markets. The country's tourism industry is not as developed as Greece's, resulting in fewer sales opportunities driven by tourism.

There are fewer established cultural institutions and galleries dedicated to crafts, and those that exist often lack the resources and visibility of their Greek counterparts.

- **Trade Fairs and Exhibitions:**

North Macedonia hosts fewer trade fairs and exhibitions, and those that do occur tend to be smaller in scale. The limited frequency and scale of these events reduce the opportunities for artisans to showcase their work and connect with potential buyers.

- **Online Marketplaces:**

Artisans in North Macedonia face greater challenges in accessing online marketplaces and e-commerce platforms. There is less support and fewer initiatives aimed at helping artisans establish an online presence, which limits their ability to reach international markets.

Innovation and Modernization

Technology Integration: Modern technology can significantly improve the production and marketing of ceramic products. Providing grants and subsidies for modern equipment, such as energy-efficient kilns and digital marketing tools, can help artisans enhance product quality and reach broader markets. In Greece, supporting digital skills training can capitalize on the country's better-developed online market access. In North Macedonia, ensuring access to modern production equipment can boost efficiency and innovation.

Research and Development: Funding R&D initiatives focused on innovative materials and sustainable practices can drive the evolution of the ceramic industry. Collaborations with universities and research institutions can foster the development of new techniques that respect traditional methods while introducing modern improvements. Greece can leverage





EU research funds for such initiatives, while North Macedonia can establish local partnerships to support innovation.

Design Collaboration: Encouraging collaborations between traditional artisans and contemporary designers can create products that appeal to modern markets. Design residencies and workshops can facilitate these collaborations, blending tradition with contemporary aesthetics. For Greece, design competitions that promote traditional motifs in modern designs can bridge the gap between heritage and modernity. In North Macedonia, fostering partnerships between artisans and designers can help create innovative and marketable products.

In sum:

For Greece:

- **Technology Integration:**

Greek artisans have better access to modern technologies and tools, partly due to more developed infrastructure and support programs. However, the adoption rate is still relatively low compared to Western European countries.

- **Research and Development:**

Greece has a higher number of institutions and organizations dedicated to research and development in the arts. These entities occasionally focus on innovative materials and sustainable practices, though resources are often limited.

- **Design Collaboration:**

There is a growing trend of collaborations between traditional Greek artisans and contemporary designers. These partnerships are supported by various cultural and educational institutions, which help bridge the gap between traditional crafts and modern design markets.

For North Macedonia:

- **Technology Integration:**

Artisans in North Macedonia have limited access to modern technologies and tools due to financial constraints and less developed infrastructure. The adoption of new technologies is slower, hindering the sector's ability to innovate.

- **Research and Development:**

North Macedonia has fewer institutions and resources dedicated to research and development in the arts. As a result, there is less focus on innovative materials and sustainable practices, which restricts the potential for modernization in the ceramic crafts sector.





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- **Design Collaboration:**

Collaboration between traditional artisans and contemporary designers is less common in North Macedonia. There are fewer initiatives and support structures to facilitate such partnerships, limiting the exposure of traditional crafts to modern markets.

Education and Skills Training

Vocational Training Programs: Developing vocational training programs that cover both traditional and modern ceramic techniques is essential. These programs should be accessible and affordable, ensuring that aspiring artisans can acquire the necessary skills. In Greece, integrating business skills into vocational training can help artisans better manage their enterprises. In North Macedonia, modernized curricula can enhance the competitiveness of local artisans.

Apprenticeship Schemes: Formalizing apprenticeship schemes can facilitate the transfer of knowledge from master artisans to the next generation. Providing certifications for completed apprenticeships can enhance the credibility and career prospects of young artisans. Greece can develop mentorship networks to support this knowledge transfer, while North Macedonia can implement structured apprenticeship programs recognized by the state.

Artisan Schools: Establishing specialized schools or training centers focused on ceramic crafts can provide comprehensive training and resources for innovation. In Greece, centers of excellence in regions with rich ceramic traditions can offer advanced training. In North Macedonia, rural outreach programs can identify and nurture young talent, making education accessible to all.

In sum:

For Greece:

- **Vocational Training Programs:**

Greece offers a more extensive range of vocational training programs, although many are still focused on traditional techniques. There is a growing effort to incorporate modern skills into these programs, supported by cultural and educational institutions.

- **Apprenticeship Schemes:**

Apprenticeship schemes in Greece, while often informal, are more structured and recognized than in North Macedonia. There are initiatives aimed at formalizing these schemes and providing better support to both master artisans and apprentices.





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- **Artisan Schools:**

Greece has a few specialized schools focused on ceramic crafts. These institutions provide comprehensive training and serve as hubs for innovation, although they often face funding and resource constraints.

For North Macedonia:

- **Vocational Training Programs:**

North Macedonia has fewer vocational training programs specific to ceramic crafts. Existing programs are more focused on traditional techniques, with limited integration of modern skills.

- **Apprenticeship Schemes:**

Apprenticeship schemes in North Macedonia are largely informal and lack the structure and recognition needed to ensure consistent quality. There is minimal support for formalizing these schemes, which limits the transfer of knowledge and skills.

- **Artisan Schools:**

There are very few specialized schools or centers of excellence dedicated to ceramic crafts in North Macedonia. The existing institutions are under-resourced and unable to provide the comprehensive training needed to advance the sector.

Sustainability and Environmental Practices

Eco-friendly Materials: Promoting the use of sustainable and eco-friendly materials in ceramic production is crucial for long-term viability. Providing guidelines and resources to help artisans adopt these materials can support both sustainability and the local economy. Greece can link sustainable material promotion to its sustainable tourism initiatives, while North Macedonia can encourage the use of locally sourced materials.

Waste Management: Establishing recycling initiatives and providing infrastructure for waste management can reduce the environmental impact of ceramic production. Training programs on sustainable practices can help artisans adopt effective waste management techniques. Regional recycling hubs in Greece and targeted recycling programs in North Macedonia can support these efforts.

Energy Efficiency: Enhancing energy efficiency in ceramic production can reduce costs and environmental impact. Providing subsidies for energy-efficient equipment and promoting the use of renewable energy sources can support this goal. Greece can implement energy audits and upgrades, while North Macedonia can offer grants for renewable energy adoption.





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In sum:

For Greece:

- **Eco-friendly Materials:**

Greek artisans have better access to information and resources regarding eco-friendly materials. There are initiatives aimed at promoting the use of sustainable materials, though practical adoption is still limited.

- **Waste Management:**

Waste management practices in Greece are more developed, particularly in urban areas where there is better infrastructure. However, many artisans still lack formal waste management systems, especially in rural areas.

- **Energy Efficiency:**

Greece has more initiatives aimed at improving energy efficiency in ceramic production. There is greater awareness of the benefits of energy-efficient technologies, but high costs and limited access to financing remain significant barriers.

For North Macedonia:

- **Eco-friendly Materials:**

The use of eco-friendly materials in North Macedonia is less common due to limited access to information and resources. Artisans often rely on traditional materials without considering the environmental impact.

- **Waste Management:**

Waste management practices in North Macedonia are less developed, with many artisans lacking formal systems for managing and recycling production waste. There is limited infrastructure to support proper waste management, particularly in rural areas.

- **Energy Efficiency:**

Efforts to improve energy efficiency in ceramic production are minimal in North Macedonia. Artisans face significant financial and logistical barriers to adopting energy-efficient technologies, and there is less awareness of their benefits.





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Recommendations per category

Market Access

Subsidies and Grants:

- **Tourism-Driven Grants:** Given the strong tourism industry, create grants that specifically target artisans in tourist-heavy regions, helping them expand their presence in local markets frequented by tourists.
- **Cultural Heritage Funds:** Establish funds dedicated to preserving and promoting Greece's rich cultural heritage in ceramics. These funds can support artisans who use traditional techniques and motifs.
- **Targeted Financial Support:** Implement targeted financial support programs to assist Macedonian ceramic artisans in covering costs associated with national and international trade fairs and exhibitions. These programs should include direct grants and subsidies tailored to small and medium-sized enterprises.
- **Startup Grants:** Provide grants specifically designed to help new and emerging ceramic businesses establish themselves, covering initial costs such as equipment, materials, and marketing.

Organized Delegations:

- **EU-Focused Trade Missions:** Organize delegations of Greek artisans to participate in EU-based craft fairs and exhibitions.
- **Mediterranean Network:** Create a Mediterranean network of artisans, fostering cross-border collaborations with neighboring countries, enhancing market access and cultural exchange.
- **Regional Collaborations:** Facilitate regional collaborations with neighboring countries in the Balkans. Organize delegations to participate in regional craft fairs and exhibitions, providing logistical and promotional support.
- **Emerging Markets Focus:** Identify and support participation in emerging markets where Macedonian ceramics could have a unique appeal. This could include trade missions to countries with growing interest in handmade crafts.

Local Exhibitions:

- **Tourism Integration:** Integrate ceramic exhibitions with major tourist events and destinations, ensuring high visibility and access to international visitors.
- **Cultural Hubs:** Utilize historical and cultural sites for exhibitions, creating a unique blend of heritage and contemporary craft showcasing.





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- **Increased Frequency:** Increase the number of local exhibitions dedicated to ceramic crafts, ensuring they are well-publicized and accessible to a wide audience.
- **Community Events:** Integrate ceramic exhibitions into community events and local festivals to boost visibility and engagement with local audiences.

Cultural Promotion:

- **Greek Cultural Festivals Abroad:** Promote Greek ceramics through cultural festivals organized by Greek embassies and cultural centers abroad. Highlight ceramics as a key element of Greek cultural exports.
- **Heritage Tourism Packages:** Develop heritage tourism packages that include visits to ceramic workshops and exhibitions, promoting ceramics as a key aspect of Greek cultural tourism.
- **Cultural Heritage Promotion:** Leverage North Macedonia's rich cultural heritage by integrating ceramic craft exhibitions into cultural festivals and national celebrations.
- **International Cultural Centers:** Utilize Macedonian cultural centers abroad to promote ceramics. Organize exhibitions and workshops that highlight the unique aspects of Macedonian ceramic art.

Innovation and Modernization

Technology Integration:

- **Heritage Technology Grants:** Provide grants specifically for integrating modern technology into traditional ceramic practices, ensuring the preservation of heritage while adopting efficiency.
- **E-commerce Training:** Offer specialized training programs in e-commerce and digital marketing, leveraging Greece's better-developed online market access to help artisans reach a global audience.
- **Modern Equipment Access:** Provide subsidies and grants for the purchase of modern production equipment, such as advanced kilns and precision tools. This will help artisans improve product quality and production efficiency.
- **Digital Skills Training:** Offer comprehensive training programs in digital skills, focusing on e-commerce, digital marketing, and online store management to help artisans reach a global audience.





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Research and Development:

- **University Collaborations:** Partner with Greek universities and research institutions to develop innovative materials and techniques. Focus on creating sustainable practices that align with traditional Greek ceramics.
- **EU Research Funds:** Utilize EU research funds to support R&D in the ceramic sector, ensuring that Greek artisans have access to cutting-edge materials and techniques.
- **Innovation Grants:** Establish grants specifically for R&D in the ceramic sector, encouraging innovation in materials, techniques, and sustainable practices.

Design Collaboration:

- **Cultural Design Residencies:** Establish design residencies that invite contemporary designers to work with traditional artisans, fostering innovative collaborations that respect and enhance Greek ceramic traditions.
- **Contemporary Greek Collections:** Develop contemporary collections that merge traditional Greek motifs with modern design, supported by government and private sector initiatives.
- **Designer-Artisan Collaborations:** Create initiatives that encourage collaborations between traditional artisans and contemporary designers. Offer incentives and platforms for such partnerships to develop new products that blend tradition with modern design.
- **Design Workshops:** Organize workshops and competitions that bring together traditional artisans and modern designers. The winning designs should receive support for production and marketing.

Education and Skills Training

Vocational Training Programs:

- **Tourism and Craft Integration:** Develop vocational training programs that integrate ceramic craft skills with tourism management, helping artisans leverage the tourism market.
- **Modern Techniques:** Update existing vocational programs to include modern ceramic techniques and technologies, ensuring artisans can compete in contemporary markets.
- **Modernized Curriculum:** Develop vocational training programs that include both traditional and modern ceramic techniques. Ensure these programs are accessible and affordable for aspiring artisans.





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- **Business Skills:** Integrate business skills training into vocational programs, covering areas such as marketing, financial management, and entrepreneurship.

Apprenticeship Schemes:

- **Formalized Apprenticeships:** Create formal apprenticeship programs recognized by the state, providing certifications that enhance the credibility and career prospects of young artisans.
- **Mentorship Networks:** Develop mentorship networks that pair young artisans with experienced masters, ensuring the transfer of both traditional skills and business acumen.
- **Incentive Programs:** Develop incentive programs that encourage master artisans to take on apprentices, offering financial support and resources to facilitate knowledge transfer.

Artisan Schools:

- **Centers of Excellence:** Establish centers of excellence in regions with a rich ceramic tradition, such as Crete and Rhodes, providing specialized training and resources.
- **Mobile Training Units:** Implement mobile training units that travel to rural areas, offering workshops and training sessions to artisans who might not have access to formal education centers.
- **Specialized Training Centers:** Establish specialized schools or training centers focused on ceramic crafts. These centers should provide comprehensive training programs, host workshops, and offer resources for innovation and experimentation.
- **Rural Outreach Programs:** Implement outreach programs in rural areas to identify and nurture young talent. Offer mobile training units and community-based workshops to make education accessible.

Sustainability and Environmental Practices

Eco-friendly Materials:

- **Sustainable Tourism Link:** Link the promotion of eco-friendly materials to Greece's sustainable tourism initiatives, ensuring that tourists seeking sustainable products find Greek ceramics attractive.
- **Traditional and Sustainable:** Encourage the use of traditional Greek materials that are naturally sustainable, such as local clays and natural dyes, promoting their environmental benefits.





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- **Sustainable Material Promotion:** Promote the use of sustainable and eco-friendly materials in ceramic production. Provide guidelines and resources to help artisans adopt these materials.
- **Local Resources:** Encourage the use of locally sourced materials that have a lower environmental impact, supporting both sustainability and the local economy.

Waste Management:

- **Regional Recycling Hubs:** Establish regional recycling hubs that support artisans in managing and recycling ceramic waste, ensuring that all parts of Greece have access to proper waste management facilities.
- **Training in Sustainable Practices:** Offer training programs focused on sustainable practices, emphasizing the importance of environmental responsibility in the crafts sector, covering techniques for reducing waste and safely disposing of hazardous materials.
- **Recycling Initiatives:** Establish recycling initiatives that support artisans in managing and recycling ceramic waste. Provide infrastructure and resources to facilitate waste management practices.

Energy Efficiency:

- **Energy Audits and Upgrades:** Provide subsidies for energy audits and upgrades, helping artisans identify and implement energy-saving measures in their workshops.
- **Renewable Energy Projects:** Promote the adoption of renewable energy sources, such as solar panels, by offering grants and incentives for artisans to reduce their reliance on traditional energy sources.
- **Energy-efficient Equipment Subsidies:** Provide subsidies for the purchase of energy-efficient kilns and other production equipment. Encourage artisans to adopt practices that reduce energy consumption.

Conclusions

The ceramic crafts industry in Greece and North Macedonia stands at a crossroads where rich historical traditions meet modern economic challenges and opportunities. This policy recommendation paper has outlined several strategic measures to bolster the sector, focusing on enhancing market access, fostering innovation and modernization, improving education and skills training, and promoting sustainability and environmental practices. By addressing these key areas, policymakers can help transform ceramic crafts from a traditional





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art form into a vibrant and sustainable micro-business sector, preserving cultural heritage while contributing to economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Economic Growth and Employment

To stimulate economic growth and employment within the ceramic crafts sector, it is crucial to improve market access for artisans. Greece, with its robust tourism industry, offers a unique advantage. Leveraging this, the government should provide targeted grants and subsidies to artisans in tourist-heavy regions, enhancing their ability to reach a wider audience. Additionally, organized delegations to EU-based craft fairs can facilitate greater exposure and market entry for Greek artisans.

In contrast, North Macedonia should focus on establishing a more recognizable market infrastructure. Implementing targeted financial support programs, including startup grants, can help emerging ceramic businesses cover initial costs and participate in trade fairs. Facilitating regional collaborations within the Balkans can provide valuable exposure and networking opportunities, helping Macedonian artisans access new markets.

Innovation and Modernization

The integration of modern technologies in the production and marketing of ceramic products is essential for keeping the industry competitive. In Greece, providing grants for modern equipment and digital marketing tools can enhance both product quality and market reach. Collaborating with universities and leveraging EU research funds can drive innovation in materials and techniques, ensuring the industry remains at the forefront of sustainable practices.

For North Macedonia, improving access to modern production equipment through subsidies and grants is critical. Establishing partnerships with local universities can support research and development initiatives, fostering innovation in the ceramic crafts sector. Encouraging collaborations between traditional artisans and contemporary designers can create products that appeal to modern markets, blending tradition with contemporary aesthetics.

Education and Skills Training

Developing comprehensive vocational training programs that cover both traditional and modern ceramic techniques is vital for the future of the industry. In Greece, integrating business skills into vocational training can help artisans better manage their enterprises, ensuring long-term sustainability. Formalizing apprenticeship schemes with state recognition can enhance the credibility and career prospects of young artisans.

North Macedonia should focus on modernizing its vocational training curriculum to include contemporary techniques and business skills. Establishing formal apprenticeship programs and specialized training centers can provide artisans with the necessary skills and resources to thrive in the modern market. Implementing rural outreach programs can ensure that training is accessible to all, nurturing young talent across the country.





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Sustainability and Environmental Practices

Promoting the use of sustainable and eco-friendly materials in ceramic production is essential for the long-term viability of the industry. In Greece, linking sustainable material promotion to its sustainable tourism initiatives can attract tourists seeking eco-friendly products. Establishing regional recycling hubs and offering training programs on sustainable practices can further support environmental responsibility in the sector.

North Macedonia should encourage the use of locally sourced, sustainable materials to reduce environmental impact and support the local economy. Implementing recycling initiatives and providing the necessary infrastructure for waste management can help artisans adopt sustainable practices. Offering subsidies for energy-efficient equipment and promoting renewable energy sources can reduce the industry's environmental footprint and operational costs.

In sum, the ceramic crafts industry in Greece and North Macedonia holds immense potential to contribute to cultural preservation, economic development, and environmental sustainability. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this paper, policymakers can create a supportive environment that enables artisans to transform their craft into thriving micro-businesses. This holistic approach, tailored to the unique contexts of each country, will ensure the longevity and prosperity of the ceramic crafts sector, preserving its rich heritage while adapting to modern market demands.

