

Prototyping Innovation Policies with(in) cities

Innovation Area:
Crafts Led Innovation

Košice, Slovakia



How does “prototyping...” work?

This City Case Description is the outcome of a policy prototyping exercise within a city ecosystem. Once the ekip research team has explored a policy area and its connection to cultural and creative industries (CCIs) and innovation, we ask: what would this mean in a local city context?

Together with local stakeholders, we test how a draft policy recommendation might stimulate innovation. Using Portfolio Sensemaking, stakeholders simulate an innovation portfolio, analyse the strengths and gaps of the local support system, and identify what resources are needed to realise the portfolio.

Košice Context & Area of Focus

The Košice region has a strong cultural and artistic heritage, with numerous craft-based organizations and artisans contributing to local economic and social development. However, several challenges hinder the full realization of the sector's potential, including limited access to international markets and exposure, insufficient integration of digital tools and new technologies, fragmented institutional support and lack of coordinated efforts among stakeholders and weak business skills and marketing capabilities among craftspeople.



Innovation in the craft industry is influenced by various factors, including:

Material Innovation: The use of new and sustainable materials to enhance product offerings.

Digital Transformation: Adoption of e-commerce, digital marketing, and online sales platforms to expand market reach.

Cross-Sector Collaboration: Partnerships between artisans, designers, technologists, and academic institutions to develop new products and processes.

Infrastructure Development: The creation of shared workspaces, co-working hubs, and maker spaces to support collaborative innovation.



Portfolio sensemaking

SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEM ENHANCING COMPETITIVENESS WITHIN THE SECTOR AND BEYOND

The policy portfolio seeks to create a sustainable ecosystem that enhances the competitiveness of craft industries within the Košice region and beyond. It includes the following areas.



Community Building:

Establishing a platform for collaboration among craft practitioners, educational institutions, and policymakers.

Infrastructure Development:

Strengthening existing cultural and craft institutions, including shared service centers and co-working spaces.

Market Expansion:

Increasing regional and international visibility of local craft producers through exhibitions, online platforms, and trade missions.

➤ Key aspects of the portfolio

Economic Growth: By enhancing market access, improving branding, and creating shared infrastructure, the policy aims to stimulate local economic growth.

Cultural Heritage Preservation: Ensuring traditional skills and knowledge are passed down while integrating modern innovation.

Social Impact: Strengthening mental health, fostering community engagement, and supporting young creators through incubation programs.

Sustainability: Encouraging eco-friendly practices in material sourcing and production methods.



Who was there?

A BROAD MIX OF STAKEHOLDERS CO-CREATED THIS CASE

CCI ORGANISATIONS

GemArt – Gemersky umelecký inštitút,
Textilne centrum o.z., Košice Artist in
Residence



BUSINESSES

Ateliér MYtkame, Pink Pony
Coffee Club, Štúdio Svarc s.r.o.,
Kannalab s.r.o., Diva Bara,
GETIART o.z., Wnoozow



ACADEMIA

Fakulta umení, TUKE, Škola umeleckého
priemyslu Jakobyho



LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Košický samosprávny kraj



OTHERS

Inovačné Centrum Košického
kraja (ICKK), Kreatívne
centrum Košického kraja,
Creative Industry Košice



Analysis

THE LOCAL INNOVATION SUPPORT SYSTEM

Lack of Coordinating Entity: A key challenge is the absence of a centralized coordinator to oversee policy implementation.

Solution: Assign regional government as the main coordinating body.

Insufficient Funding for Services: Many craft practitioners struggle with financial sustainability.

Solution: Develop shared service centers providing accounting, marketing, and grant acquisition support.

Limited Digital Presence: A centralized online marketplace is missing.

Solution: Revive and maintain an online platform similar to CulturalCake.

Data Gaps: The sector lacks sufficient data for strategic decision-making.

Solution: Conduct annual assessments of the craft industry's impact and trends.



Conclusions

& RECOMMENDATIONS

Shared Service Centers & Infrastructure Development

Centralized services such as legal and financial consulting, grant-writing support, and marketing assistance. Education and training programs focused on business development, technology, and sustainability.

Expected Impact: Reduces operational costs for artisans. Increases collaboration across different craft disciplines.



Digital & Technological Integration

Development of a regional e-commerce platform for craft sales (similar to SAShE.sk). Digital marketing and branding workshops for artisans.

Expected Impact: Strengthens international competitiveness of Slovak artisans. Encourages product diversification through technology use.

Education, Upskilling & Talent Development

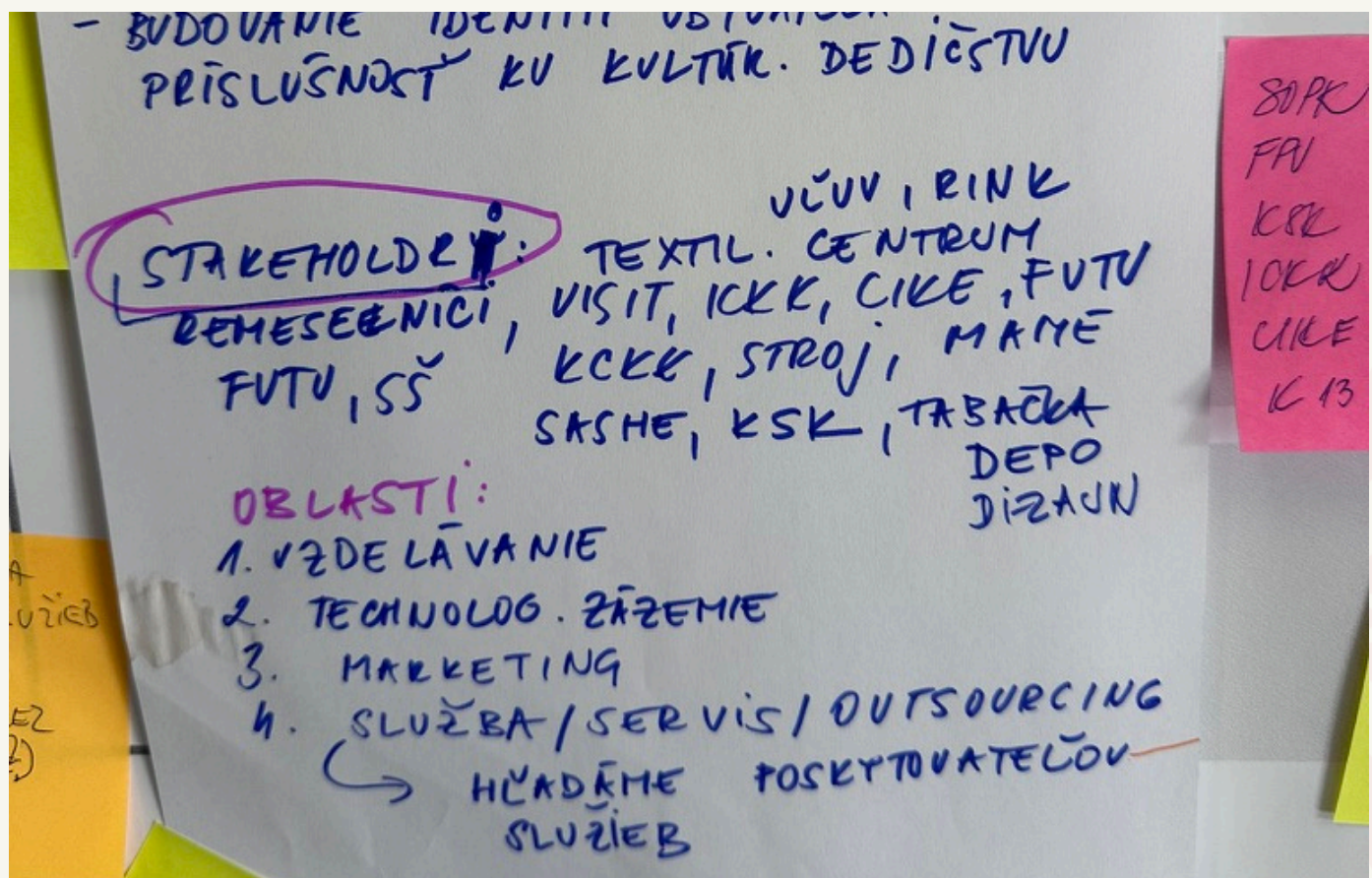
Collaboration with universities (TUKE, School of Applied Arts) to introduce craft-focused innovation programs. Craft incubators providing training on business models, marketing, financial management, and digital sales. Skill-sharing initiatives between traditional artisans and younger designers to ensure knowledge transfer.

Expected Impact: Increases professionalization of the craft sector. Bridges the gap between traditional and contemporary craft practices.

Internationalization & Market Positioning

Participation in international craft fairs and trade missions. Partnerships with European and global design and craft networks. Development of a certification system for authentic Slovak-made crafts (regional branding).

Expected Impact: Strengthens the export potential of local artisans. Enhances the perceived value of handmade products.





Our methods

THE INNOVATION PORTFOLIO POLICY CANVAS

The Prototyping Workshop Methodology and the Innovation Portfolio Policy Canvas guide local stakeholders to analyse their local ecosystem, make an inventory of actors and resources, identify and create a potential innovation portfolio and analyse their local innovation support system.

THE OPSI MODEL

The OPSI-model (Open Public Sector Innovation OECD) is adapted to analyze the innovation character of the policy area. Participants explore whether the policy involves new legislative measures or is more exploratory in nature, allowing for a deeper understanding of how the policy might influence the local ecosystem

THE LIEPT MODEL

The Lund Innovation Ecosystem Portfolio Tracking (LIEPT) model is a tool that provides a framework for tracking changes in innovation portfolios in ecosystems where impact and growth happen not in one organisation but in many. This relies on collaborative efforts by many stakeholders.

What is ekip

The ekip partnership funded by the European Commission consists of 5 universities, 4 consultancies, 4 creative and cultural organisations and 4 cities. Together we develop innovation policies for the cultural and creative industries in Europe. We do that in various ways: through research, consultations and interaction with people in the sector at policy labs and focus groups and assessments in city ecosystems.

Want to know more? Want to do it in your city?

Would you like to explore the topic of Ecodesign further? Visit the [*Fashion Transition: Eco-Design for Circularity*](#) on ekip website, where you'll find relevant policy posters, presentations, videos, and articles.

You can even host your own session in your city! It's an empowering and insightful way to bring together local stakeholders across sectors and disciplines for a focused discussion on a topic of shared importance. The ekip method and approach are open for anyone to use including a Facilitator's Guide and templates available in the ekip Knowledge Bank under [*Tools and Methods*](#).

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Disclaimer:

Each City Case Description reflects the views of workshop participants. It is a perspective from one city context, intended to inspire and ignite action



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