

# Prototyping Innovation Policies with(in) cities

Innovation Area:

Cultural Heritage Organizations  
as Innovation Catalysts

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

Košice is a regional cultural hub in eastern Slovakia with a dense concentration of museums, galleries, libraries, and heritage institutions, supported by universities, creative professionals, and an active tourism sector.

While the city and region benefit from strong cultural assets and international networks, cultural heritage organisations operate under financial pressure, ageing infrastructure, and limited capacities in audience development, digitalisation, and cross-institutional cooperation.

At the same time, visitor expectations are changing toward more participatory, inclusive, and experiential forms of engagement, creating both pressure and opportunity for innovation.

The area of focus is innovation in cultural heritage organisations as catalysts for regional development, with an emphasis on strengthening relationships with visitors and communities. This includes visitor-centred services, participation and co-creation, inclusion and accessibility, and the use of digital and hybrid tools, combined with capacity building and stronger regional coordination. The aim is to transform heritage institutions from primarily custodial organisations into socially relevant, collaborative, and resilient actors that contribute to education, social cohesion, tourism, and the long-term attractiveness of the Košice region.





# Portfolio sensemaking

## FROM CUSTODIANS TO COMMUNITY CATALYSTS: TRANSFORMING CULTURAL HERITAGE ORGANIZATIONS INTO ENGINES OF ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The portfolio aims to transform cultural heritage organizations into visitor-oriented, inclusive, and collaborative institutions that actively contribute to regional development, education, social cohesion, and cultural participation. Its vision is to position these organizations not only as custodians of heritage but also as dynamic actors within their communities, fostering engagement, innovation, and cross-sector collaboration.

### ► Key aspects of the portfolio



- Visitor-centred innovation: participatory, inclusive, and experiential cultural services
- Capacity building: skills in audience development, communication, project management, fundraising, and innovation
- Regional coordination: cross-institutional and cross-sector collaboration, joint planning and visibility
- Digital and service innovation: digital tools, interactive formats, and data-informed visitor engagement
- Regional impact: linking cultural heritage to education, tourism, creative industries, and social cohesion

### ► Expected Impact

- Stronger visitor engagement, satisfaction, and more diverse audiences
- Increased relevance, visibility, and strategic position of cultural heritage organisations
- Improved professional capacities, confidence, and motivation of staff
- Greater financial resilience through diversified funding and partnerships
- Better regional coordination, reduced fragmentation, and more efficient use of resources
- Positive spillovers for tourism, education, social cohesion, and regional attractiveness



# Who was there?

A BROAD MIX OF STAKEHOLDERS CO-CREATED THIS CASE

## CHO ORGANISATIONS

Slovak technical museum  
Museum of Spiš  
Museum and cultural center of Zemplin  
Youth Library Košice  
Artists' Gallery Spiš  
Gemers Library Rožňava



## OTHERS

EIT Culture Creativity



## LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Košice Self Governing Region



## THE LOCAL INNOVATION SUPPORT SYSTEM

The local innovation ecosystem in Košice is characterised by a strong concentration of cultural heritage institutions, universities, creative professionals, and an emerging technology and tourism sector, creating favourable conditions for cross-sector collaboration.

Key public actors, such as the city and the self-governing region, provide strategic direction and funding, while organisations like CIKE play an important intermediary role in ecosystem building and international cooperation.

At the same time, the ecosystem remains fragmented.

Cultural institutions often operate in parallel, compete for the same audiences, and lack permanent coordination structures and shared innovation capacity.

Innovation is expected by policymakers but constrained by limited financial and human resources, rigid regulatory frameworks, and uneven skills in areas such as audience development, digitalisation, and project management.

Despite these challenges, the ecosystem has significant untapped potential. There is a growing demand for participatory, inclusive, and experiential culture, strong educational and research partners, and local creative and technology actors capable of supporting innovation.

With stronger coordination, capacity building, and shared agendas, the Košice ecosystem can shift from isolated initiatives toward a more collaborative, resilient, and impact-driven model of cultural innovation.



# Conclusions

## & RECOMMENDATIONS

### Fragmentation limits impact

Cultural heritage organisations in Košice operate in a fragmented environment with limited coordination, leading to duplicated efforts, competition for audiences, and underused resources. Without a shared framework, innovation remains isolated and short-term.

**Recommendation:** Create a permanent, lightweight coordination structure that connects cultural heritage institutions, public authorities, tourism, education, and intermediaries. This platform should support joint planning, shared communication, and alignment of innovation priorities.



### *Innovation capacity is uneven across institutions*

While motivation for innovation exists, many organisations lack skills in audience development, digital tools, project management, and fundraising, which constrains their ability to respond to changing visitor expectations.

**Recommendation:** Implement shared training programmes, peer learning, and cross-institutional project teams to build professional skills and reduce dependence on individual staff members.

### *Visitor relationships are not yet fully strategic*

Visitor engagement is often activity-based rather than systematic, with limited use of feedback, segmentation, and co-creation approaches.

**Recommendation:** Introduce regular visitor feedback mechanisms, clear audience segmentation, and participatory formats that position visitors as active partners in cultural experiences.

### *Digital and service innovation remains underutilised*

Digital tools and data are not yet used consistently to enhance accessibility, mediation, and decision-making.

**Recommendation:** Support partnerships with local technology providers, improve digital access to collections, and apply user-centred design and data-informed methods across institutions.

### *Culture is not fully integrated into regional development agendas*

The contribution of cultural heritage to education, tourism, and social cohesion is recognised but not systematically embedded in regional strategies.

**Recommendation:** Align cultural innovation objectives with city and regional development, education, and tourism strategies to ensure long-term support, visibility, and sustainable impact.



# What happened next?

“

- “The biggest barrier is not ideas, but capacity. We need support in marketing, project management, and digital skills if we want innovation to become part of everyday practice.” ”

Jana Kováčová, Museum of Spiš

“

- “The workshop made it clear that small, coordinated steps can already make a difference. We don’t need radical change, but we do need continuity and shared direction.” ”

Kamila Prextoová, Youth Library Košice

“

- “We often focus on programmes and exhibitions, but not enough on who the visitor really is and how they experience our institutions. This discussion helped us see visitors as partners, not just audiences.” ”

Marek Čížmar, Gemers Library Rožňava





## 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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