



ekip White Paper

Open Innovation 3.0: Empowering Europe Through Cultural and Creative Industries

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**Funded by
the European Union**

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon (2021-2027) Research and Innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101112111.

About ekip

ekip is a collaborative platform designed to boost the development of innovation capacity in ecosystems to include the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI).

Creatives are not just “nice to have” they are essential for driving progress on major challenges like the green and digital transformation and social inclusion. Their competences and skills are crucial for tackling complex innovation processes involving diverse stakeholders.

Rooted in open innovation, *ekip* brings together broad stakeholder groups to co-create and deliver evidence-based policy recommendations. Together, we’re shaping smarter innovation policies for ecosystems where collaborative processes and cross and open innovation are standard practice. We believe this will empower the CCIs to become drivers of innovation, creating a better and brighter future.

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Executive Summary

For *ekip*, Open Innovation is more than a principle – it is a strategic principal positioning cultural and creative industries at the forefront of Europe's innovation cycle. By engaging from the earliest stages, CCIs both shape and benefit from new developments, advancing Europe's ambitions for greater competitiveness, sustainability, and global influence.

The application of Open Innovation has benefits not only for the CCIs, but for many other areas in need of development. But it must be used with a twist. The policy recommendations from *ekip* show the way for how to make this change happen.

ekip promotes the application of Open Innovation 3.0, where two key elements are added: (1) stronger CCI involvement across all business sectors and (2) foresight-driven policy recommendations that support innovation policies enabling this approach.

The aim is to make Open Innovation 3.0 into norm and standard practice in innovation ecosystems, and to find ways to support this progress through policy development focusing on innovation ecosystem building blocks such as infrastructures and networks, investment and funding, regulations and governance, how to work with skills and competence development, and techniques and technologies. In addition, sustainable competitiveness must be considered as well as the social dimension.

Empowering Europe through Open Innovation 3.0 means embracing the full potential of CCIs – not as peripheral actors, but as central partners in shaping the future.

This White Paper was put together by Lena Holmberg using material produced by several people in the *ekip* consortium.

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1 Establishing Open Innovation 3.0

ekip is a collaborative platform designed to boost the development of innovation capacity in ecosystems to include the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs). One key concept is Open Innovation that when implemented enables CCIs to contribute to and benefit from early stages of innovation processes, supporting the European strategy towards strengthening competitiveness, sustainability, and security to establish Europe as a global power.



Innovation happens where boundaries break.

MISSION
To empower Europe's CCI's through smarter, fairer innovation policy for Europe's competitiveness.

VISION
To make open innovation the standard practice in ecosystems so that Cultural and Creative Industries can: - be part of driving transformative change

What are we set to do? ↘

ekip brings together creatives, policymakers, researchers, and industry leaders to reshape how innovation happens in Europe, making it more open, collaborative, and effective.

We develop targeted strategies to strengthen innovation ecosystems around Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), helping them lead Europe's green, digital, and social transitions.

At the core of our work is this belief:

Open innovation should be the rule, not the exception.

That means:

- Moving away from siloed approaches to innovation
- Making collaboration between creatives, institutions, researchers, and businesses the default
- Designing policies and funding structures that reward shared knowledge and co-created solutions

ekip works to embed open innovation into how ecosystems function, not as a one-off experiment, but as a daily practice.

Real impact happens when we work beyond silos.

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According to Marcin Poprawski at Humak University of Applied Sciences, the story of the Open Innovation paradigm started with a term popularised by business scholar and innovation expert Henry Chesbrough¹. In 2003, he began promoting the definition of open innovation, which spread among business academics and practitioners. Essentially, it is a strategic model in which organisations use both internal and external ideas to accelerate innovation, rather than relying solely on internal resources. This model involves collaborating with external partners, such as start-ups, universities, customers and competitors, with the aim of sharing knowledge, reducing costs and speeding up product development and market adoption.

Ten years later Martin Curley and Bror Salminen introduced Open Innovation 2.0² that attracted significant attention from European institutions and networks, including the EU Open Innovation Strategy and Policy Group. According to the 2.0 'upgrade' proposal, Open innovation is all about embracing change. This requires a new mindset that is focused on teams, collaboration and sharing.

¹ Chesbrough, H. (2003), "Open Innovation: The New Imperative for Creating and Profiting from Technology", Harvard Business School Press

² <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/24-oispgopeninnovation20anewparadigm-whitepaper.pdf>

The problem? It's the ecosystems.

Despite their proven value, CCI remain fragmented, underfunded, and disconnected from mainstream innovation infrastructures. They operate in ecosystems that don't always recognise or reward their contribution. Innovation policy is still largely written for tech and science, with creatives treated as add-ons, not as core actors.

That's why *ekip* exists: to change this dynamic.

To move CCIs from the margins to the centre of Europe's innovation future, by redesigning ecosystem policies.



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"From this perspective, innovation is not just an imperative for economic and social progress, but a composite of mindset, art, skill and societal capability that underpins the survival and progress of the human species", says Marcin Poprawski. "However, Open Innovation 2.0 predominantly proposed to become a paradigm buster for citizens and users, making them an integral part of the innovation process."

Now *ekip* promotes Open Innovation 3.0, building upon the prior versions but with two major additions: (1) a strong emphasis on CCI engagement to enhance innovation work in all kinds of business areas, and (2) foresight-driven policy recommendations targeting innovation policies to make this possible and feasible.

To remain competitive, sustainable, and resilient, Europe must fully leverage the empowering potential of its Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) as strategic drivers of innovation. Open Innovation 3.0 offers Europe a pathway to combine technological advancement with cultural insight, enabling more human-centred and meaningful transformation. By integrating creative competences, design methods, and cultural value creation into innovation processes, CCIs empower Europe to navigate complexity and anticipate societal shifts. CCIs unlock new forms of collaboration that strengthen Europe's capacity to turn uncertainty into opportunity.

2 Myth-Busting Open Innovation

Open Innovation is sometimes confused with the concept of Open Source³. They both leverage collaboration to enhance development but differ in scope and intent. Open Source refers specifically to the free sharing, modification, and community development of software code. Open Innovation is a broader business strategy involving the strategic, purposeful inflow and outflow of knowledge – ideas, intellectual property, or R&D – to accelerate internal innovation or expand markets.

Another related concept is Cross Innovation, which is an interdisciplinary process in which professionals from different fields collaborate in new ways, and Cross Sectorial Innovation where people from the private, public, civic sector and academic sectors work together often on societal challenges. Open

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_source

Innovation can be organised as both Cross Innovation and Cross Sectorial Innovation, depending on what challenge or opportunity that is taken as departure.

According to Charlotte Lorentz Hjorth, Lund University, there are also other aspects of open innovation that sometimes get misinterpreted.

“Open Innovation does not automatically imply that everyone collaborates all the way to a new product. Instead, we see a process starting with exploring the unknown together in what we call the Yellow Innovation Zone. This is an open, shared, and neutral space where the mandate is quite unclear, and organisations share challenges and opportunities. Who owns what, and who will do what is not defined. It is therefore necessary to co-create and to work with neutrally and being transparent.”

Enter ekip

A EUROPEAN INITIATIVE MAKING OPEN INNOVATION THE DEFAULT PRACTICE.

ekip is a Horizon Europe flagship initiative designed to revolutionise policies on Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI).

ekip supports the development of innovation policies that make the use of open innovation processes into the new standard in ecosystems.

This initiative ensures that supportive ecosystems develop a capacity to handle complex multi-stakeholder innovation processes needed to realise more innovative CCIs in Europe and the behavioural change they drive towards a more green, inclusive and digital Europe.



Multi-stakeholder environments where cross-innovation and co-creation is the norm.



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This first step is used to create relationships for future partnerships, and the commitment and presence of the participants drive the opportunities. The next step into the Green Zone can take on different forms often as continued collaboration between all or some of the partners in the first phase. Here, organisations must negotiate and create agreements about who does what, what can be done together, and how it should be done. In the Blue zone, the organisation decides for itself, has control and mandate. The work takes place within the structure of the own organization and with the logic by which it conducts its business and is made possible by internal or external investments.

Charlotte Lorentz Hjorth emphasise that this kind of staged Open Innovation does not happen by itself. Instead, policy development is needed to change the how innovation ecosystems are organised and operate. This involves developing the innovation ecosystem building blocks such as infrastructures and networks, investment and funding, regulations and governance, how to work with skills and competence development, and techniques and technologies. In addition, sustainable competitiveness needs to be considered as well as the social dimension.

“Open Innovation does not simply involve giving away knowledge collected through the innovation process to anyone, anywhere and at any time. Instead, Open Innovation, as a strategic and coordinated process, works under an agreement between the involved partners or precisely defines the role of a wider


range of users who contribute to innovation. It can then include limitless access within a circle of trust agreed by the committed parties involved or citizens invited to explore innovative solutions purposefully with the innovation initiators. This means that Open Innovation is anchored in mutual trust, respect, and transparency regarding stakeholders' intentions.” Marcin Poprawski

Re-designing the Building Blocks

Innovation ecosystems are made up of “building blocks” that represent functions in the ecosystems.


All these building blocks need to be developed to support open innovation.

We develop policy recommendations that address the building blocks in the ecosystems.




SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVENESS

- Cross-sector collaboration
- Scalable business models
- SME and startup support
- Innovation mindset building




REGULATION & GOVERNANCE

- Adaptive regulations
- Ecosystem coordination
- Standardisation frameworks
- Policy experimentation




SOCIAL DIMENSION

- Societal impact awareness
- Human-centric innovation
- End-user involvement
- Just transition alignment




R&I, TECHNIQUES & TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS

- New product development
- Interdisciplinary approaches
- Technology uptake




INFRASTRUCTURES

- Infrastructure access
- Technical service support





SKILLS

- Workforce upskilling
- Curricula alignment
- Innovation soft skills



INVESTMENT & FUNDING

- Funding access
- Innovation procurement

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3 The CCIs Being the Missing Piece in the Innovation Ecosystems

Given the challenges facing Europe and the ambitions stated in the European Strategic Agenda⁴ regarding democracy, security and competitiveness, there is an urgent need to find new ways of working together. *ekip* recently launched the campaign “Creatives Are the Missing Piece” aiming to raise awareness of the often-overlooked role that cultural and creative actors can play in enabling innovation, particularly at its earliest stages, where ambiguity, experimentation, and meaning-making are most critical.

Without the interpretive, imaginative, and sense-making capabilities of CCIs, Europe risks under-utilizing a competitive advantage that is distinctly its own. CCIs do not merely support innovation – they empower Europe to shape futures that are inclusive, democratic, and culturally grounded.

CCI professionals, despite the highly competitive nature of their field, are generally very aware of the long-term benefits of sharing. The generosity and openness of artists, authors and craft professionals pay off in the field of creative practices, and it is this generosity and legacy that guarantees the continuity and relevance of the arts and crafts and their ongoing, uninterrupted presence in human history. The history of art, cinema, the musicology and the theatre studies provides massive number of examples of the long-term impact of this open approach, despite the widespread belief that authorship is restrictive and ‘impact-proof’, and that attempts to silo authors are effective.

⁴ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/strategic-agenda-2024-2029/>

Europe's innovation ecosystems need a creative reset

Innovation policy is siloed. Creatives are underutilised. Ecosystems aren't inclusive.

ekip is here to make open innovation the new norm, with creatives at the core. Because Creatives are the missing piece, the **untapped force that can reset ecosystems.**



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In sum, the CCI bring with them a broad set of knowledge and competence oriented towards both products and processes. For example, many CCI have long experience from acting as a swarm and working together with other organisations, co-creating new concepts or productions. They are also crucial in the process of making new products attractive to users, and in imagining new futures. If we want innovation in Europe to be impactful and inclusive, we need to recognize the role creatives already play in shaping how new ideas develop, take root and spread.

4 Major Gains for CCI with Open Innovation

Not only is the engagement of CCI in Open Innovation beneficial to other business areas and sectors, but it is also a major opportunity for the CCI. By working together in Open Innovation together with others, especially when involving cutting edge researchers, CCI can leverage new knowledge that advances their own work regardless of if they are profit-oriented or NGOs. They can also get access to potential new partners and customers or even markets.

An important aspect of this is that Open Innovation 3.0 also builds upon the notion to combine Cultural Policy and Innovation Policy. Traditionally, development of the CCI have been funded by Cultural Policy measurements and only involved CCI institutions. With Open Innovation 3.0, departure is taken in Innovation Policy instruments adding CCI aspects. This creates opportunities for CCI to tap into new funding and new contexts.

Cultural Policy

Focuses on **WHO** creates, and how they are supported.

- Prioritises recognised cultural organisations through funding, infrastructure, and production resources.
- Encourages creativity and expression, but innovation is not a requirement.
- Centres artistic and societal value over commercial outcomes.
- Applies to accredited entities, often with protected content and limited public reuse.
- Purpose: cultural enrichment, public engagement, and societal reflection.

Impact measured in cultural and social value.

Innovation Policy

Focuses on **WHAT** is produced, and how it scales.

- Prioritises solutions, services, and technologies that are scalable, replicable, and sustainable.
- Outputs must improve over time, ideally becoming self-sustaining.
- Intellectual property can be open or closed, but public funding often requires open access.
- Driven by economic viability, but societal relevance is increasingly integrated.

Impact measured in economic return, scalability, and real-world application.



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The 10th Framework Programme (FP10), running from 2028 to 2034, is being shaped to integrate areas rather than separate in different tracks, enabling the CCIs and arts-based research into the EU's R&I agenda. According to Charlotte Lorentz Hjorth, not having a special program or pillar for the CCIs is beneficial since it enables Open Innovation 3.0. However, for this to happen it is important that the CCIs remains a recognized, resilient sector within the broader EU R&I strategy and that the policy measures and innovation ecosystems change.

5 How ekip contributes to Open Innovation

ekip's numerous deliverables are deeply immersed in the Open Innovation paradigm. The work itself, the *ekip* Engine, is designed as an Open Innovation 3.0 process involving people and organisations from various sectors and disciplines. The cross-innovation policy topics that are processed through the *ekip* Engine focus on European challenges and opportunities of importance not only to the CCIs but also other areas.

These include topics such as AI, deep tech, inclusivity, platformisation, civic resilience and green transitions. The resulting methods, concepts, tools and artefacts are shared to enhance policy development processes at different levels, from cities to the EU Commission.

