



Prototyping Innovation Policies with(in) cities

Innovation Area:

INFRASTRUCTURES FOR CCIS

Celje, Slovenia



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.

Celje Context & Area of Focus

Celje is a mid-sized Slovenian city where the technical infrastructure for culture largely exists, but coordination does not. Cultural infrastructure is owned by the Municipality yet managed by several public institutions at different levels, with no one overseeing the system as a whole.

The Municipality holds usable assets (6 flats, a youth hostel, an existing UNESCO residency programme, and maintenance manpower) but studios sit unused by local artists, locals rarely attend residency activities, and funding is short-term and heavily reliant on state funds that can be withdrawn. The result is empty spaces and brain drain.



Coordinating and sharing Celje's existing municipal infrastructure under a single institutional roof — "DOM" (Home) — that connects space, content, and community rather than building new institutions. The immediate vehicle is a flexible "guest room" residency model (short, agile stays alongside longer residencies), opened to local artists and tied to the wider community. The work treats accessibility, hospitality, coordination, and talent retention as the levers for a more livable, connected city — with the long-term ambition of becoming a European Capital of Culture.



Portfolio sensemaking

DOM (HOME)

A single institutional roof that coordinates Celje's municipally owned cultural infrastructure — connecting space, content, network, and community rather than building new institutions. Its immediate vehicle is a flexible "guest room" residency model — short, agile stays alongside longer residencies, opened to local artists and tied to the wider community.



► Scope & Potential

Main idea

Celje is considered too small to sustain separate venues for each discipline, so the portfolio favours a single shared place — a "brain" for urban cultural life. DOM is a coordinating roof, not just facility management: it oversees the network, acts as an entry and information point ("someone who knows all"), and connects residencies, institutions, and subsectors. The agile "guest room" residency model is its first concrete vehicle.





Scope

City level — Celje's municipally owned CCIS infrastructure, understood as the combination of space, content, hospitality, accessibility, production and storage, logistics, and the networks that connect them. The door stays open to state, private, and other partners, with awareness that the same challenges recur across Slovenia. Time horizon: a short-term start and testing phase (≈ 3 – 5 years, ≈ 7 years for real change) up to a ≈ 10 – 30 -year horizon, with short- and long-term goals pursued in parallel.

Potential

Accessibility as the foundation — open access on which content, audiences, and community can grow. Coordination under one roof; a flexible residency and guest-room model; talent retention that gives young people reasons to stay rather than move to Ljubljana; cross-sector connection linking culture with business, science, education, and technology; community and hospitality filling empty municipal spaces; and environmental sustainability. The ambition extends to growing the art and creative sector from roughly 120 to 200 organisations and positioning Celje internationally, including a long-term European Capital of Culture bid.



Who was there?

A BROAD MIX OF STAKEHOLDERS CO-CREATED THIS CASE

CCI ORGANISATIONS

Poligon; Center for Contemporary Art (residency programme); Celje Visual Artists Association; NGO for art in public space; NGO for visual art; Dance Public Institute of Celje; City Library of Celje / UNESCO City of Literature focal point; Celje Youth Center



ACADEMIA

Art & Dance School



LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Municipality of Celje (Development Office; Department of Projects, Economy and Development; Culture Department); Deputy Mayor in charge of Social Affairs



OTHERS

Business Incubator Celje



Analysis

THE LOCAL INNOVATION SUPPORT SYSTEM

The Municipality owns a usable asset base (6 flats, a youth hostel, and available maintenance manpower (Youth Center cleaning staff, Zelenica's services) alongside an existing UNESCO residency programme. There are strong potential actors (National Theatre Celje, the Center for Contemporary Art, museums, the Dance Institute, the City Library / UNESCO City of Literature, artistic NGOs, the Youth Center) and education partners (University of Maribor units in Celje, schools, the music school, plus the new "School in Culture" programme). Funding reference points include the municipal budget and tenders, Center for Creativity tenders, EU and national funding, tax benefits, and flagship companies (Cinkarna Celje, Zlatarna Celje) that could support residencies.

Coordination is the core gap: infrastructure is owned by the Municipality but managed by several institutions at varying levels, with no one overseeing the whole. The form of the coordinating roof (public institution or NGO) is undecided, management rules are undeveloped, and a mapping of potential spaces is absent. Technical infrastructure exists, but interest and audiences are lacking — studios go unused by local artists, locals do not attend residency activities, and rehearsal spaces, events, and shared studios (labs) are missing. Transport connections are a further gap.

Funding is short-term and heavily reliant on state funds that can be withdrawn; long-term funding is absent. Many public spaces previously used by artists have been privatised in recent years, narrowing the available base.

The assets, institutions, and manpower are largely in place but disconnected. The system needs coordination above content — a single roof (DOM) that connects, with content staying with the institutions — supported by long-term, diversified funding (modelled on Slovenia's 4-year NGO funding programmes), clear management rules, and a deliberate effort to design for actors not yet known rather than only the existing habitat.



Conclusions

& RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Celje has the assets of a functioning cultural infrastructure — municipal flats, a hostel, a UNESCO residency programme, strong institutions, and available manpower — but they are split across institutions with no one coordinating the whole. The decisive gap is governance, not hardware: ownership and management are separated, management rules are undeveloped, and funding is short-term and state-dependent. The cost of inaction is concrete — empty flats, continuing brain drain to Ljubljana, and content, community, and funding that stay disconnected. The opportunity is equally concrete: existing infrastructure ready to be activated under a single coordinating roof.

Recommendations

- Decide the coordinating roof — agree the form of DOM (the Municipality prefers an existing institution) and appoint a coordinator who keeps the vision.
- Use what exists — put the 6 municipal flats and the hostel into use, building on the UNESCO residency programme and available maintenance manpower.
- Map the ecosystem — actors, resources, funding sources, infrastructure, and potential buildings.
- Launch the guest-room residency model — short, agile stays open to local artists and tied to community activities.
- Develop management rules and secure rehearsal spaces, shared studios (labs), and events; use temporary empty business spaces in the interim.
- Secure long-term, diversified funding — modelled on Slovenia's 4-year NGO programmes, supported by corporate engagement and national-level lobbying.

Critical success factors

Pursue short- and long-term goals in parallel; keep coordination above content (the roof connects, the institutions keep the content); balance new and established actors; design for actors not yet known; and invest in the people and relationships that carry the portfolio over time.





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 further? 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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