

THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF INNOVATION AWARDS



This series of factsheets has been created by the member cities of the European Innovation Council Prizes - iCapital Alumni network, with the purpose of sharing their knowledge. They include the cities' challenges, their recommendations and best practices.

HOW CAN CITIES BETTER DEFINE THEIR INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM?

To become a European Capital of Innovation a city must assess its current innovation landscape. How to define 'innovation ecosystem' in such a way that all stakeholders upheld it? The definition helps to set the boundaries of the ecosystem and its key players.

Challenges

- Most cities struggled with the **scope of the 'innovation ecosystem' definition**. Sometimes, it was too narrow, applying only to a small subset of the city's challenges and **excluding valuable innovation stakeholders**. For others, it was too broad, having too many meanings and making it ambiguous and hard to enforce.
- **There was no process to evolve the definition** from a vertical domain (eg Industry 4.0) to a more horizontal approach across different urban domains (eg technological, social, cultural, administrative etc).
- There was a **lack of stakeholder consensus** around the 'innovation ecosystem' definition, making it challenging to uphold and/or enforce.

Recommendations

- Focus on one **initial definition and develop it** as the innovation process matures. Many iCapital winners used an evolutionary definition which eventually included the application of innovative processes across a wide range of domains.
- Make the definition **process as participatory** as possible, including not only the usual innovation players, but also citizens.
- Ensure that the definition of innovation is **agreed on by all players**, looking for a special alignment between political groups and the city.

iCAPITAL TOOLBOX



Best practice: citizen committees

Most cities have deployed participatory citizen committees which have brought valuable ideas, **feedback** and new insights into how to improve cities' **communications**. Through these committees, cities are beginning to lead **co-design sessions** with heterogeneous groups of citizens and receive feedback not only on their innovation experiments, but also on the internal digitalisation of each city's services and processes.

These committees do not, however, come without challenges. The proposals arising from individual citizens' feedback are sometimes hard to scale.