

ADVANCING FUTURE INTEGRATIVE POLICIES TO SUPPORT INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE CREATIVE ECOSYSTEMS



ECOCRIN

SUSTAINABLE AND
INNOVATIVE CREATIVE
ECOSYSTEMS

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INTRODUCTION – A CHALLENGE IN CURRENT POLICY DESIGN

The ECOCRIN research project at University of Turku examines the bottom-up needs of creative ecosystems and how current cultural and innovation policies aiming at supporting cultural and creative sectors are aligned with these needs. The project explores new ways of designing policies to boost sustainable growth and innovation of creative ecosystems. Our findings do not reveal any unexpected bottom-up needs but instead they confirm those already identified in existing literature. However, current policies in Finland have not sufficiently addressed these needs this far. These aspects are addressed in the ECOCRIN projects Fact Sheets as well as in the earlier Policy Brief.

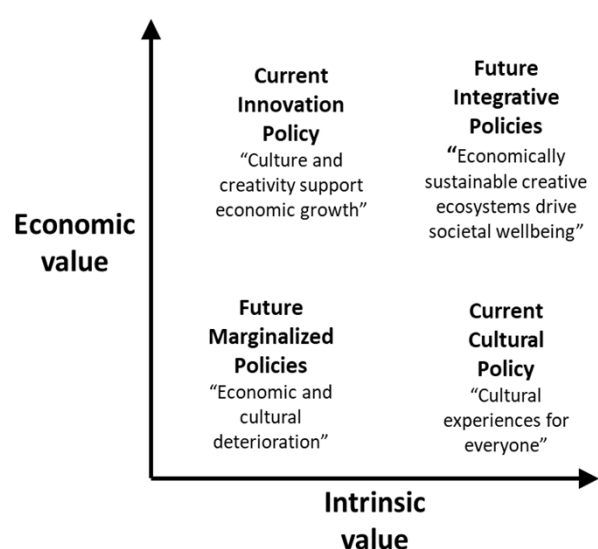


Figure 1. Economic and intrinsic value of cultural and innovation policies.

Cultural and innovation policies approach the needs and problems of the ecosystems from different angles. Understanding the meaning of economic and intrinsic value within cultural and innovation policies illustrates their divergence and convergence (Figure 1). Innovation policies typically emphasise demand-driven value chains to support creative ecosystem actors become more market-oriented in generating economic growth. In contrast, cultural policies focus on supply-driven production chains to support creative ecosystem actors become more effective in creating intrinsic value and well-being. Over time, these different approaches may result in conflicting or marginalised policies that lead to economic and cultural deterioration. Consequently, our findings suggest that a holistic, integrative policy approach is required to promote economically sustainable creative ecosystems which drive wider societal wellbeing.

To achieve future integrative policies, we propose an inclusive, multi-stakeholder view on value creation of creative ecosystems. At the core of this is a bottom-up and dialogue-based policy design, where grassroots actors, policymakers and intermediaries all have an important role.

BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO POLICY DESIGN – GRASSROOTS ACTORS AT THE CORE

The ECOCRIN project has published 'A Dynamic Model for an Ecological Approach to Policy Design for Finnish Creative Ecosystems', a living tool for developing bottom-up creative ecosystem policies in Finland. The Dynamic Model is freely available and aims to help bridge the gap between cultural and innovation policies. It inspires bottom-up thinking and supports dialogue in policy design to strengthen creative ecosystems. The Model enables various actors to analyse their activities and define their future aims. It encourages creative actors, policymakers, as well as intermediaries to explore what is needed to generate value in various forms to various stakeholders within creative ecosystems both in the present and towards desirable futures.

The Dynamic Model highlights a network approach to value creation. Challenges in society are complex and interconnected, and addressing them requires value co-creation of creative actors, policymakers and intermediaries across sectors and geographical levels. For the Dynamic Model to be successfully used in policy design, grassroots actors and intermediaries must actively engage at different stages, including problem identification, solution development, policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. Various participatory methods can be used, such as surveys, public meetings, committees, and working groups.

STRONGER DIALOGUE ACROSS POLICY DOMAINS IN POLICY DESIGN

Our results show that cultural and innovation policies are in many ways pulling into divergent directions. This highlights the need for cross-sectoral policy design to enable more impactful policies for creative ecosystems. Such collaborative policy efforts are increasingly visible in policy documents and discussion forums, but less in concrete policy means and actions. Furthermore, our findings show differences between national, regional, and inter-regional policies suggesting the importance of considering different geographical levels in policy design.

At the core of future integrative policy design is an open and continuous dialogue that extends beyond the boundaries of single policy domains. The starting point for this is to adopt an inclusive mindset by acknowledging the diversity of value creation and plurality of supportive means. Creative ecosystems can simultaneously contribute to economic, environmental, and societal wellbeing, and supporting this requires a wide range of policy instruments. Furthermore, impactful policy design benefits from permanent collaborative structures and practices across policy domains at local, regional, and national levels. Ideally, national ministries should lead by example in dismantling institutional siloes leading to divergent policies. Moreover, it is important to develop and publish joint strategies that cut across policy domains to strengthen creative ecosystems across all geographical levels.

IMPORTANCE OF INTERMEDIARIES IN POLICY DESIGN

Given the local nature of creative ecosystems, it is equally important to understand how national policies are integrated to regional policies and local grassroots initiatives. Our findings suggest a crucial role of intermediaries to connect the actors and resources within the creative ecosystems and beyond with other sectors. Intermediaries may also help establishing connections with national and international actors and identify touchpoints and language through which cultural and innovation policies could address common goals to support creative ecosystems. Consequently, strengthening intermediary activities is important for aligning cultural and innovation policies and for shaping roles and operations of creative ecosystems. This is needed both at local/regional, national, and international levels/fields.

To achieve this, the value of intermediaries should be acknowledged and supported. Intermediaries come in all variety of sizes and professions, to enable diverse and meaningful actions. They have deep understandings of the diversity of the grassroots operating culture within creative ecosystems, and they recognise the evolving needs of the field and build bridges between grassroots actors and policymakers. Various actors can act as intermediaries as they have an important role as facilitators both within and beyond the creative ecosystem. In addition to developing their role of existing intermediaries, it is important to create opportunities for new actors to act as intermediaries.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVANCING FUTURE INTEGRATIVE POLICIES

1.

We recommend strengthening a bottom-up approach to policy design. To achieve this:

- Encourage grassroots actors, policymakers, and intermediaries to adopt a network approach to future-oriented value creation and to identify their roles and actions within creative ecosystems.
- Recognise the needs of grassroots actors concerning both their current and future value creation activities by engaging the actors at different stages of policy design.
- Utilise the Dynamic Model for an Ecological Approach to Policy Design for Finnish Creative Ecosystems as a tool to support bottom-up thinking in policy design.

2.

We recommend strengthening dialogue across policy domains. To achieve this:

- Recognise the plurality and diversity of value creation within creative ecosystems: cultural and creative sectors contribute to the economic, environmental and societal wellbeing of society.
- Create permanent collaborative structures and practices across policy domains at local, regional, and national levels.
- Develop and publish joint strategies that cut across policy domains to strengthen creative ecosystems at local, regional, and national levels.

3.

We recommend strengthening the network and role of intermediaries in the creative ecosystem. To achieve this:

- Identify and develop the role of intermediaries. Note that any actor within creative ecosystems can take on the role of an intermediary.
- Establish dialogue, mediation activities, and cooperation with organisations that already act as intermediaries within creative ecosystems.
- Acknowledge the needs, skills, and work of intermediaries to strengthen the recognition of intermediary activities.

PROJECT RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Policy Briefs:

Heinonen, J., Hytönen, K., Pukkinen, T., Stenholm P., Lemmetyinen, A., Siivonen, K., Latvala-Harvilahti, P. & Taylor, A. (2025) **Policy Brief. Advancing Future Integrative Policies to Support Innovative and Sustainable Creative Ecosystems**. D5.2. ECOCRIN – Sustainable and Innovative Creative Ecosystems. Turku School of Economics, University of Turku.

Latvala-Harvilahti, P. & Siivonen, K. (2025) **Policy Brief. Policy Analysis and the Needs of the Creative Ecosystems**. D5.1. ECOCRIN – Sustainable and Innovative Creative Ecosystems. Turku School of Economics, University of Turku.

The Dynamic Model and the Roadmap:

Siivonen, K. – Taylor, A. – Latvala-Harvilahti, P. – Heinonen, J. – Hytönen, K. – Pukkinen, T. – Stenholm, P. & Lemmetyinen A. (2025) **A Dynamic Model for an Ecological Approach to Policy Design for Finnish Creative Ecosystems**. D4.1. ECOCRIN – Sustainable and Innovative Creative Ecosystems. Turku School of Economics, University of Turku.



Siivonen, K., Taylor, A., Latvala-Harvilahti, P., Heinonen, J., Hytönen, K., Pukkinen, T., Stenholm, P. & Lemmetyinen, A. (2025) **Roadmap for Strengthening Creative Ecosystems**. D5.3. ECOCRIN – Sustainable and Innovative Creative Ecosystems. Turku School of Economics, University of Turku.

Fact Sheets:

Hytönen, K., Pukkinen, T. & Latvala-Harvilahti, P. (2024) **Fact Sheet: Creative Ecosystem Needs**. D2.1. ECOCRIN – Sustainable and Innovative Creative Ecosystems. Turku School of Economics, University of Turku.

Pukkinen, T. & Latvala-Harvilahti, P. (2024) **Fact Sheet: Creative Ecosystem Policy Analysis**. D.3.1. ECOCRIN – Sustainable and Innovative Creative Ecosystems. Turku School of Economics, University of Turku.

Stenholm, P. & Hytönen, K. (2024) **Fact Sheet: Creative Ecosystem Mapping**.

D.1.1. ECOCRIN – Sustainable and Innovative Creative Ecosystems. Turku School of Economics, University of Turku.



All ECOCRIN publications are available on the project website:

sites.utu.fi/ecocrin



FURTHER INFORMATION

The Dynamic Model draws empirically from three locally diverse ecosystem examples (Kuhmo, Pori, Turku & Paimio) but is applicable also to other regions, particularly for those outside the metropolitan area.

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