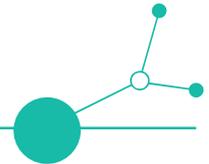


# x-Inno Pilot Concept 2

## Integrating maker skills in innovation ecosystem of industrial regions



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Pilot activity 2: Concept



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## A. About x-Inno Radar and its Pilots

x-Inno Radar is an Interreg Central Europe project that aims to explore, promote, and integrate soft skills in industrial environments (2024-2027). A consortium of eight non-metropolitan regions, a think tank and a scientific institute runs it.

x-Inno Radar builds on a joint structured approach consisting of three main phases:

1. screenings of the regional soft skill landscapes
2. jointly developed pilot activities
3. regional strategies and policy recommendations

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase “pilot activities”, partner teams test new approaches in four thematically different pilots. These pilots take up the needs discovered in the screening phase. As well, their outcomes feed into the strategic considerations of partners. Each pilot consists of two test zones.

The four pilot themes are:

- (1) **Cross-Innovation:** “Strengthening transversal soft skills and cross-sectoral inspiration in industrial regions” (focus: transversal skills)
- (2) **Level Integration:** “Integrating maker skills in innovation ecosystem of industrial regions” (focus: maker skills)
- (3) **Pioneer Spirit:** “Reviving industrial society’s pioneer skills as basis for transformation” (focus: entrepreneurial skills)
- (4) **Territorial Cooperation:** “Improving skill capacities in industrial regions through territorial cooperation” (focus: networking amongst soft skill stakeholders)

This document here presents the concept for pilot 2 as the respective partner team jointly elaborated it. All four pilot concepts can be found on the project homepage [www.x-inno-radar.eu](http://www.x-inno-radar.eu).



*Brainstorming on pilot actions at Partner meeting - Karlovy Vary region, April 2025*



## B. Pilot Theme: Integrating maker skills in innovation ecosystem of industrial regions (level integration)

Long-standing industrial regions are thriving places for makers, tinkerers, autodidacts, nerds, techies and the like. These usually rely on a specific habitual set of soft skills such as improvisation, explorative learning, low-budget solutions and crowdsourcing. However, the inspirational potential of these place-based soft skills as well as their `experts` remain usually unseen and non-integrated in the innovation ecosystems.

x-Inno Radar promotes and supports makers and their specific soft skills. Partners reach out to makers and garage communities for investigating their potential to inspire the institutionalised innovation landscape, bringing them on eye-level with R&D departments. Showcasing formats are joint public presentations, exhibitions, pitching forums, study tours, exchange workshops...

With two experimental testcases, we want to reach out to these communities through developing and applying

- (1) **Garages meet R&D:** formats showcasing specific habitual innovation skills of makers, such as exhibitions, pitching forums, study tours, exchange workshops
- (2) **Boots for roots:** systematic search for undiscovered grass root makers and tailored entrepreneurial support measures that complement, amplify and market their specific skillsets

This pilot is targeted to upgrade competences in industrial and technological SME, research, general public (here: maker scene), Business Support Organisations.

## C. Pilot Test Zone 2A: Garages meet R&D

### C.1 Focus

**“Garages meet R&D”:** formats showcasing specific habitual innovation skills of makers, such as exhibitions, pitching forums, study tours, exchange workshops

**Pilot team:**

- Stebo Competence Centre Community Development | STEBO - Belgium (PP8 | Test zone leader)
- Creative Region Linz & Upper | CREARE - Austria (PP2)
- Association of Cultural & Creative Industries Chemnitz & Region (Creative Chemnitz) | KC - Germany (PP10)

**Main target groups:**

- Industrial and technological SME
- Research
- General public (here: maker scene)
- Business Support Organisations



## Reference practices:

### Start-up Safari Limburg, Belgium (organised by LSU)

Limburg Start-Up (LSU) and 42 partner organisations organised a full-day "Start-up Safari" on October 5, 2018, to connect start-ups with key players in the regional innovation ecosystem. Participants visited over 20 support organisations, including incubators, accelerators, and innovation centres across Limburg. The event began at Corda Campus and included guided bus transport to locations like IMEC, VLAIO, GreenVille, T2 Campus, and more. Throughout the day, attendees engaged in networking, start-up pitches, and informational sessions to boost their ventures. The safari provided start-ups with direct access to valuable resources, peer connections, and a strong sense of community support.

### VDI Garage, Leipzig, Germany

VDI Garage served as an inspiration by showing how a single, neutral space can bring together R&D professionals, makers, start-ups, and even schoolchildren to collaborate and exchange ideas. This insight led to prioritise creating a similar shared environment that emphasises smart soft skills, reflection, and cross-sector interaction.

More info: <https://vdi-garage.de/>

## C.2 Conceptual approach

As a pilot team, we jointly defined a harmonised approach that builds on shared best practices while allowing for regional specificity. Inspired by initiatives such as Limburg's Start-up Safari and the integrative model of VDI Garage, we agreed to map local R&D hubs and informal maker spaces in each partner region as a foundational step. This enables us to identify key actors and environments suited for connection and collaboration. Based on this mapping, each partner organises local "innovation safaris" - dynamic events that brings makers, researchers, and innovators together through site visits or co-creative gatherings in neutral settings.

Together, we will develop thematic and engaging programmes that cater to the needs of both makers and R&D stakeholders, aligning formats across regions while allowing room for local adaptation. These activities will culminate in hosted events that foster meaningful interaction, with careful documentation of processes and outcomes. Through a structured follow-up process, we will gather feedback and reflect both locally and transnationally, ensuring that local insights contribute to a shared, cross-border learning experience. In this way, the synchronised local activities reinforce and enrich our collaborative pilot effort, making it a cohesive and scalable reference practice.

## C.3 Expected outcomes and desired effects

The pilot aims to create meaningful new connections between makers and R&D communities, sparking collaborations that would not have occurred otherwise. By bringing together these often separate worlds, the initiative seeks to foster greater mutual understanding and open up fresh opportunities for innovation.

A key focus is to make soft skills more visible and valued as essential complements to technical expertise. Through the development of practical tools for reflection and learning, the pilot encourages a broader appreciation of how these skills contribute to successful innovation processes.

Additionally, the pilot is designed to deliver replicable methods for connecting fragmented communities and bridging gaps within regional innovation ecosystems.



Looking ahead, the results of the pilot will feed directly into regional action plans, embedding makers and fixers as active contributors to innovation strategies. The experiences and insights gained will also serve as a valuable reference for shaping regional soft skill strategies, demonstrating the importance of informal, hands-on learning environments.

On a broader scale, the pilot will contribute to transnational recommendations by drawing on comparative findings from the participating regions. Blueprint development will capture the tested methods and formats in a transferable structure, enabling other regions to replicate or adapt the approach. This will create new opportunities for makers to engage with other regional ecosystems and to co-develop a transnational maker-R&D interface. Learnings and “watch & learn” experiences will be actively shared across x-Inno partners, supporting mutual inspiration and continuous improvement throughout the network.

## C.4 Key activities

- **Mapping** - Identify and map local R&D hubs and informal maker spaces in each region
- **Safari format** - Organise “innovation safaris” that bring these communities together, either through site visits or neutral co-creation settings over one or more days.
- **Programme development** - Design an engaging, thematic programme tailored to both makers and R&D stakeholders
- **Implementation** - Host the co-creative events or tours and document interactions and outcomes
- **Follow-up** - Collect feedback, reflect on the collaboration process, and report results both locally and transnationally

## C.5 Roadmap

Timing	Pilot team / single PP	Joint / local key activities
Preparation phase (Mar - Jun 2025)		
Mar 25	Pilot team	Joint concept development in 2 <sup>nd</sup> partner meeting Czechia
April 25	Pilot team	Online meeting: follow up joint concept development, translation of joint concept to local regions
May 25	Pilot team	Online meeting: follow up joint concept development, further planning of local pilot ideas and sharing progress
Implementation phase (Jun 2025 - Apr 2026)		
Jun 25	PP8	Mapping R&D spots and makers
Jul 25	PP2	Mapping R&D spots and makers
Aug 25	PP10	Mapping R&D spots and makerspaces, invitation of participants
Sep-Oct 25	PP8	Programme development, selection locations, building database of makers for invitations, preparation Safari Tour
Sep-Oct 25	PP2	Programme development, selection locations, building database of makers for invitations, preparation Safari Tour



Sep 25	PP10	Preparatory sessions with facilitators, programme finalisation, material preparation
Oct-Nov 25	PP10	Execution of the collaborative workshop (2 days)
Nov 25	PP2	Execution of the Makers Safari
Nov 25	Pilot team	Jointly monitoring of ongoing pilot implementation in 3 <sup>rd</sup> partner meeting Slovenia
Nov-Dec 25	PP10	Follow-up documentation, analysis of feedback, and optional online session
Nov 25	PP8	Programme finalisation, preparation with R&D departments, invitation makers
Mar 26	PP8	Safari tour with makers to R&D departments
Apr 26	Pilot team	Final reporting of pilot outcomes within the x-Inno network
Assessment and reporting phase (Apr - May 2026)		
Mar / Apr 26	Pilot team	Jointly assessing pilot implementation in 4 <sup>th</sup> partner meeting Germany
By May 26	Pilot team	Jointly elaborating pilot implementation report
Roll-out phase (Jun - Nov 2026)		
By Sep 2026	PP2, 8, 10	Locally defining future action planning based on pilot results
By Oct 2026	Pilot team	Jointly elaborating pilot blueprint



## D. Pilot Test Zone 2B: Boots for Roots

### D.1 Focus

**“Boots for roots”**: systematic search for undiscovered grass root makers and tailored entrepreneurial support measures that complement, amplify and market their specific skillsets

#### Pilot team:

- Regional Development Agency in Bielsko-Biała | ARRSA - Poland (PP7 | Test zone leader)
- The Regional Chamber of Commerce of the Karlovy Vary Region | KHK KK - Czech Republic (PP3)
- Padova Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture | CCIAA Padova - Italy (PP4)

#### Reference practices:

- PioneerGarage (Creative Region Linz& Upper Austria GmbH)
- FabLab (Regional Development Agency in Bielsko-Biała)

#### Main target groups:

- Makers
- Business support organisations

### D.2 Conceptual approach

Pilot action focus, agreed among implementing partners is:

**Finding & mapping** local makers (of different professions: tech related, craft related, artists...) to further **support** them with entrepreneurial skillset that will enable them to **“monetise their hobby”**

The pilot approach was jointly defined to create a structured pathway that engages makers from initial outreach to transnational visibility. It ensures consistent engagement and capacity-building across all partner regions.

We built on successful models like FabLab and Pioneer Garage, which demonstrate how accessible maker spaces and tailored entrepreneurial support can drive innovation and business development from the grassroots level. These examples informed both the content and format of our workshops and events, emphasizing hands-on engagement and low-threshold access to entrepreneurial pathways.

Local activities, such as maker fairs, hackathons, and tailored workshops, allow each partner to address specific regional needs and contexts, while the collaborative elements, like joint concept development, shared workshop content, and the international event, ensure coherence and shared learning across the partnership.



## D.3 Expected outcomes and desired effects

The pilot action within Test Zone 2B is designed to engage local makers and support their transition from hobbyists to potential entrepreneurs. Through a structured, three-phase approach—mapping, workshops, and an international event—we aim to identify and mobilize hidden talent, provide targeted entrepreneurial support, and create meaningful opportunities for transnational exchange.

After implementation of the activities, we expect:

- Increased visibility and engagement of local makers through tailored outreach and events.
- Enhanced entrepreneurial capacities among participants, particularly regarding the monetization of creative skills and hobbies.
- Strengthened regional maker communities through practical support and recognition.
- Identification of promising individuals for participation in an international showcase, promoting cross-regional collaboration and exposure.

The results of the pilot will be used in several strategic ways:

- Integration into regional action plans to scale support structures for makers and creative entrepreneurs.
- Contribution to regional soft skills strategies by providing insights into informal learning pathways and grassroots innovation.
- Development of transnational recommendations to guide policy and funding priorities for maker-based entrepreneurship.
- Transferability through pilot blueprints, enabling other regions to replicate or adapt the methodology to their local contexts.

Ultimately, the pilot will serve as a stepping stone toward more inclusive, flexible, and community-driven innovation ecosystems across participating regions.

## D.4 Key activities

Test zone 2B activities are divided into 3 main steps aligned with the parts of the pilot action concept:

### 1) Mapping of potentially interested makers:

- a) Based on joint tools and created guidelines
  - i) Mapping methods table - all partners shared their good practices related to their current outreach methods, based on which, short analyses and guidelines were prepared by ARRSA as test zone leader
- b) Organisation of the easily accessible event (hackathon, competition, local fairs...) - all partners agreed that this way of approaching makers may be valuable and effective and due to that each partner will organize one of the mentioned above, tailored to their local context
- c) On the event, open call for makers will be launched to attract participants for the workshops indicated in 2nd step of pilot action implementation

### 2) Workshops “How to monetise your hobby?”

- a) According to the open call results, each partner will organise workshops focusing on entrepreneurial support



- i) All partners will define common introductory steps (i.e. (1) From Hobby to Business - key differences, (2) Identifying market value, (3) Monetisation pathways, (4) Business Strategy & First Business Steps
  - ii) Each partner will define own specific scope
  - iii) Contest for makers - to choose those who will attend international event
- 3) International event - project partners and makers from all involved regions will participate in an international event, to exhibit makers works as well as share the pilot action results.

## D.5 Roadmap

Timing	Pilot team / single PP	Joint / local key activities
<b>Preparation phase (Mar - Jun 2025)</b>		
Mar 25	Pilot team	Joint concept development in 2 <sup>nd</sup> partner meeting Czechia
May 25	PP7	Organisation of online meeting, preparation of guidelines for effective stakeholders mapping
Jun 25- Aug 25	PP3, PP4, PP7	Makers mapping (each PP local level)
Jun 25- Aug 25	Pilot team	Joint concept of “How to monetise your hobby?” workshops & event guidelines
<b>Implementation phase (Jun 2025 - Apr 2026)</b>		
Sep - Oct 25	PP3, PP4, PP7	Organisation of the easily accessible events with open call for makers (local)
Oct - Dec 25	PP3, PP4, PP7	Conduction of the workshops (local)
Dec 25 - Feb 26	PP3, PP4, PP7	Contest for makers and selection for international event
Nov 25	Pilot team	Jointly monitoring of ongoing pilot implementation in 3 <sup>rd</sup> partner meeting Slovenia
Mar - Apr 26	Pilot team	International event showcasing maker work and sharing pilot results
<b>Assessment and reporting phase (Apr - May 2026)</b>		
Mar / Apr 26	Pilot team	Jointly assessing pilot implementation in 4 <sup>th</sup> partner meeting Germany
By May 26	Pilot team	Jointly elaborating pilot implementation report
<b>Roll-out phase (Jun - Nov 2026)</b>		
By Sep 2026	PP3, PP4, PP7	Locally defining future action planning based on pilot results
By Oct 2026	Pilot team	Jointly elaborating pilot blueprint