



TIP Working Party
CO-CREATION PROJECT
2019-2020

Case study from Italy



Open Innovation Platform of the Lombardy Region

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Executive summary

The Open Innovation Platform was originally designed and launched by Lombardy Region in 2015, under ERDF 07-13, as a meeting place for R&D+I experts and professionals in research and industry. The project evolved in 2018 towards a “quadruple helix” model becoming a tool to deliver citizen engagement initiative, bridging the gap between the research community and the civil society, offering all concerned parties the opportunity to get engaged and make their voice heard.

The platform offers a broad range of tools to inform, share and engage, to launch and manage projects, to disseminate results, to create and manage communities and working groups, to profile participants and manage permissions, to route content according to user interests.

The software framework (which includes a multilingual interface) has been released under an open source, free license to promote its adoption in other regions, networks and projects.

Today the platform is broadly used by the Regional Government to carry out citizen engagement initiatives related to responsible research, innovation and sustainability, to discuss the adoption of new technologies with an impact on everyday life.

The platform’s thematic focus is n. 2 ‘Effective involvement of NGOs and civil society at addressing societal challenges’

The platform has an established base of users: 2.375 organisations and +20.000 participants have registered so far (55% industry, 25% academia and research, 20% public administration and civil society).

An overall number of 8.000 collaboration opportunities in R&D+I projects has been circulated, receiving over 240 expressions of interest in the past 12 months.

Furthermore, the platform sends personalized digests to its participants, to make sure that they are aware of what is going on. Over 10.000 emails are sent each night, including news of general interest on research and innovation topics and alerts on new contents (news, discussions, collaboration proposals and partner search, project results) covering topics of interest of each participant.

Experts from Finlombarda spa and ARIA spa (respectively Lombardy Region’s financial and IT in-house agencies) manage the platform and take care of all back office activities related to CRM. Lombardy Region provides the policy framework for the whole platform, sets priority themes and guidelines.

From the stakeholders’ point of view, the platform provides free collaborative working tools (plugins) hosting communities, work teams, projects, organizations; it maximizes synergies and network capability bringing together individuals with common interests, skills and competencies. Among the most recent initiatives available on the platform, the case study presents ‘Open Challenge’ a suite of tools used by companies to launch and manage open innovation challenges, on topics that fit with the strategic views of the region or address societal needs.

Open Challenge is a free service made available for all companies that want to set up innovation projects, scout ideas and new talents, look for solutions by means of a call to action targeted to a

wide variety of subjects.

The challenge usually takes place entirely on the platform and depending on the target audience (students, professionals, citizens) anyone can apply. According to the level of confidentiality that the company needs to protect the ideas, the results of the challenge can be published online.

Companies have appreciated the ‘Open Challenge’ tool because the application procedure is very simple, cutting red tape and paperwork. Furthermore, no limits on themes or targets allowed high levels of creativity and cross-fertilization allowing them to create a tailor made initiative. As it is a free tool, with very limited boundaries and no funding, the worst scenario is that companies withdraw themselves from the challenge.

1. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CO-CREATION INITIATIVE

Name of the initiative*: Open Innovation challenges: pilot action towards co-creation process

Start date*: September 2019

Expected end date*: n.a.

Country/ies where partners are based*: Italy

Project budget *:

Share of budget co-funded by partners:

Share of public funding (please provide details of the public authorities providing support): 100% Regione Lombardia – public funding

Share of budget co-funded by VC or other sources (please specify):

Main focus (please select)*: Research / Economic/ Innovation

Innovation

Goal and objective of the co-creation initiative

1*. What is the vision of the co-creation initiative?

Lombardy Region Open Innovation Platform (www.openinnovation.regione.lombardia.it) is a collaborative web environment that gathers government, industry, academia and civil participants around strategic Research and Innovation (R&I) topics.

The Platform is an open and inclusive space to enable dialogue between public and private players where the strategic R&I goals of the regional government are shared, discussed and integrated: all regional innovation stakeholders are informed and actively engaged. With a strong focus shift from institutions and organizations to individuals, citizens play a role alongside professionals within enterprises to identify needs and solutions in the whole life cycle of the regional R&I policy. Professionals working in companies, research institutions, public administrations, organisations representing the civil society and citizens themselves meet on the platform and discuss by means of a broad range of targeted tools designed for knowledge and ideas sharing, project creation and management, dissemination of research results. Today the platform counts over 16.000 participants, research and innovation professionals working in companies and research centres and concerned citizens/ representatives of associations, lending substance to the principle of multi-

actor, public engagement. More than 4000 news and 2000 discussions have been posted and 11 public consultations on regional thematic priorities have witnessed a broad participation of all relevant actors.

To date, the platform has promoted to its participants over 20.000 collaboration proposals coming from 60 countries thanks to a collaboration with the Enterprise Europe Network, putting the basis of co-creation processes between competence centres in the Region. A new instrument, called “Open Challenge”, has been recently released on the platform to support companies exploit the potential offered by the open innovation paradigm, i.e. the use of purposive inflows and outflows of knowledge to accelerate internal innovation and expand the markets.

Open Challenge is a free service made available for all companies that want to set up innovation projects, scout ideas and new talents, look for solutions by means of a call to action targeted to a wide variety of subjects.

A company might be looking for talents or skills, solutions to specific problems, plans to boost productivity, new product ideas or any other innovation need which cannot be found within the company.

After a thorough needs analysis, experts from Finlombarda spa and ARIA spa (respectively Lombardy Region’s financial and IT in-house agencies), together with the company, co-create the best possible instrument that is launched and managed on the platform. It can be a call for ideas, a contest, a competition, talent scouting. The target can vary depending on the type of challenge: students, professionals, start-ups, other enterprises, universities, research centres, citizens coming from Italy or abroad.

Each challenge has a dedicated page and can set up a variety of tools offered by the platform itself (news, communities, document upload, forums, video conferencing, surveys etc.).

The application procedure is very simple: users create a personal profile, fill in a form and apply. From that point on, the process is managed on one side by Finlombarda spa and ARIA spa, which supervise the whole back office procedure, and on the another by the company, which accesses and evaluates the applications. Through a co-creation process that happens entirely on the platform, the participating companies can benefit of the following services/products:

- creation of new products and services, or innovation of old ones
- talent scouting in a non-traditional way
- community and employee engagement
- new cooperation opportunities with Lombardy Region
- visibility and new marketing opportunities
- presence in regional or international events

The involved stakeholders are:

- 1 public administration
- 2 regional government agencies
- 3 companies as pilot projects

1A. What is the rationale behind the vision of the co-creation initiative?

Promote and support the adoption of open innovation practices. Promote the role of the Regional Government as “catalyser” to start co-creation initiatives in domains where relevant actors do not know each other, as in the case of some emerging industries. **1B.**

Was it someone's initiative or was it jointly set by all partners? Please provide details on the mechanisms implemented to co-develop the vision.

It was co- created by the regional Government - Lombardy Region Directorate General for Research, Innovation, University, Export and Internationalization (in brief DG Research). with

Finlombarda spa spa - the regional Development Agency - and ARIA spa - the regional Digital Company

Companies as pilot projects:

Gefran spa: Italian multinational company specialized in designing and manufacturing sensors, drives, systems and components for automation and control of industrial processes. The challenge on the platform is a scouting for young professionals.

Sirti spa: leading technology company specialized in the design and production of network infrastructures and telecoms system integration.

Starting with an analysis based on needs and problems expressed by employees, the challenge is set up as a call for start-ups.

Rold spa: Rold is an Italian SME leader in the field of household appliances. It has three main divisions: Appliances, Industrial and the R-Lab. The latter aims at ideating innovative solutions by investigating novel technologies and advanced materials. Rold is setting up a multi-disciplinary strategic partnership to find out innovative solutions aiming at reducing microplastics dispersion.

1C. Has the vision of the initiative ever been revised? Why?

Not yet, the tool has just been recently released.

2*. What are the main objectives of the initiative?

To support companies, exploit the potential offered by the open innovation paradigm, i.e. the use of purposive inflows and outflows of knowledge to accelerate internal innovation and expand the markets.

2A. Are there plans to commercialise the co-created products and/or services? Please explain.

It's a public initiative with public funding so there are no plans to commercialise it.

3. What are the main motivations of the different partners to collaborate in this initiative (e.g., need for finance, competences and skills, network & connections of partners, risk sharing)?

On one hand Lombardy Region wants to provide companies a free tool that can help them experiment open innovation initiatives. This is especially important for small and medium enterprises, which are the backbone of the regional economy: they might not be able to carry on such projects on their own (too small, no specific budget, no dedicated human resources available) but would if adequately supported. On the other, the regional partner fills in the gap, the distance with the world of enterprises, creating a leverage effect to boost innovation.

Companies can launch innovative projects within a much-protected and institutional environment. They benefit from communication campaigns that help them gain visibility and accountability. They enter a network that can be useful for further projects, be ahead on public call for proposals or funding opportunities, as well as sharing knowledge and expertise in a regional and international environment.

For all partners involved, motivations to collaborate include sharing competences and skills, network & connections to reach common goals.

Functional roles of co-creation partners

4*. Please fill in the table below with the following information:

4A*. Specify all partners involved in the co-creation process (specifying the number of partners per type)

4B*. Choose the co-creation process project initiator(s)

4C*. Specify where partners are located

4D*. Specify what are the main activities and responsibilities of partners

	A.	B.	C. Location			D. Main activities						
	Partners for co-creation	Project initiator(s)	Local/regional	National	International	Priorities setting	Research	Designing products	Experimentation and development	Commercialization / Support (marketing, consultancy, etc.)	Product launch	Financial engagement (share of funding, %)
Firms:												
Service	1		1					1		1	1	
Manufacturing	3		3						3			
Research organizations:												
Public research institutes												
Universities												
Civil society:												
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)												
Personal engagement												
Government:												
Public authorities	1		1			1					1	
Government agencies	1		1					1			1	
Transnational organizations												

Notes:

5*. Were there any conditions to participate the co-creation initiative? (e.g. amount of funding provided, data sharing conditions, type of expertise, etc.)

n.a.

Q5A. If there were any criteria for selecting partners, please, name them

n.a.

For each co-creation partner, please, provide the following information:

6*. Name of organization and its scope of activities (local/regional/national/international) and website (if available)

1. Lombardy Region Directorate General for Research, Innovation, University, Export and Internationalization (in brief DG Research). The Lombardy Region General Directorate for Research, Innovation, University, Export and Internationalization supports research in emerging strategic sectors, encourages the transfer of results on the market and boosts competitiveness of the economic-social system. Main initiatives promoted by the General Directorate aim at:
 - Strengthening public and private investment in Research and Innovation
 - Encouraging open innovation
 - Enhancing Export and Internationalization strategies for SMEsThe DG is in charge of managing the Regional Operational Programme of the European Regional Development Funds for the 2014-2020 period.
2. Finlombarda spa is a regional in-house financial company, totally participated by the Lombardy Region, whose institutional task is to support regional policies for the economic and social development of the Lombardy territory, enterprises, the governmental authority and the citizen, through financial and management tools and initiatives.
3. ARIA spa is an in-house company of the Lombardy Region managing and developing IT systems with a specific focus on digital-health, digital-government and e-procurement solutions.

Companies as pilot projects:

1. Gefran spa: Italian multinational company specialized in designing and manufacturing sensors, drives, systems and components for automation and control of industrial processes. The challenge on the platform is a scouting for young professionals.
2. Sirti spa: leading technology company specialized in the design and production of network infrastructures and telecoms system integration. Starting with an analysis based on needs and problems expressed by employees, the challenge is set up as a call for start-ups.
3. Rold spa: is an Italian SME leader in the field of household appliances. It has three main divisions: Appliances, Industrial and the R-Lab. The latter aims at ideating innovative solutions by investigating novel technologies and advanced materials. Rold is setting up a multi-disciplinary strategic partnership to find out innovative solutions aiming at reducing microplastics dispersion.

7*. Please explain the rationale of involving this partner in the co-creation project

As there are no limits on themes, objectives or targets, companies are free to present a challenge that is most suitable to their needs.

Companies of any size or industrial sector can join in.

Even if the tool is promoted as an opportunity for companies, challenges are available also for institutions or organizations that are not specifically SMEs (eg. Public administrations).

8*. Please explain the role and main responsibilities of this partner in the co-creation project

Within the project, DG Research supports the companies explore and detect emerging strategic sectors, encourages the transfer of results to market and generally speaking, boosts competitiveness of the economic-social system; Finlombarda spa collects and codifies the needs expressed by the companies and participates at the co-design process of the entire released service/product; ARIA spa manages and develops the IT systems.

9*. What is the financial engagement of this partner in the co-creation initiative (i.e. what is the share of funding they provide overall and for each of the activities of the co-creation project)?

Initiative and related services are fully funded by the regional Government, companies participating in the pilots bear their own costs.

2. MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

10*. Who is responsible for co-creation process management?

The regional Government in particular, Lombardy Region Directorate General for Research, Innovation, University, Export and Internationalization (in brief DG Research)

Q10A*. Was a steering group or advisory committee set up? If so, please provide details on its role and frequency of interactions.

There's a steering group with all involved managers in DG Research, Finlombarda spa and ARIA spa .

11*. What is the frequency of interaction between co-creation partners? (please select)

If necessary (not scheduled)

Q11A*. Please describe the nature and frequency of interaction between all couples of partners

Project meetings and continuous interactions.

12*. What are the main means of communication among co-creation partners? (Please choose all appropriate answers)

- a) Official meetings at the end of the reporting period (quarterly, yearly)
- b) Sharing of documents, reports, publications

- c) Digital tools (e.g., email communication, conference calls, internet platforms)
- d) Conferences, workshops, etc. engaging external stakeholders
- e) one to one meetings

13. Is there a partnership agreement for the co-creation initiative?

Yes, there is a service contract.

13A. Is the agreement formalised?

Yes,

13B. Please specify the type of the agreement:

Legal agreement

13C. Are legal issues related to the ownership of jointly developed IPRs settled in a partnership agreement?

The legal issues related to ownership of jointly developed intellectual property rights are not resolved in a partnership agreement. Companies must, if necessary, take care of these concerns on their own.

13D. In case there is no agreement, please explain how partners' activities are coordinated

14A*. Who is the owner of data from the co-creation initiative?

DG Research

14B*. Who is the owner of IP from the co-creation initiative?

Each company participating in the Challenge.

15*. How is the process of accessing research results (for partners) organized?

n.a.

16*. How do you set the balance between data sharing and IP protection?

n.a.

17. Is public access to either co-creation results or products granted?

n.a.

18*. What types of intellectual property (IP) protection mechanisms are used (e.g., patents, trademarks, industry design, utility model, complexity)?

n.a.

18A*. What types of IP are more important for your co-creation processes?

n.a.

3. PROJECT EVALUATION

19*. Are milestones and key performance indicators (KPIs) set for the co-creation initiative?

Yes

19A. Are they settled in a partnership agreement?

Yes, in the service contract

19B. Are they essentially qualitative or quantitative?

Quantitative

19C. Please provide the main KPIs (provide up to 5 indicators)

Number of innovation challenges on line on the Open Innovation Platform and number of participants;

Number of the new expressions of interest from companies or institutions.

20*. At what stages is the evaluation implemented?

Interim / Ex-post

For each evaluation stage, please, provide the following information:

20A. What approaches are used?

Interim: Internal reports

Ex post: Final report

20B. What types of data are used?

The data are the numbers of challenges launched and of their participants.

20C. How is the evaluation process organised? Who is responsible for it? Are there any external evaluations conducted?

On one hand DG Research evaluates the overall performance of the tool.

On the other, each company evaluates the outcome of the challenge they have launched.

Finlombarda spa helps the companies create the best possible challenge proving support in the set up phase in order to clarify targets, define objectives and desired outcomes. This activity can then be capitalized in the final evaluation stage when companies analyse the benefits of the tool.

21. Are the evaluation results open (e.g. published on the website, reports, structured databases, etc.) or closed (used only for the internal goals)? If they are open, please specify.

At the end of the challenge, we publish online the name of the winners and the results of each challenge.

22. What are the implications of any evaluations conducted so far (e.g., revision of KPIs; suspension or termination of funding; penalties and rewards associated to performance)? Please explain.

The tool has just been recently launched so it is too early to draw the line and analyse the implications. As it is a free tool, with very limited boundaries and no funding, the worst scenario is that companies withdraw themselves from the challenge.

23. What are the key success factors of this co-creation initiative?

The tool basically has no limitations for companies, which feel free to apply and launch their challenge in a protected, institutional environment. The only boundary is the match between the theme of the challenge and the Regional Development Strategy, which is very broad and covers the entire spectrum of industrial activities.

24. Were there any challenges during the co-creation process? Please provide details and explain what caused them.

n.a.

25. Based on your experience, what would you recommend to a new co-creation initiative for it to be successful? Please explain the main lessons learned from your experience.

Companies have appreciated Challenges because the application procedure is very simple, cutting red tape and paperwork. Furthermore, no limits on themes or targets allowed high levels of creativity and cross-fertilization allowing them to create a tailor made initiative.

4. THEMATIC FOCUS

Please select one of the two themes below and answer the corresponding questions:

Theme 1. Co-creation's contributions to digital innovation and AI and effects of data sharing

n.a.

Please explain:

- What are the ways in which the co-creation initiative features digitalization and AI? Please provide examples.
- What are the roles of stakeholders? Are they different from traditional ones? Please provide examples.
- How are data sharing and intellectual property protection organised? Please provide details.
- What are your best practices? What would you recommend to a new co-creation project involving digital innovation and AI?

Theme 2. Effective involvement of NGOs and civil society at addressing societal challenges

The Platform enables citizens, as individuals or as employees/employers in enterprises, to take part of the innovation process of their territory. Citizens are informed about regional R&I initiative and related public surveys.

From the stakeholders' point of view, the platform provides free collaborative working tools (plugins) hosting communities, work teams, projects, organizations; it maximizes synergies and network capability bringing together individuals with common interests, skills and competencies.

For example, the 'challenges' tool, in a broad sense, is directed to civil society since anybody can join in once they are launched.

The Platform has recently launched three initiatives that specifically address societal challenges:

- 1) a community entirely dedicated to the Covid19 emergency that brings together enterprises, researchers, doctors, startups... anybody who has an idea to solve a specific problem, a medical device to be upgraded, a best practice to be shared, a research project that needs partners or knowhow.
- 2) a community dedicated to online teaching in order to help teachers, parents, experts, tech companies share experiences on the current situation that interrupted traditional lessons bringing them all online. Within the community, Lombardy Region has launched a survey addressed to all teachers to investigate problems, issues, ideas emerging from the new experience of remote learning.
- 3) a new section called 'Lombardia 2030' that promotes social innovation projects targeted at the 17 UN sustainable development tools. Anybody can share their initiative, filling in a simple form describing the project and how it helps reach the UN goals. Users can vote the project they like the most.

Please explain:

- How are civil society and NGOs engaged in the co-creation initiative? Provide examples.
- At which stages of the co-creation process (e.g. priority setting, research, design, experimentation and development, commercialisation, product launch) is the interaction most intensive? Please explain
- What tools do you use to gather inputs from civil society (e.g. online surveys, social media, organised workshops)?
- Are there mechanism in place to address possible conflicts of interest? Please provide details.
- Was the participation of civil society and NGOs in the co-creation project useful for you? Why?
- What are your best practices? What would you recommend to a new co-creation project involving civil society or NGOs?

5. POLICY CONTEXT

26*. Was the initiative supported by a specific policy initiative? If so, please provide details on the policy initiative and type of support provided (e.g. amount of funding, conditions of support, selection criteria, reporting obligations, etc.).

The initiative is supported by Regional law no. 29 of 23 November 2016 called "Lombardy Is Research and Innovation". It aims to foster, support and promote the Research and Innovation ecosystem of the Lombardy Region. It is a concise text, made up of just eight articles that concretely eliminate redundant bureaucracies and guarantee a certified timing. An important element is the matching of Business, which needs an innovative push, with the world of Research, which together can provide the necessary know-how and human capital to drive local growth and employment.

THE KEY POINTS OF THE LAW:

Three-Year Strategic Programme

The three-year strategic programme for research, innovation and technology transfer is the key element of all the regional interventions foreseen for the 2018-2020 period. The definition and implementation of the programme is entrusted to the Steering Committee, through direct involvement with the actors of innovation and the tool for public consultation.

Multidisciplinary Steering Committee

The Multidisciplinary Steering Committee has the task of coordinating all the regional policies concerning research, innovation and technology transfer through the "Three-Year Strategic Programme" so that there are no more individual initiatives but rather concerted actions, the result of an overall vision.

Regional Forum for Research and Innovation

Independent body - with consultative, propositional and informative functions - composed of 10 experts in scientific, social and humanistic disciplines with a proven experience on the impact that innovations have on people's lives, selected through an international public procedure.

Research Day Scheduled for 8 November and named after Umberto Veronesi to reward researchers and companies that have distinguished themselves in research and innovation.

STRATEGIC TOOLS

Research Agreements

"Research Agreements" aim to foster the development of research and innovation projects with a high impact on the investments made, the partnership involved and the competitiveness of the territory. They are funded with a 106 million euro block grant (from the resources of the POR FESR 2014 - 2020 - Axis I - Action I.1.b.1.3 "Support for collaborative R&D activities for the development of new sustainable technologies, new products and services"), through negotiation agreements between the Lombardy Region and other public or private entities. A total of 32 projects were financed by the Lombardy Region with this measure.

27*. What are the factors (e.g. related to regulations, policy, business environment etc.) supporting and/or hindering co-creation in your country? Please explain.

Innovation policies at the regional level are very effective: regions have the ideal size to support exchange of knowhow and creation of new products and services in the long run, bringing together companies (small and large), universities, research centers, public and private agencies that act like intermediaries of knowledge (scientific parks, service centers, incubators, consultancy agencies). Struggling on the international markets and under pressure because of globalization, enterprises can find in the open innovation paradigm opportunities to go beyond their boundaries and limits, thus enhancing their overall performance.

28*. What do you think are most effective types of policy support for co-creation?

The concept of Open Innovation is constantly changing and is moving from bilateral transactions and collaborations towards networked, multi-collaborative innovation

This means that a specific innovation can no longer be seen as the result of predefined and isolated innovation activities but rather as the outcome of a complex, intertwined and less-deterministic co-creation process involving knowledge flows across the entire economic and social environment. Open Innovation is a new paradigm based on a Quadruple Helix Model where government, industry, academia and civil participants work together to co-create the future and drive structural changes far beyond the scope of what any one organization or person could do alone. This model encompasses also user-oriented innovation models to take full advantage of ideas' cross-fertilisation leading to experimentation and prototyping in real world setting.

Co-creation in all sectors of society provides for manifold opportunities to fully exploit it. Co-creation builds on new forms of interaction among key actors in modern societies, involving citizens, the market and the state. Collaboration between these actors should be organized to share information, knowledge and resources. Open data help to co-create user-friendly, personalised and proactive services that lower the administrative burden and improve the user experience.

Co-creation, trust and resilience should be at the core of future Research and Innovation policies. These will support in the same time European competitiveness, European sustainability and European citizen's quality of life. But these policies should enable individuals to engage in innovation as co-creators, promote social innovation, and allows firms to test and roll-out solutions in the new changing world. If Europe, a continent so proud of its roots and shared values, can innovate sustainably, it will become the beating heart of a new and positive union between individual empowerment and the collaborative economy.

[source [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315924171 Towards a new economy Co-creation and open innovation in a trustworthy Europe](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315924171_Towards_a_new_economy_Co-creation_and_open_innovation_in_a_trustworthy_Europe)]

----- CASE STUDY AUTHORS -----

Name: Vincenzina Cristofaro

Location (country): Italy

Affiliation: Lombardy Region

Your role in the co-creation process: senior project manager

Name: Vera Martinelli

Location (country): Italy

Affiliation: Finlombarda spa

Your role in the co-creation process: project manager