

# Design - A catalyst for growth

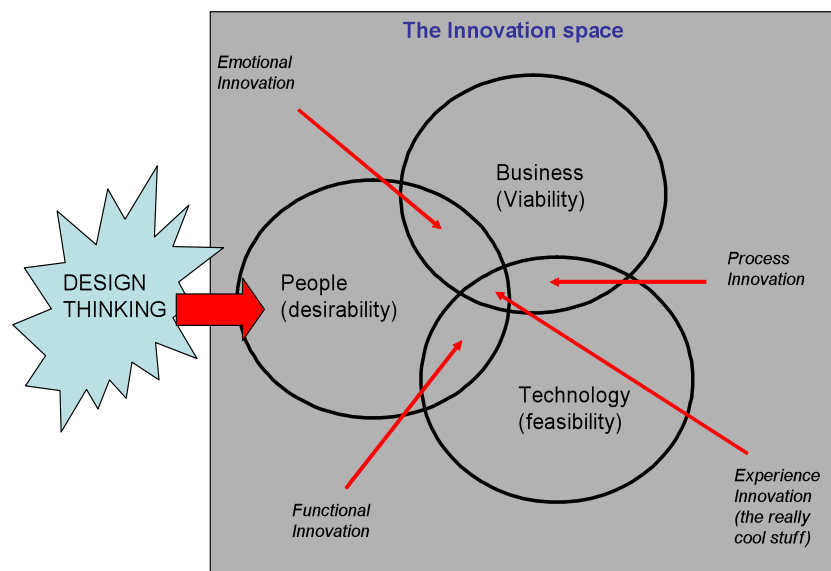
## 1 ERRIN

ERRIN (European Regions, Research and Innovation Network) was established in 2001 as an informal regional offices network with support from the European Commission's Regions of Knowledge pilot action. Today, ERRIN represents some 75 dynamic EU regions and their Brussels representation offices in an independent not for profit organization. ERRIN brings together regional decision makers, practitioners and R&D players from 16 different Member States.

ERRIN addresses research and innovation-related issues and aims at improving collaboration and joint transnational projects between the research and innovation organizations in member regions and at facilitating regular dialogue with the European institutions in order to promote the regional dimension of research and innovation and the participation of member regions in European debates and consultations.

## 2 Design and Innovation

Design, or rather design thinking, is one way of entering the "Innovation Space" (Tim Brown - IDEO during a lecture for MIT Sloan School of Management -2006). Innovation may come about in different ways, as indicated in the picture on this page, and depending of the angle one takes, different types of innovation are likely to occur. For example, process innovation is a combination of technology and business. And when business, people and technology come together, that's where the really cool stuff happens...



Designers enter the innovation space from the side of people and link up with technology, business or both. When innovation is inspired by design, it transcends technology and utility. Designers and



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design thinking therefore, are in a position to come to what is called the *experience innovation*, offering the answers that today's socio-economic challenges require. .

**Design, therefore, is by nature human centred as it is based on observation of people and society to get inspired, gain ideas and implement them. The importance of design lies in the fact that it introduces the *human factor* into innovation.**

Successful innovation is a foundation of regional competitiveness and growth and is as such a core area of interest to regional and local authorities across Europe. This was also underlined by various speakers on the ERRIN Briefing Lisbon in Practice - Regional Attractiveness for Investment in Research and Innovation, which took place in Brussels on 8 July 2009. Thus, regional & local authorities can create and facilitate the favourable environment for design and design thinking to flourish and thus contribute to regional innovation and sustainable competitiveness and wealth creation.

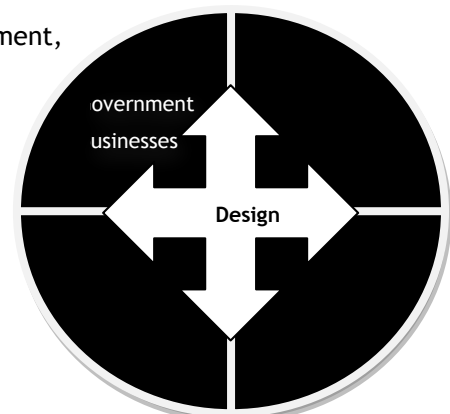
ERRIN as the network of regional, public, private and knowledge actors devoted to support its members to create these innovative environment considers design and design management are core to its activities. It is because ERRIN can draw from such multidisciplinary know-how and experience that the network is in an excellent position to offer the European Commission its views on the theme of design as a driver for innovation.

### 3 Understanding design

Many have tried to capture the concept of design in equally many definitions. ERRIN will not add a new definition. However, in order to understand the ERRIN position it is important stress our understanding of design. Briefly it can be captured through the following statements:

ERRIN understands that:

- ***Design, of products and processes, is a human centred driver for innovation*** and as such can be driving the process towards a more innovative, sustainable and more just society and an increased quality of life.
- Design, therefore, is an appropriate instrument to ***address many of today's societal challenges***, for example through concepts such as sustainable design and through innovative, human centred, design of public services.
- ***Design drives innovation***, therefore it must be a central element, ***embedded in today's business strategies of all organisations, big or small, public or private***. It can no longer be considered a luxury, but must, rather, be considered a prerequisite for delivery of quality services and/or products.
- Design goes beyond the development of new products to the ***application to today's pressing societal challenges***. Due to its human centred character design plays a role in the





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development process related to social, economic and cultural development.

- Following from this, **public authorities have an important facilitating and steering role to play** in ensuring the positive contribution of design to regional development. To be successful, however, public authorities must engage in cooperation with private and knowledge sectors in triple helix constellations. ERRIN is instrumental in establishing these links through awareness raising and facilitating exchange.

**Design is the ultimate link between people, as users, and the economy. According to ERRIN there can be no doubt that people, and therefore design at human scale, must be central to the development of tomorrow's sustainable and innovative economies.**

## 4 ERRIN recommendations to the European Commission

ERRIN, as the network of regional, public, private and knowledge actors, can draw from multidisciplinary know-how and experience and is, therefore, in an excellent position to offer the European Commission the these recommendations.

ERRIN supports the European Commission's initiative to discuss the role of design and welcomes the staff working document "Design as a driver of user centred innovation". ERRIN stresses the following issues in the further discussions and planning of the Commission's future actions in this area<sup>1</sup>.

ERRIN considers design as a transversal driver for innovation and we feel that it should, therefore, occupy a central space within the future European Innovation Plan highlighting its unique position adding to technology and process driven innovation. In addition, design should, ultimately, become embedded in innovation strategies and implementing action plans at all policy levels.

*"Design has become the most powerful tool with which man shapes his tools and environments and, by extension, society and himself" - Victor Papanek, Austrian designer*

Because of its multidisciplinary character, ERRIN considers it vital that the issue is not only addressed from an enterprise angle, but that the DG's in the European Commission responsible for Regional policy and for Research are closely involved and supportive of design as a driver for innovation.

1. ERRIN asks the European Commission **to initiate and financially support awareness raising activities** geared towards a better understanding of the importance of design thinking and the design industry as a major contributing factor to economic success within the private sector and the achievement of quality of life objectives in the public sector. In this respect two initiatives should be launched:

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<sup>1</sup> Disclaimer: This ERRIN position is the result of a wide consultation among ERRIN members but does not necessarily integrally reflect the views of all ERRIN members.



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- a. A **European dialogue platform** bringing together stakeholders from across Europe from different sectors, facilitating a genuine cross sector and multi disciplinary exchange and mutual learning. ERRIN thinks of the European Commission and Parliament, European public authority networks and their regional and local members, SME networks, professional networks and knowledge networks as actors in this platform. ERRIN is willing and in a position to, in cooperation with other key European networks, play a leading role in establishing such dialogue platform. ERRIN also is of the view that such platform should evolve towards a Europe wide **Centre of Design Expertise** contributing to and maintaining one of the strengths of Europe, the capacity to add value at the high end of the economy, design and high tech.
  - b. A **European Design and Innovation Week** along the principles of existing European weeks on energy and employment, with an objective to bring to the fore the importance of innovation and design for sustainable and economic development.
2. ERRIN asks the European Commission to support **Networking activities** at European level among design professionals and between them and other organisations in order to understand the challenges each faces and the contributions that design can make to solving some of the key issues faced by organisations.
  3. Design and innovation have great potential as a drivers for the European economy, and the specificity of “European design” as opposed to design from elsewhere in the world, can be considered a strength of European industry. Today’s economic reality is that European industry survives by specializing in adding value at the high end of the economy through being highly innovative, high tech and using state of the art design. ERRIN, therefore, asks the European Commission to investigate further measures to support the concept of European Design. A possible option could be the development of a “**designed in Europe**” label.
  4. The European Commission should support the development of **tools and processes** allowing the growth of the design industry and supporting the uptake of design in businesses, research and other organisations. The design industry is largely composed of very small companies with the connected challenges of sustainability of the business. Support to them could vary from management training to marketing to match making. The business sector (SME’s in particular) and public and research organisations in the broadest sense of the word should learn to understand the contribution design could make to their business.
  5. Support the **uptake of design knowledge in regular entrepreneurship / management education** and support the learning of **management and entrepreneurial skills in design education**. Tomorrow’s managers should be made aware already now of the potential positive role of design to their business, and tomorrow’s designers should have entrepreneurial skills.