

Advocacy Letter



Europe cannot function without Design.

Design underpins the products we use, the services we rely on, and the systems that structure our societies. Design is essential for generating innovative concepts, translating them into tangible products and services, and embedding them sustainably within society and the economy. Design plays a critical role in creating a sustainable innovation ecosystem within the FP10 program. **Design enables the translation of fundamental insights from Pillar I into innovative applications in Pillar II, and ensures that these applications, aligned with the objectives of Pillar III, are effectively and scalably embedded in society - securing sustainable uptake by citizens, public institutions, enterprises, and policy frameworks.**

Design (engineering) inspires new technology and ensures its successful adoption by society and end-users. Furthermore, design can translate social and societal challenges into technological solutions like no other discipline, making it the true engine of innovation.

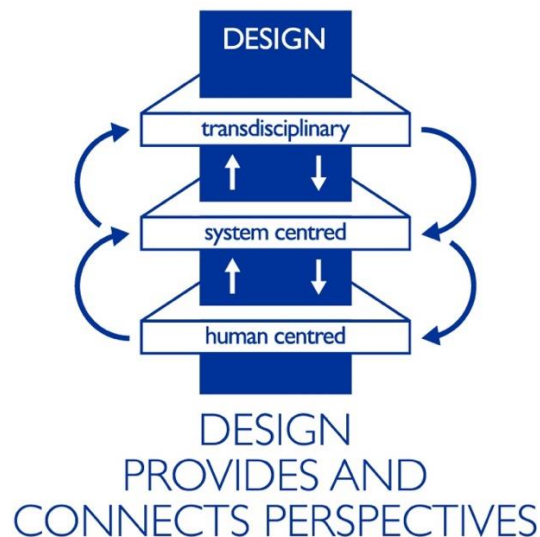


Evidence consistently demonstrates the innovative and economic value of Design. The European Commission identified, as early as 2009, a strong positive correlation between the use of design and national competitiveness. More recently, the McKinsey Design Index confirmed that design-led companies significantly outperform their peers, achieving twice the revenue growth and 1.5 times higher returns to shareholders. Europe's Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) form a substantial pillar of the European

economy, accounting for approximately 4% of EU GDP value added and employing around 8 million people across 2 million enterprises. **This makes the sector one of Europe's largest economic contributors and a key driver of resilience in the Union's transition toward a sovereign and competitive future.**

Design (engineering), involving scientific research, creative research, and industry, provides the methods, concepts, and prototypes necessary to build a collaborative sustainable innovation ecosystem across the pillars of FP10. The European Competitive Fund windows – Defence, Health, Sustainability, and Digitalization— are supported up by the Defence Readiness roadmap, the Preparedness Union Strategy, the Clean Industrial Deal and the AI Continent. Together they are (urgently) needed to increase the Union's Strategic Autonomy and boost its global competitiveness. To maximize effect and coherence, the FP10 research & innovation program has these same four policy windows as backbone. Technological innovations play a fundamental role in addressing each of the windows.

However, to effectively let new and valuable technologies and innovations land in societies the right guidance is essential. For European innovations to deliver European impact, they must be adopted by users, embedded in infrastructures, and developed through transdisciplinary efforts. This is exactly where **Design plays a crucial role as an innovation operating system**, because:



Design provides a *human-centred perspective*, ensuring that the Union's innovations are developed with and for the people who will use, share, and further advance them, enabling a sustainable impact.

Design provides a *system-centred perspective*, ensuring that innovations are securely and purposefully grounded in societal, economic, and industrial networks and infrastructures, reinforcing Europe's transition toward stable sovereignty and scalable competitiveness.

Design provides a *transdisciplinary perspective* as backbone for research and innovation. Design's methodologies and practices foster creative collaborations between engineering and other scientific disciplines (e.g. humanities, social sciences), between academia and practice, between individuals and policy, between short-term and long-term values, and between scientific and experiential perspectives.

Together, these perspectives ensure not only the effective delivery of FP10's policy priorities but also **strengthen the programme's economic outcomes**. Through its methods, concepts, and prototyping capacity, **Design accelerates the translation of fundamental research into societally applicable solutions and increases economic value creation and societal impact.**

Design involves close collaboration between its academic researchers, education, and industry partners. Through this, it brings the experience, methods, and knowledge needed to spark technological innovation across knowledge creators, developers, and citizens. Design valorizes knowledge and technology by enhancing innovation-adoption and market alignment. Technology is crucial for the Union's future. But to create an EU-based sustainable innovation ecosystem, technology needs to inspire—and be inspired by—users, companies, scientists, and policymakers. This is what Design does.

Recommendations

1. Given its integrative, creative and collaborative role, **Design needs to have a structural position within FP10's architecture in general.** Positioned explicitly in Pillar II, Design strengthens and fuels exchanges with pillar I (fundamental research) and pillar III (market innovation).
2. Design has the skills and network to bring the four policy windows to innovative practice and reinforce the Union's sovereignty. **Design needs to have a structural and supported position within FP10's policy windows.**
3. To further develop the European Union Strategic Autonomy and boost its global competitiveness it is necessary to support Design as a discipline. **We urge the commission to include and support the Design discipline, including research and practise as a competitive advantage.**

The undersigned parties, consisting of the Union's Design Research faculties, Design Education institutes and the Design Industry, stand ready to take their role in FP10!

Signed by:

EU Design Research Institutes

EU Design Education Institutes

EU Creative Industry