

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MANAGEMENT OF INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Conference Theme

PARALLEL TRANSFORMATIONS:

Responding to the AI Revolution and Global Crises through innovation and Entrepreneurship

Special Track Proposal

Track Title <i>Please provide a concise and engaging title for the proposed track</i>	Connecting, Collaborating, and Innovating: The Role of Digital Technologies in Shaping Innovation Ecosystems
Track Description <i>Please provide a detailed description of the proposed track (approximately 800–1,000 words), outlining:</i> • Motivation and relevance of the track; • Key research challenges and emerging issues addressed • Track's contribution to the conference theme • Examples of topics and research questions that would fit within the track	Open Innovation (OI) processes are central to firms' ability to develop and sustain innovation, as they enable organizations to access knowledge and capabilities beyond their boundaries and to combine, co-create, and diffuse new solutions (Chesbrough, 2003). Firms rarely possess all the knowledge and resources required to innovate internally and must therefore engage in external search, accessing and recombining knowledge held by customers, suppliers, competitors, universities, research organizations, and other external actors (Chesbrough, 2003; Laursen and Salter, 2006). At the same time, OI entails substantial relational, coordination, and appropriation challenges, making the selection and governance of external partners critical to the success of collaborative innovation initiatives (Enkel <i>et al.</i>, 2009). Partner selection may be shaped by complementarities or similarities in knowledge structures, allowing firms to exploit cognitive proximity, while connections with more distant actors and knowledge domains may increase opportunities for novel combinations and reduce the risk of technological lock-in (Boschma, 2005; Breschi <i>et al.</i>, 2003; Castaldi <i>et al.</i>, 2015). The effectiveness of these processes is also influenced by the broader innovation ecosystem (IE) in which firms are embedded. IEs comprise interconnected networks of firms, universities, research organizations, governments, intermediaries, financial institutions, and other actors that collectively contribute to the creation, diffusion, and mobilization of knowledge and resources (Adner, 2006). Well-developed IEs can facilitate knowledge exchange, collaborative risk sharing, access to complementary resources, and collective problem-solving, thereby reducing the barriers associated with complex innovation processes and transitions that individual organizations may struggle to address independently (Li <i>et al.</i>, 2022; Mahdad and Roshani, 2025; Secundo <i>et al.</i>, 2019). Conversely, when firms operate in fragmented or weak IEs, accessing relevant knowledge, competencies, and partners may become more difficult, limiting the potential benefits of OI (Van Rijnsouwer, 2020). In this context, digital platforms, online communication technologies, data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), and other digital infrastructures can expand firms' reach, facilitate access to information, connect otherwise disconnected actors, transform organizational processes, and support networking, entrepreneurial activities, and knowledge exchange across organizational and geographical boundaries (Autio <i>et al.</i>, 2018; Nambisan, 2017; Vial, 2019). In the context of OI, these technologies may fundamentally reshape external search and collaboration processes (Holgersson <i>et al.</i>, 2024; Kim and Park, 2024) by making broader and more heterogeneous pools of potential partners and knowledge sources more visible and accessible. In particular, AI and data driven approaches offer new possibilities for identifying technological trajectories, emerging fields, knowledge complementarities, and potential partners across sectors, regions, and disciplines (Arts <i>et al.</i>, 2021; Holgersson <i>et al.</i>, 2024; Marx and Fuegi, 2020;

	Park <i>et al.</i>, 2024). These developments may support a shift from relatively bounded and experience-based partner search towards more systematic and data-informed approaches to IE collaboration. Digital technologies can therefore influence not only how firms search for and interact with external actors, but also how IEs are orchestrated and how connections between their participants are established and maintained (Smolka <i>et al.</i>, 2026). This digital transformation is particularly relevant for innovation intermediaries, including Business Incubators, which play an important role in connecting supported firms with the broader IEs in which they operate (Anzolin and O’Sullivan, 2025; Galbraith <i>et al.</i>, 2021; Howells, 2024; Rippa and Secundo, 2019; Secundo <i>et al.</i>, 2020). Digital technologies can enhance intermediaries’ ability to identify relevant actors, establish connections, and facilitate more effective matching between firms and external competencies, resources, and opportunities. By improving the availability, circulation, and integration of information, digital tools may also reduce information asymmetries and facilitate more efficient and potentially more transparent interactions among IE participants. Existing research has established the growing relevance of digital technologies for IEs, but important questions remain regarding how these technologies reshape ecosystem structures, actor relationships, intermediation processes, and governance mechanisms (Barile and Secundo, 2026; Khizar <i>et al.</i>, 2025; Smolka <i>et al.</i>, 2026). Therefore, further research is needed to understand how digital technologies can facilitate OI among firms at the IE level (Broekhuizen <i>et al.</i>, 2023). Within this emerging landscape, greater attention is also needed to how innovation intermediaries adapt their intermediation activities to these digitally enabled IE dynamics (Colovic <i>et al.</i>, 2024; Rippa and Secundo, 2019). Against this background, the track aims to advance research on how digital technologies enable, reshape, and govern collaboration within IEs, with particular attention to the mechanisms through which these technologies influence the formation, development, and outcomes of collaborative relationships among IE actors. The track contributes to the conference theme by placing digital technologies at the intersection of OI and IE development. The track welcomes conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions addressing, among others, the following topics: 1) AI and data analytics for partner search, matching, knowledge recombination, and technological diversification; 2) Digital platforms as infrastructures for IE formation, coordination, and orchestration; 3) Digital technologies, cross-sector and cross-regional collaboration, and knowledge flows, including university-industry and public-private relationships; 4) Digitalization and the role of innovation intermediaries in facilitating collaboration and ecosystem orchestration; 5) Digital technologies, information asymmetries, and coordination among IE actors; 6) Trust, tacit knowledge, relational embeddedness, and digitally mediated collaboration; 7) Digital technologies and the bridging of geographical, organizational, and institutional boundaries; 8) Digital inclusion, algorithmic bias, platform power, and unequal access to IE resources.
Keywords <i>Please provide 4–6 keywords that best characterize the proposed track. Separate keywords using a semicolon (;)</i>	Digital technologies; Innovation ecosystems; Open innovation; Artificial intelligence; Innovation intermediaries; Digital collaboration
References <i>Please include the key references supporting the relevance and positioning of the proposed track</i>	Adner, R. (2006), “Match Your Innovation Strategy to Your Innovation Ecosystem”, <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 1 April, Vol. 84, pp. 98–107. Anzolin, G. and O’Sullivan, E. (2025), “Innovation intermediaries in the digital transformation process. A comparative case study of research and technology organisations in the US and the UK”, <i>Technovation</i> , Vol. 142, p. 103200, doi: 10.1016/j.technovation.2025.103200



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Track Chairs Please identify between 2 and 5 Track Chairs. For each Track Chair, provide: • Full Name • Affiliation • Country • Email address • Research interests (optional)	• Antonio Sonetto, University of Calabria, Department of Business Administration and Law, Italy, antonio.sonetto@unical.it • Silvia Tommaso, University of Calabria, Department of Business Administration and Law, Italy, silvia.tommaso@unical.it • Patrizia Pastore, University of Calabria, Department of Business Administration and Law, Italy, patrizia.pastore@unical.it • Beniamino Sacco, eCampus University, Italy, Department of Human and Social Sciences, beniamino.sacco@uniecampus.it • Antonio Ricciardi, University of Calabria, Department of Business Administration and Law, Italy, antonio.ricciardi@unical.it
Short biography of each organizer Please provide a short biography for each Track Chair (maximum 200 words per biography)	Antonio Sonetto is PhD candidate in Economic and Business Sciences at the University of Calabria, Italy. His research interests include innovation ecosystems, open innovation, start-ups, business incubators and sustainable innovations. Silvia Tommaso, PhD, is Associate Professor of Financial Accounting and Business Administration at the University of Calabria, Italy. Her research interests include contractual networks, open innovation, innovation ecosystems, start-up, business incubators, financial reporting. Patrizia Pastore, PhD, is Associate Professor of Financial Accounting and Business Administration at the University of Calabria, Italy. Her research interests embrace female entrepreneurship; outsourcing and back-reshoring strategies; governance model and performance of the Italian Industrial districts and business networks; Commons and collective action in Italian industrial districts and business networks. Beniamino Sacco, PhD, is Researcher in Financial Accounting and Business Administration

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Corresponding Track Chair <i>Please indicate the Track Chair who will serve as the primary contact person for all communications with the Conference Organizing Committee</i>	Antonio Sonetto

