

The IdeaSquare and GRADE Advisory Board (ISAB-G) was presented the activities of GRADE and IdeaSquare on January 21 – February 1, 2020.

The composition of ISAB: Professors Julian Birkinshaw (LBS), Matteo Cavalli-Sforza (IFAE), Kalevi Ekman (Aalto University), Sijbrand De Jong (RU Nijmegen), Joachim Mnich (DESY), Ezri Tarazi (Technion), Thierry Lagrange (CERN, Chair).

Minutes and presentations are available [here](#).

ISAB wishes to thank all the members of the different teams presenting their activities and answering all the questions. It also wishes to congratulate everyone involved for the impressive progress made since 2019 and for their achievements.

Based on the presentations and summary minutes made available, ISAB-G wishes to make the following observations and recommendations:

1. ISAB-G expresses its support to the proposed CBI-project within the GRADE MoU framework.
2. ISAB-G considers that IdeaSquare has been wise to position itself to the early stage of the innovation chain, yet making links to “being useful for society”. At CERN IdeaSquare is complementary to the KT Group, while it is globally well positioned in experimenting with and studying early stage innovation.
3. ISAB-G feels that CIJ is providing an important contribution to the goals of IdeaSquare in sheading light to the unanswered question of how (good) ideas pop up and how best to feed them further up in the innovation chain.
4. ISAB-G warmly welcomes the introduction of dedicated technical workshops for CERN at IdeaSquare, such as for Labview, FPGAs, 3D modelling etc.
5. Following its earlier recommendation to pool the CERN-centred ATTRACT projects to GRADE, ISAB-G is puzzled why H2020 IP-rules would hinder this, noting that there are several EU-funded projects, which are embedded within the CERN experiments without posing any potential IP conflicts.
6. It supports the idea of purchasing a laser-cutter in the price range presented by H. Boe, provided that IdeaSquare is not able to obtain the same service level and access elsewhere.
7. It recommends IdeaSquare to update the list of tools available at CERN to determine what machinery to use at IdeaSquare (and possibly then charge for its use?) and what to rely on elsewhere at CERN, when needed.
8. It supports initiatives to create topical “Think Tanks” at IdeaSquare, but in niche areas like energy efficiency or mobility (e.g. autonomous vehicles), which are better connected to the core of CERN and where direct competition is less fierce.
9. Following up its earlier recommendation of establishing links with the Science Gateway, ISAB-G acknowledges that an engineering-driven approach could provide a complementary offering for Science Gateway and that it should be clearly anchored at CERN. It encourages IdeaSquare to explore this line of thinking further.

10. ISAB-G finds the new entrepreneurship-initiatives presented by KT, like the concept of a “pre-incubator”, most encouraging. It nevertheless perceives IdeaSquare more as a “germinator” - pollinating seeds of entrepreneurship among participants to create an innovation ecosystem and the right conditions - rather than as a business incubator or an accelerator to boost business growth. ISAB-G recommends that IdeaSquare does not try to compete in the business incubator and accelerator domains.
11. ISAB-G considers IdeaSquare as a “must have” for CERN, rather than a “nice to have” or a “just a fad”. The value provided by IdeaSquare is concrete and real, the building is there, the people and projects are there. It is in the interest of CERN to continue IdeaSquare and its success.
12. As CERN is no longer providing an operating budget for IdeaSquare, ISAB-G strongly recommends IdeaSquare to seriously consider seeking for external donations, e.g. wealthy individuals, family offices, and alike. Naturally, complementarity should be maintained w.r.t other funding programs at CERN, like the CERN & Society and the Science Gateway.
13. ISAB-G expresses its concern that, while it understands IdeaSquare urgently needs to turn to new funding sources, like ATTRACT Phase 2, it risks to move away from what has made it important in experimenting and studying the process of how and why ideas emerge and develop, referring e.g. to the research being documented in the CIJ.
14. ISAB-G welcomes the proposed initiative(s) to attract and charge for e.g. business executives to spend time at IdeaSquare, like the ESADE-program.
15. It recommends that IdeaSquare increases its efforts to make its existence, activities and results more visible, both internally and externally.
16. ISAB-G recommends IdeaSquare to increase awareness within CERN that IdeaSquare is an important and integral part of CERN. For example, by organizing and hosting:
 - Inter-departmental info-sharing events
 - Annual “Open Days ”
 - One-day events with topics of common interest e.g. AI/Machine Learning
 - Inviting the different Committees (CC, FC, SPC, etc.) and target people (e.g. ILOs, corporate CEOs, VIPs)
 - Promoting the prototyping capabilities at IdeaSquare
 - Targeting at young people to participate in its activities and use its facilities for inventing new things
 - Invite CERN Alumni to give technical presentations.
17. ISAB-G recommends that IdeaSquare makes a list of specific show cases of events or projects at IdeaSquare which have resulted in acknowledged advances.
18. ISAB-G itself would benefit from additional expertise in the domain of investor/business advice. It also observes a gender imbalance in its composition and wishes to raise this question with the CERN management.

For the next review in early 2021, ISAB-G would like in particular to hear more about the following points:

- A strategic plan 2021 -2025 providing an updated mission statement, stated priorities, measurement of deliverables, and funding plan;

- Examples of technologies or ideas *imported* from the outside to the CERN community.

ISAB-G would also appreciate receiving ad-interim progress updates by email, to facilitate the preparations for the next review.