

SuSI (Supported Smart Innovation) Leads Strategic Innovation by everis

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Abstract

Headquartered in Spain and a member of the NTT DATA Group since 2014, everis is a multinational firm dedicated to consulting and outsourcing in all sectors, with 19,000 professionals in 16 countries across Europe, the USA, and Latin America. This article introduces SuSI (Supported Smart Innovation), a corporate unit that leads the company's innovation strategies.

Keywords: global, innovation, R&D

1. Introduction

SuSI (Supported Smart Innovation) was created in 2014 as a strategy to offer new value to our clients. The mission of the department is to promote, industrialize, and facilitate the company's innovation processes transversally in the business units (BUs), business sectors, and cross areas* (**Fig. 1**). We are also very committed to taking part in innovative research and development (R&D) activities such as Innovation Hub with NTT DATA, and we work closely with Japan and other EMEA (Europe, the Middle East and Africa) operating companies in the NTT Group.

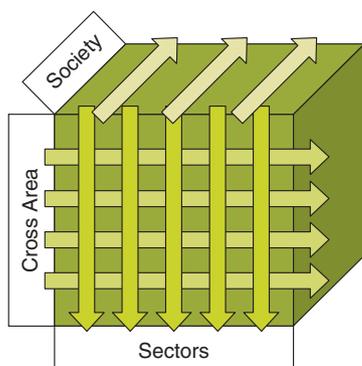


Fig. 1. everis is a matrix organization.

2. Innovation horizons at everis

everis [1] is following an innovation strategy that covers three *innovation horizons*. In horizon 1, our business sectors and cross areas lead the production evolution of existing technology and markets through improvements, extensions, and operational cost reductions. In horizon 2, which is the one led by SuSI, we explore existing markets and technology, but unlike in horizon 1, our activities are centered on next-generation products for core markets as well as asset development. Horizon 3 is focused on disruptive innovation led by the everis nextGen unit (**Fig. 2**).

In summary, we can say that horizon 1 identifies new needs and improves current business practices, horizon 2 works on meeting mid-term innovation business needs, and horizon 3 looks for disruptive innovation for the long term. However, once horizon 3 has reached a mature level, we go back to horizon 2 to develop new innovation use cases. Finally, this innovation will enrich the portfolio of the business sectors in horizon 1 and increase the value they offer.

The knowledge acquired is transferred continuously between the different horizons, and those involved provide the corresponding feedback to each other.

* Cross areas: An everis term referring to Business (business consultancy), SAP & Enterprise Solutions, Outsourcing, Business Process Outsourcing, Technology, and Enterprise & Cloud Solutions.

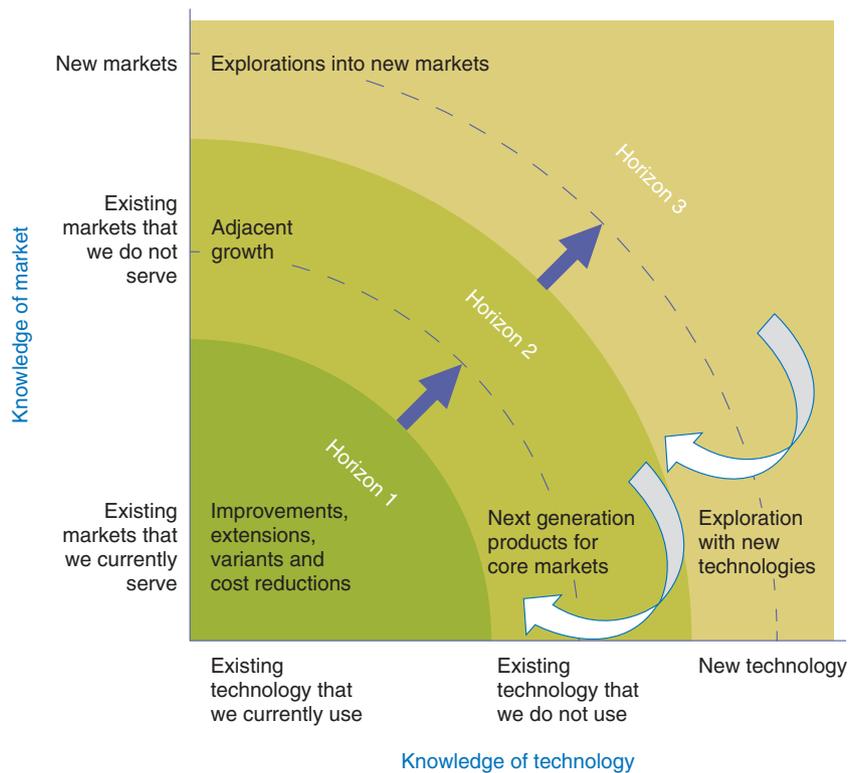


Fig. 2. Innovation horizons.

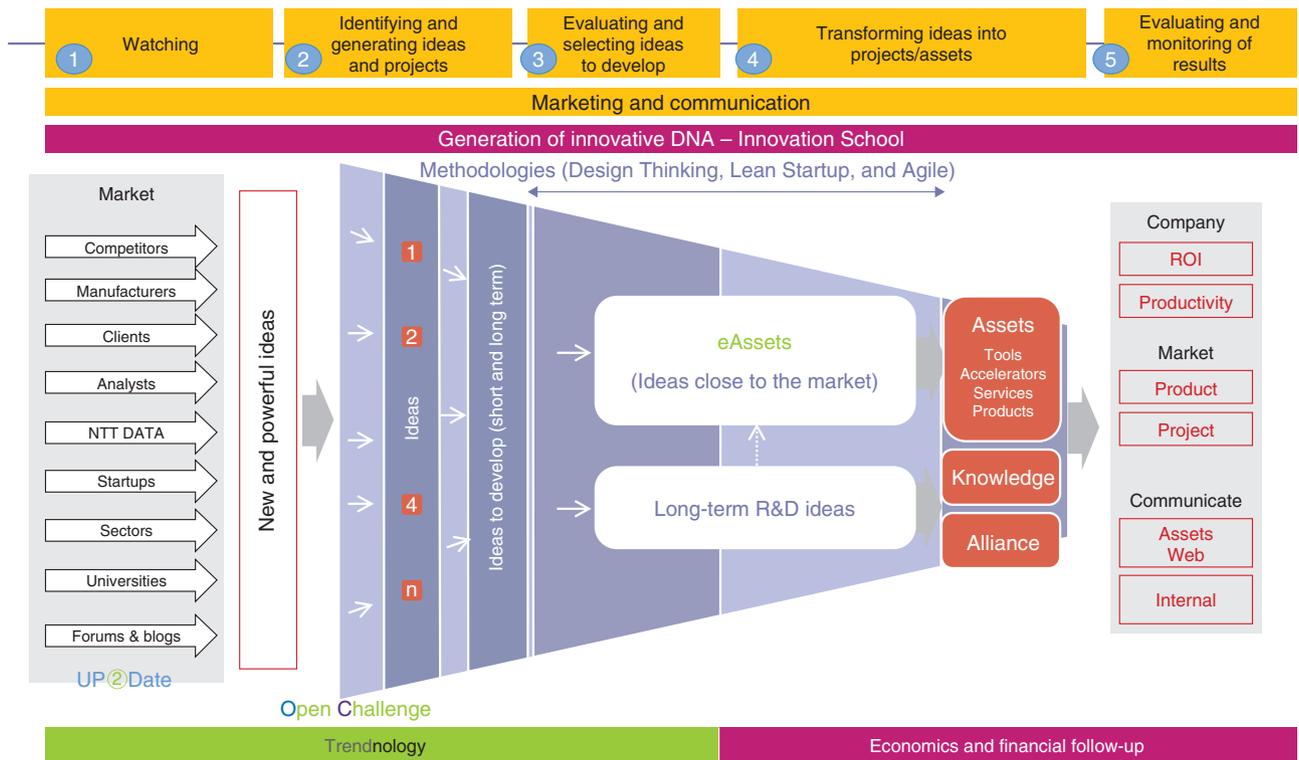
3. Activities of SuSI: strategic innovation

As a strategy, we have established a strategic innovative framework. The activities carried out by SuSI are focused on three main areas. The first is strategic innovation, in which the objective is to introduce a systematic process of innovation and the creation of *innovative DNA* in the company. The second one, funding, provides support in obtaining competitive funding by offering information about external funding and assistance in accessing it. The third is monetization, which supports BUs in obtaining tax deductions related to research, development, and investment (R+D+I) and controls the investment in assets and the generation of intellectual property (IP). The funding and monetization efforts are extremely important for our innovation strategy.

The strategic innovation effort establishes an innovation process that starts with market research, generation and evaluation of ideas, transformation of the ideas into projects and the seeds of the future product portfolio, through to evaluation and monitoring of the results (Fig. 3).

Concretely, the first stage (Watching) consists of

the complementary initiatives *Research Services* (providing specific information for BUs from the best insights and reports from analysts such as Gartner, Ovum, etc.), *Up2Date*, and *Trendnology*. *Up2Date* is a tool that scans hundreds of sources and detects future trends in order to provide the most relevant and updated short-term information on technologies and innovations that can affect or be used by the business sectors and cross units. It is one of the initiatives we are collaborating with NTT DATA on as part of the NTT DATA Technology Foresight annual report (NDF) [2] (Fig. 4) in order to identify new trends in their early stage. *Trendnology* is the other initiative, a tool to gather informed opinions by taking advantage of the best sources (*Up2Date*, researchers, scientific articles) and internal and external experts in a three-axis matrix: technology, business impact, and social challenges our company is facing. *Trendnology* will connect and reduce the gap in a natural way between short-term innovation and long-term research, which is the focus of the NDF. The combination of all these initiatives could also be used as a validation tool for internal decision making on investments and to align technology and business dimensions.



ROI: return on investment

Fig. 3. Strategic innovation.



Fig. 4. NTT DATA Technology Foresight.

For the second and third stages (Identifying and generating ideas for projects and Evaluating those ideas), SuSI proposes initiatives such as Hackathon (with the first NTT DATA Global Hackathon taking place last November in Barcelona) and Open Challenges along with the BUs to help them gather and select the best ideas suited for the next sector’s challenges. These ideas will be some of the seeds for developing assets.

In the next stage (Transforming ideas into projects) the coaching/mentoring starts for the teams working on the selected ideas to help them develop the ideas using world-class innovative methodologies such as Design Thinking, Value Proposition, and Business Model Canvas, and then starting Agile development with the Lean Startup approach to gain their first insights.

In the final stage, once the BUs have confirmed their commitment with the Open Challenges results, the ideas go into a new level of technological incubator called *everis assets (eASSETS)* (Fig. 5). This asset incubator was created for the purpose of facilitating all of the company’s initiatives in asset development

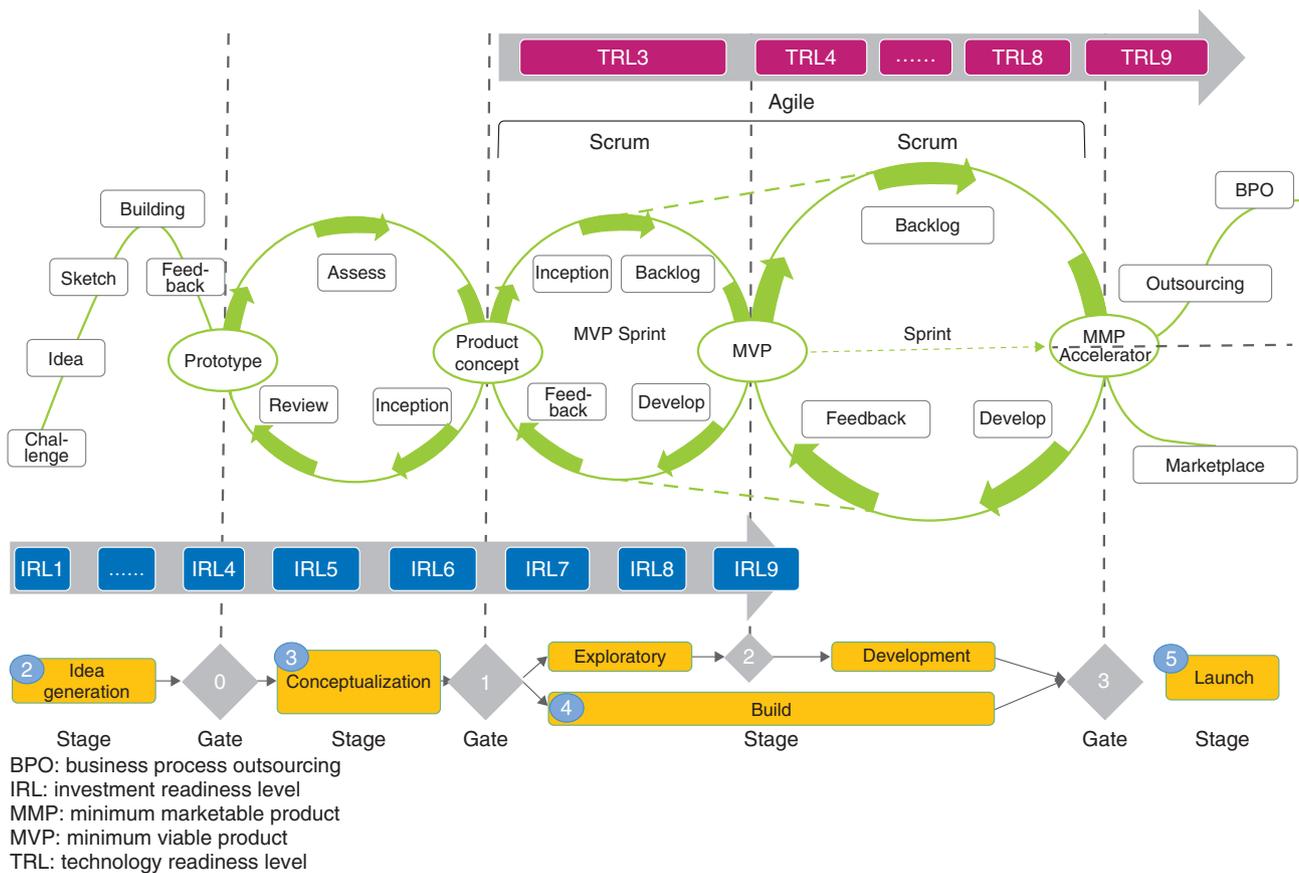


Fig. 5. everis assets (eASSETS).

and tackling the asset life cycle management so that the created asset is a readily marketable product. This process, which starts with idea assessment, is supported by four important pillars: a specific methodology that addresses the entire asset life cycle, specific tools to carry out the development (such as Altemista or Cognitive Assisted Development (CAD), whose details are presented in section 4), technical teams specialized in asset development, and a cultural management process within the company that encourages people to innovate and change from *thinking about projects to thinking about products*.

In this process, the technical team as well as client managers, the outsourcing team, BPO (business process outsourcing), and the Agile and Idea teams are involved. The methodology is very effective, and the results are impressive, especially thanks to the specialized eASSETS professionals, who support the entire asset maturation and incubation process, and also thanks to the company commitment that encourages encapsulating the everis knowledge in attractive

products to customers and markets.

Other cross initiatives such as *Innovation School - InnCub3* or *The Wall* focus on generating innovative DNA and supporting a vibrant community of innovators. InnCub3 offers training in practical innovation skills in coordination with everis University (internal educational programs). These activities are also supported by our innovation ambassadors within the BUs.

The Wall is the monthly newsletter sent to the innCub3rs community (people identified as having an innovative profile in the company) that reports on innovation and creativity aspects: news, invitations to workshops, courses, talks, recommendations of videos, and articles.

Finally, I will explain the support of the Funding and Monetization teams. The Funding team provides assistance in getting competitive funding by offering information and support to BUs and sectors in accessing external funding. We focus mainly on public R&D funding opportunities provided by the European

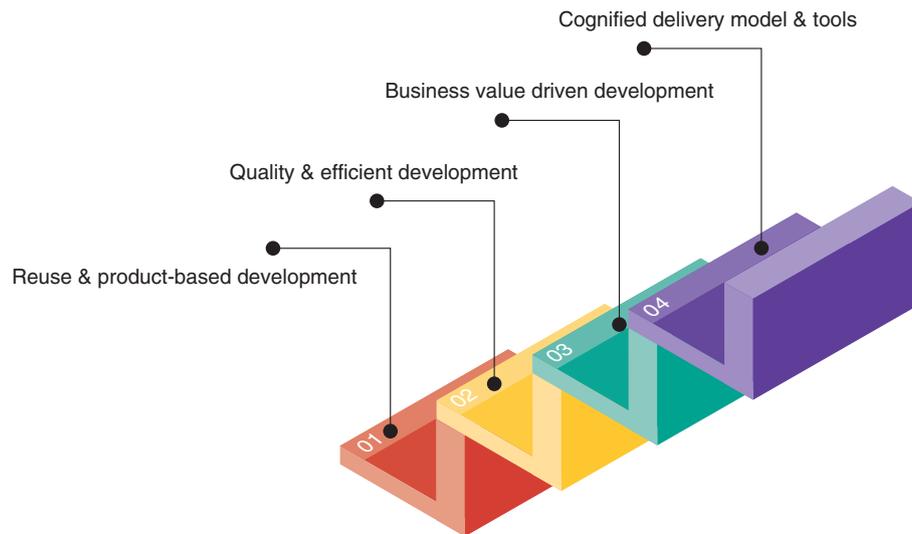


Fig. 6. CAD initiative.

Commission. The requirements are very strict, and it is a very difficult competition. Nevertheless, we have succeeded in obtaining more than 1.5 million euros per year. For example, we have recently won two projects: one about blockchain applied to avoid fake news, and the other about artificial intelligence applied to medical images in order to detect and predict illness (e.g. cancer).

The Monetization team leads the process of obtaining tax deductions related to R+D+I for the created assets. This effort helped the company reduce its taxes by about half a million euros in fiscal year (FY) 2017. The team also helps the BUs draft business plans and observes their commercial achievements. In this way, we manage asset investment and IP generation.

4. Asset creation of SuSI

When we identify assets that will be part of the core transverse strategy of the company, SuSI is also in charge of their development. In addition to Up2Date, Trendnology, and eASSETS already mentioned, we have developed everisKnowler and CAD.

4.1 everisKnowler

At everis, we consider that employee knowledge is one of our most valuable assets. Sharing knowledge about projects or human skills improves numerous aspects in the company such as the project management capacity, human resource allocation, and quali-

ty of solutions, and it reduces the time to produce related documents. However, sharing knowledge between different sectors or offices has been a challenging task.

The everisKnowler system was initiated in 2017 in order to deliver the right knowledge to the right people at the right moment without asking. In this system, structured and unstructured information from all company documents is extracted by text to knowledge processes, and relevant information is stored in triplets (a format consisting of subject, verb, and object elements), which enables semantic searches to be done in natural languages (multilingual) and connects all the information (knowledge) in the company. Furthermore, everisKnowler has the capacity to analyze the research history of each user (for example, the activity, projects participated in, colleague relationships, email, and documents), which enables it to suggest useful information to the user without the user asking. Pilot testing of everisKnowler will be done this year in some sectors at everis, and in the near future, it will be deployed as the general intranet of the company. We are also working together with the NTT DATA Knowledge Management team in this initiative to study the feasibility of implementing everisKnowler in Japan.

4.2 CAD

This is a very innovative and critical initiative that was developed in order to respond to the huge social demand for fast software development (Fig. 6). Until

2021, the market demand for application development is predicted to grow at least five times faster than the information technology (IT) capacity to deliver it. Recruiting IT professionals has become a difficult task, so to reduce IT backlog, new stakeholders without IT skills have emerged—citizen developers—who create new business applications for consumption by others using development and runtime environments sanctioned by corporate IT.

To support this scenario, a set of platforms, known as low-code platforms, has been developed.

They are defined as products and/or cloud services for application development that employ visual and declarative techniques instead of programming. They are available to customers at little or no cost in terms of money and training time, with any costs involved rising in proportion to the business value of the platforms. Business demands continuous value delivery that requires solutions that are: 1) rapidly built; 2) seamlessly and continuously deployed; 3) easily changed; and 4) that require no bug fixes. If IT corporations do not offer this bimodal IT approach, customers will apply shadow IT (solutions developed by non-IT departments) and will acquire devices, software, and services outside the ownership or control of IT organizations.

In this context, the main motivation in developing the CAD initiative is to avoid shadow IT from our customers, with the aim of leading a software development transformation process oriented to achieve a high productivity, continuous business value delivery model. CAD will promote an IT methodological approach, supported by cognitive tools, supporting the full E2E (end to end) development life cycle to

improve the development of cloud-native solutions. This year we have already started to work with the Product Engineering team of NTT DATA to study a possible collaboration to develop this asset.

5. Conclusion

SuSI is based at everis Aragón (Zaragoza), where I have been the director since its establishment in 2009. It is the central office for SuSI's asset development. It is also the base for other units such as the Center of Excellence of AI, where the artificial intelligence platform everisMoriarty is being developed, the DevOps team, which is working on Altemista, and other specialized centers for digital experience and architecture. The operation scale of everis Aragón is getting larger each year, and FY 2017 closed with a turnover of 10 million euros thanks to our innovation, an increase of 30–40% compared with the previous year. The forecast for FY 2018's turnover is 12 million euros. Our team consists of 265 professionals, and we plan to add about 80 more people this year. It makes us feel very proud to lead the innovation of everis and to coordinate all the relationships regarding innovation with NTT DATA. We hope to boost our group collaboration even more in the future.

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He obtained an MBA-PDD from IESE Business School, University of Navarra, Spain, and has certification as a Computing Engineer and in Pedagogic Adaptation. In his 25 years of experience in digital transformation and technology, he has led several innovative companies as chief executive officer and/or chief technology officer. He also has 10 years of experience in venture capital, in which he led digital and technology investments. He is a founder shareholder of several innovative companies and is also working as an external expert of innovation for the European Union.