



**EU INNOVATE**

**SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION IN ACTION:  
THE CASE STUDY “SNAPSHOT” SERIES**

**IKEA – SKANSKA**

Making (Sustainable) Homes Affordable



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[www.eu-innovate.com](http://www.eu-innovate.com)

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## About EU-InnovatE

Between 2014 and 2016, the EU-InnovatE project investigated the potential of citizen innovation and sustainable entrepreneurship to achieve sustainable lifestyles in Europe by 2050. The following is one of a series of case study “snapshots” illustrating how new enterprises are being created by passionate, visionary individuals to benefit society at large.

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### **The Case of IKEA – Skanska: Making (Sustainable) Homes Affordable Through the BoKlok Concept**

*The dream of ‘a home of your own’ often remains just that for many people. However, two Swedish-based international companies, in collaboration with others, are designing and building compact and stylish homes that meet the demand for affordable housing.*

#### **Swedish Giants Establish A Unique Partnership**

Construction company Skanska builds houses, apartments and offices in 17 countries. A conversation between Skanska and IKEA, the furniture and home furnishing company, led to an innovative housing programme being conceived.

The BoKlok concept is described as ‘building affordable homes for ordinary people’ and has resulted in the construction of apartment blocks and two-storey houses in a number of European countries. The modular housing is located in pleasant surroundings and is designed to meet the needs of residents who want to live in quality homes of their own, but have limited incomes.

Housing developments are mainly built in suburban areas close to parks, local convenience stores and public transport links. Externally the properties take account of their local surroundings and internally the compact design makes maximum use of space and keeps energy consumption to a minimum. (The following account is based on two projects in Finland.)

#### **Collaborative Innovation in Practice**

Architects do not usually prepare design plans with large scale end user feedback. However, the externally-hired architect who designed BoKlok housing units took a different approach. A consumer survey gathered responses to several alternative apartment layouts, while more detailed feedback came from online focus groups arranged for people who were in the primary target groups for the housing. This approach resulted in the final design of apartments and raised suggestions for additional facilities, such as a communal sauna and vegetable plots.

Further collaboration in the project came from a number of partner organisations including: IKEA, which advised on making the best use of space, layouts and appliances; Skanska, which ensured small modifications could be made during construction and sourced high-quality materials cost effectively; an international supplier of wood related products, Stora Enso, which built the apartments as modules at off-site facilities, cutting on-site waste by 70% and speeding up construction; Hanken School of Economics, which arranged stakeholder workshops; and local authorities, which provided suitable affordable land.

### **Summary of User-Driven Innovation**

- To ensure the construction of popular and affordable homes, potential users were consulted from the outset on the suitability of the planned housing developments.
- Input from a public survey and focus group determined the layout of the apartments and neighbouring facilities.
- Consulting end users provided a reality-check for the design of apartments and assisted in making the BoKlok concept attractive to a wider public.
- Organisations with different skill sets, knowledge and experience assisted in developing the original concept, while taking into account local circumstances, layout and construction issues, quality and cost of materials, and future residents' expectations.

### **Influence on Core Business**

When it comes to residential properties, the construction industry tends to be conservative in what it builds. Buying a home is a big investment and buyers, with concerns about future resale value, can be wary of purchasing a house with novel or innovative features. The BoKlok concept, however, is a non-traditional response to the need for affordable housing that is proving to be popular with residents, and has taken Skanska into an additional business area.

### **Cross-Sector Relevance: Top Three Insights**

- Working collaboratively with partner organisations in sustainable projects can result in innovative outcomes, while addressing the needs of the marketplace.
- Feedback from potential end users can provide a reality-check for pioneering concepts and raise suggestions for modifications and additional features.
- “Transparent” innovation can result in competitors entering the same field, but this could help grow the market and increase customer readiness to accept new concepts.

### **To Learn More About the Case...**

Please contact the lead investigators from the EU-InnovatE research team:

*Angelina Korsunova, Aalto University – [angelina.korsunova@aalto.fi](mailto:angelina.korsunova@aalto.fi)*

*Jörg Hronek, Aalto University – [jorg.hronek@aalto.fi](mailto:jorg.hronek@aalto.fi)*

## **Further Information**

The BoKlok Concept: [www.boklok.com/about-the-BoKlok-concept](http://www.boklok.com/about-the-BoKlok-concept)

IKEA: [www.ikea.com](http://www.ikea.com)

Skanska AB: [www.skanska.com](http://www.skanska.com)

Stora Enso: [www.storaenso.com/products-and-services/building-and-living](http://www.storaenso.com/products-and-services/building-and-living)

Hanken School of  
Economics: [www.hanken.fi/en](http://www.hanken.fi/en)

Aalto University: [www.aalto.fi](http://www.aalto.fi)