



## IV ASEM-MGM – Lisbon May 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> 2017 Innovation and Entrepreneurship – Concept paper

Innovation and Entrepreneurship are currently two of the most important areas in the strategy of cities and regions around the world to create jobs and accelerate growth.

In fact, jobs and growth in the local economy are critical issues and major priorities, with a strong focus on creating strong and dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystems, attracting and retaining enterprises and talents; supporting entrepreneurial education and skills; or even transform cities as Open Innovation Labs.

### **Developing Strong Entrepreneurial Ecosystems**

Most start-ups are created in cities, where entrepreneurs and small businesses can find the opportunities, services and infrastructure they need to thrive. City governments have a deep understanding of their local economies (including sectors, opportunities, strengths, weaknesses and needs), as well as of their regional environment. They are in a privileged position to define the most appropriate strategies to create favorable local entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Examples city government's policies and programs tailored to the specific needs of local entrepreneurs and small businesses include:

- Providing support services for start-ups, entrepreneurs and small businesses, such as developing and managing business incubators and accelerating programs. Cities support cluster development by setting up a wide range of business support services to startups.
- Facilitating connections between start-ups and big companies.
- Facilitating access to finance for start-ups and SMEs.
- Facilitating access to markets by helping local small businesses and start-ups to have access to public and private procurement.
- Supporting the internationalization of companies through bilateral agreements between cities with complementary local ecosystems, helping startups to explore and target markets outside their home countries.
- Support actions focused on strengthening cooperation between startups and research centres and on better supporting research and technological development.
- Boosting an Entrepreneurial Culture, Mindset and Skills. Actions are needed to improve entrepreneurial education, business competences and skills both for new and potential entrepreneurs. These should be implemented and available at all levels of education and during career development.

### **Cities as Knowledge & Innovation Hubs**

One of the most important drivers of any city innovation strategy it's the quality and density of its higher education and R&D institutions. This is the reason why most cities have been working intensively with these stakeholders in order to strengthen its R&D and innovation systems and integrate it in their economic development strategy.





### **Strategic Clusters as Engines of Growth**

Cities and regions are the perfect places to create and develop strategic clusters and ecosystems, using these as efficient platforms for the concentration of resources and investments and for the federation of stakeholders around major priorities and structural projects, which, for its innovative nature and the ability to create value and jobs can contribute significantly to expand and strengthen the local economy.

### **Cities as Open Innovation Labs**

It's in the cities that some of the major societal challenges emerge, whether in mobility, environmental and energy sustainability, or even safety and resilience. But it is also in cities that innovations and solutions to these great challenges are created and tested.

It is precisely for these reasons that cities are being transformed in Living Labs, developing open innovation programs where startups, SMEs or researchers use the city's digital and physical resources (vd. open data, streets, squares or public equipment's) to develop and test their solutions in real conditions, with the purpose to improve quality of life of the citizens.

