ITU Regional Innovation Forum CHISINAU MANIFESTO

Regional Forum for Europe and CIS
Strengthening Innovation Capabilities in the ICT-centric Ecosystem and Fostering the Growth of ICT Startups

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Based on the discussion at the Regional Innovation Forum for Europe and CIS that gathered about 50 participants from 12 Countries, from public and private sector, international and regional organizations, civil society, academia and others, identified a set of challenges and recommendations, which may serve as a base for planning and implementing future activities fostering national ICT centric innovation ecosystem in European and CIS countries. The set of challenges and recommendations developed by the community gathered at this meeting are all equally important and non-binding; so are the gaps that were discussed and must be addressed. These challenges and recommendations are for the purpose of consideration and to be used as a possible input to the national reviews being carried out by ITU in the region.

Recognizing the critical role of ICTs across all sectors of the economy and the particular contribution of ICT centric innovation and entrepreneurship to sustainable development, in particular advancing achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation), stakeholders shared the following goals, for each of the following pillars.

Vision

ICT centric innovation ecosystems need to be established in order to accelerate sustainable development, composed of three pillars - social, economic and environmental.

The creation of innovation ecosystem should play a critical role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 9.

Innovation ecosystems should be guided to unlock new opportunities for the inclusive and sustainable growth of modern digital economy.

All ecosystems require close interaction in order to create necessary synergies.

Multisectoral and multistakeholder approaches need to serve as a foundation for ICT centric innovation ecosystems.

Policy

Tax policies and incentives are perceived as an important instrument for fostering innovation at the country level and may be considered as a measure to strengthen sustainable and inclusive growth.

Separate policies may be considered, taking into account particularities of micro-enterprises, small-medium enterprises, startups, angels network, crowdfunding, regulatory sandboxes, etc., while ensuring that coherence at the country level in line with the national innovation strategies and development priorities.

Legislation adjustments for obtaining quick work permit for foreign nationals are needed.

Regular interaction with policy makers that creates a dynamic feedback mechanisms and incorporates flexibility and agility in the policy making process is needed.

There is a need to promote capacity building through policies.

Establishment of tech / innovation parks needs to be encouraged through special national policies.

Engagement of the local governments may be considered.

Facilitation of innovative and enabling data management policies including supporting cross border data flows as well as data analytics may unlock new opportunities for innovative solutions for all sectors.

Encourage inclusive digital finance enabled by traditional and non-traditional technologies and actors.

Capital and Resources

Access to financing should be provided through a continuum of sources including innovation fund, and should improve deal flow of startups, and further promote expansion of SMEs.

There is a need for partnership with traditional banks, non-traditional banks, and development banks in order to increase access to funds, to provide risk capital, and develop new funding sources.

Access to capital, particularly pre-seed, seed investment, angel investor networks — with their focus on very early stages and accelerator programs, as well as early-stage capacity building and network creation, should be provided.

Business innovation support such as services, training, mentoring, should be provided to entrepreneurs.

Talent and Champions

Education should be adapted to provide practical skills for a predominately digital economy.

STEM and STEAM education programs should be created or upgraded to provide access to knowledge, boost original thinking, bold experimentation and interdisciplinary creativity.

Tech careers should be promoted and curricula adapted to industry needs.

Vocational education and rapid training programs of technology- and creativity-related skills should be fostered.

To foster innovation, it is necessary to go beyond digital literacy, moving towards the development of digital skills, fostering creativity and entrepreneurship.

Special programs building digital skills for creation of local content and locally-relevant services need to be encouraged.

There is a need for Mentorship programs (both in educational context and within startup incubators and accelerators)

Special programs attracting talent from abroad may be considered, including facilitation of accelerated visa processing.

Infrastructure and Programs

Innovation agencies can be considered as an important pillar of innovation ecosystem, facilitating coordination at the national level, synchronizing actions with the national strategies and policies as well as providing guidance for innovation agents.

Engagement of the top political leaders as innovation agents promoting strategic role of ICT centric innovation ecosystem in context of the national development strategy is of key importance for the country.

Efforts need to be dedicated to enhance commercialization of R&D. Creation of one-stop shop platforms may be considered.

Hubs connecting multiple stakeholders, networks of innovation, dynamics creating interdisciplinary approaches and environments for rapid testing, prototyping, and adoption.

Physical infrastructure that strengthens acceleration and entrepreneurship should be developed, including co-working spaces, acceleration hubs, innovation centers, fablabs, living labs etc.

Broadband infrastructure is a key prerequisite for building the ICT centric innovation ecosystem, and should be rolled out taking into account innovative broadband access technologies as well as national socio-economic and geographic parameters, supported by regulatory policies promoting efficient investments, for example through passive as well as active network sharing.

Market and Networks

It is essential to ensure that the national and regional ecosystems are connected.

International, regional and local marketing initiatives are required to create global awareness and attract investors from all over the world.

There is a need for associations of ICT companies and entrepreneurs to engage in the actions at the national, regional and global level.

Participation in the global platforms (e.g. world conferences, expositions, forums) is of strategic importance.

It is essential for telecom operators to contribute to the independent, inclusive, administrative and technological platforms enabling ICT centric innovation ecosystem.

Communities and Culture

Community promotion spaces that provide links to networks of mentors, skills training courses, incubators and accelerators need to be built.

Culture of openness should be created, by encouraging use of open data and launching challenges to foster entrepreneurship locally, interconnected with global networks.

There is a need to change mindset and corporate culture to enable digital transformation and foster ICT centric innovation in all sectors.

Creation of local content as well as locally relevant services needs to be encouraged.