

# ITU Regional Initiative for Europe on Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Youth



## Multistakeholder Consultation within the Framework of the National Review on the ICT Centric Innovation Ecosystem

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Tirana, Albania

### TIRANA MANIFESTO

Based on the discussion, the participants identified the following set of challenges and recommendations, which may serve as a base for planning and implementing future activities fostering national ICT centric innovation ecosystem in Albania. The set of challenges and recommendations developed by the community gathered at this meeting are all equally important and are non-binding and only for consideration and to be used as an input to the national review carried out under the ITU EUR Regional Initiative 5 adopted by the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2014.

Recognizing the critical role of ICTs across all sectors of the economy and the particular contribution of ICT centric innovation and entrepreneurship to socio-economic development, the following key challenges were articulated by the ICT ecosystem stakeholders present at the meeting:

#### *Private sector*

- Public sector being the major contractor in the country might extend the number of the opportunities to the private sector, including provision of funding for innovative projects;

- More incentives (e.g. taxes, funds) from the government for private sector are necessary in order to unlock new opportunities driven by the private sector and the fostering ICT centric innovation ecosystem;
- Academic programmes need adjustment in order to address the real needs of the private sector, as currently there is a significant lack of skilled human resources on the market and the skill set of fresh graduates does not meet expectations of the private sector;
- There is lack of mentors in ICT, innovation, entrepreneurship etc.;
- Awareness raising among wealthy Albanians and a simplified finance process may unlock sources of seed funding and venture capital within the country;
- There is lack of structured written information regarding the ICT sector and ecosystem.

### *Academia*

- Lack of platform for interaction between academia, finance and the private sector aiming at unlocking new opportunities and funding streams for applied research;
- There is a need for more funds targeting ICT centric innovation. Currently, opportunities for innovative research come solely from the public sector;
- Universities need access to the international research networks in order to facilitate transfer of knowledge and create new opportunities for cross-border collaborative research projects;
- Need for strengthening of ICT component in the education system, revising curricula, with the aim of making sure that the youth may use ICTs efficiently and effectively while pursuing studies or making research.

### *Support Network and Financial Sector*

- There is a need for incentives from the government in supporting entrepreneurship, incubation processes, and accelerators. This may include a mix of tax breaks, cofunding and collaboration with incubation and acceleration groups;
- The government should support incubators and accelerators and facilitate the recruitment of entrepreneurs for those programmes, leading to an increased quality of entrepreneurs in those programmes;
- The government should support entrepreneurship skills training in secondary and tertiary education;
- More support from the government is required to attract venture capital, angel investors, and donors;
- Greater support is needed to encourage both the global access of Albanian entrepreneurs, and foreign investment in Albania's innovation ecosystem;

- Structured engagement with the diaspora community can lead to benefits across the innovation ecosystem, drawing investment and seed funding, skills, networking, and opportunities for international collaboration;
- Support networks play a key role in ensuring that entrepreneurs compete globally and reside locally, retaining skills and innovation in the Albanian ecosystem;
- Improvement of transparency in government interactions with the private sector, including taxation, incentives and other areas is necessary.

### *Public Sector*

- Greater engagement with and from the stakeholders, in terms of meetings and conversation, is needed in order to build the ICT centric community. Existing projects should be better exploited to create this engagement;
- A platform for systematic collaboration between the government and other stakeholders involved in the ICT centric innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem is necessary in order to better support user driven innovation, collaborative development and co-creation at the national, regional and global level;
- Awareness and visibility must be increased for the private sector on ICT for programmes and policies (transparency and confidence in use of ICTs);
- Funds must be raised for ICT innovation, e.g. projects, programmes, etc.
- Financial incentives are needed (e.g taxes) in order to foster ICT centric innovation
- Raising awareness of intellectual property rights protection is a component of innovation processes;
- Lack of human capacity corresponding to the needs of the market requires adaptation of the curricula and skills trainings;
- The digital literacy of citizens to and their confidence and competence in the use of ICTs and digital services should be improved, notably in terms of e-services offered by the public sector.