Executive Workshop for Europe

Bridging the Digital Innovation Divide

Fostering Digital Entrepreneurship and Startup Ecosystems

12-13 September 2017
Ljubljana, Slovenia

innovation.itu.int   Register at EURregion@itu.int

ICPE   RegionalCooperationCouncil   ITU

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1.   Introduction

The Executive Workshop on **Bridging the Digital Innovation Divide: Fostering Digital Entrepreneurship and Startup Ecosystem** was held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, from 12 to 13 September 2017. This workshop is organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and International Center for Promotion of Enterprises (ICPE) within the framework of the **ITU European Regional Initiative on Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Youth**, adopted by the **World Telecommunication Development Conference** 2014 (WTDC-14), Dubai. It is also contributing to the Digital Integration, one of the pillars of the RCC-coordinated Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area in the Western Balkans, endorsed by WB6 Leaders at the Trieste Summit of the Berlin process (12th July, 2017), in particular focusing on promotion of the uptake of smart technologies and accelerating digital transformation as well as supporting skills development and access to digital talent.

This Executive Workshop aims at building regional and national capacities and skills in developing digital ecosystems, including designing policies, implementation programmes and projects. Programme of this workshop builds upon the recently launched toolkit on **Bridging the digital innovation divide: A toolkit for strengthening ICT centric ecosystems**, and will be supported by a series of national and regional best practices and initiatives fostering ICT centric innovation and digital transformation.

EXPECTED RESULT: Identification of stakeholders, champions and good practice programmes in the region interested in undertraining national ICT centric innovation ecosystem reviews, thereby advancing digital transformation and advancing digital integration. Furthermore, empowering participants with methodology, frameworks, tools and context relevant case studies to accelerate digital transformation through promoting innovation and entrepreneurship.

2.   Participation

This executive workshop targets all stakeholders involved in nurturing and building digital innovation environment, favorable to entrepreneurship and creation of startups. In particular, its agenda has been customized for the needs of the ICT policy makers, regulators, national innovation agencies, development agencies, entrepreneurs, ecosystem builders, academia as well as institutions willing to undertake a national review of the ICT centric innovation ecosystems and develop coherent approaches to move countries towards an innovation driven economy.

3.   Documentation

The seminar was paperless. Relevant documentation, including the Agenda, Presentations and Reference Materials were made available on the event web page. Additional reusable training material was provided by the workshop facilitators. Event web page, see: https://itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Pages/Events/2017/EW/Executive-Workshop-on-Bridging-the-Digital-Innovation-Divide.aspx

4.   Opening ceremony

Opening ceremony.

Welcome by Host
- ***Dr Anand N. Asthana,*** *Director General, ICPE*

Inauguration Addresses by
- ***H.E. Boris Koprivnikar,*** *Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Public Administration of the Republic of Slovenia*
- ***Mr Jaroslaw Ponder,*** *Head of ITU Office for Europe*
- ***Ms Maja Handjiska-Trendafilova,*** *SEE2020 Coordinator*

The opening ceremony was moderated by **Mr Nenad Stankovic** of ICPE.

The speakers, hosts & organizers articulated they key importance of having a strong vision & strategy as well as national commitment to digital transformation in order to create resilient and sustainable digital & innovation economies; moreover, it is crucial to make available and understand the necessary resource requirements and cross sectoral engagement, as well as the importance of embracing digital and 'open' government solutions. The speakers elaborated the roles and positions of their respective organizations and governments and that envision a strong and continuing collaboration with ITU on the matters of Digital Divide, Regional Cooperation & ICT centric Innovation in the future.

5. Training sessions and Outcomes

SESSION 1: Understanding the innovation divide & its challenges (1/2)
– Why are we here? Diagnosing the Digital Innovation Divide

The first session was dedicated to setting the scene for different experiences of digital innovation ecosystems and the growing digital innovation divide across Europe. For this purpose, five representatives presented country testimonials about their digital innovation ecosystems, including what their key challenges, opportunities and continuing pain points are in adapting their national digital agendas to the current reality by transforming them into digital innovation economies.

The session was constructed around the five country presentations – each of which were dedicated 10minutes and presenters were given prior guidelines on how to present and what key aspects to touch upon – and followed by a collaborative exercise & discussions to extract key learnings from the individual findings, which were aimed at introducing the participants into the subject matter, and transferring the presented information into the framework and methodology of ITU Innovation.

Country Experience Presentations

- *Bosnia and Herzegovina – Dr. Nermin Suljanović, Full Professor, Faculty of Electr. Engineering, Tuzla University*
- *Georgia – Mr Irakli Kashibadze, CEO, Future Laboratory*
- *The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – Ms. Marta A. Tomovska, Digital Transformation Strategist*
- *Slovenia – Digitalna Slovenija*
- *Montenegro – Dr. Igor Radusinovic, Full Professor, Faculty of Electrical   Engineering, University of Montenegro*

Discussion Points & Challenges Revealed

The country presentations revealed highly context specific differences in challenges the ecosystems face across the European region, which they exhibit in digital infrastructure and skills development, and regarding their approaches to creating digital innovation, project and policy solutions. The presentations highlighted a need for comprehensive strategy and vision, and an inadequacy in providing holistic solutions and not mere copy paste fixes. All presenters' national ecosystems exhibited suboptimal digital innovation capacity ratios. A trend that was further supported by other regional stakeholders participating in the workshop.

Session 1 impressions.

**SESSION 2: Understanding the innovation divide & its challenges (2/2)
– What is the Problem? Building Innovation Policy**

Session 2 gave consideration to the providing basic principles to approach the policy context of digital innovation and going into detail about existing challenges in Building ICT-Centric Innovation Ecosystems & conducive Policy approaches.

The session served the purpose to introduce a common language on innovation, to elaborate key concepts, stakeholder interactions & fundamental principles for systems of innovation and digital innovation ecosystems.

Further discussed and collectively elaborated were key challenges that exist for innovation ecosystems nationally, in the European region and in a global context. Particular consideration revolved around existing policy approaches and why these are failing – with the session concluding on the consensus of an apparent need for a new approach to digital innovation policy.

Discussion Points & Challenges Revealed

The participants confirmed the importance of ITU activity on the subjects like Innovation and Digital ICT centric Ecosystems, and highly enjoyed being introduced into the subject matter of the Digital Innovation Divide & different regional contexts & how various stakeholders approach the issue. A challenge expressed by every participant was the subject matter's strong national variances and the failure of mere copy-paste solutions. They also noted the value of the strong adaptability of ITU Innovations methodology and context-specific approach.

Session 2 impressions.

**SESSION 3: How to make Digital Innovation Work – Ready for a paradigm shift
ITU Digital Innovation Framework, New Approach & Tools**

The third session of the workshop highlighted new approaches & solutions to the problem of building enabling policy for ICT centric innovation ecosystems to foster Digital Entrepreneurship, Startup Ecosystems, and how to bridge the digital innovation divide in general – as developed by ITU.

The session provided an overview of ITU's Digital Innovation Framework, including its methodological approach, tools & services offered as part of the ITU Innovation Platform. The central point of reference was the process to create ICT centric Innovation Ecosystem Country Reviews, & the tools of the Bridging the Digital Innovation Divide Policy Toolkit.

The purpose of this overview session centred around the question "What you could do to solve the problem" and to transmit an understanding about the Building Blocks of the ITU Innovation approach to create impactful policy solutions & flagship projects.

Session 3 impressions.

SESSIONS 4 – 8: Building Digital Innovation Ecosystem Analyst Competencies – CoCreative Learning Journey

The content of sessions 4 – 8 formed part of an interactive workshop to allow the participants to familiarize themselves with the tools, methods and processes ITU Innovation utilizes to develop Reviews of ICT centric Innovation Ecosystems.

Over the course of this "cocreative learning journey" of the workshop, the participants are progressively building a deeper understanding and the fundamental competencies necessary to become a Digital Innovation Ecosystem Analyst. This is done through the guided use of ITU tools, easing participants in through a combination of mock up assessment of their respective ecosystems, information gathering and select hypothetical scenarios. Each session or module is dedicated to the introduction and exploration of one or more related competencies & set of tools.

This section of the training utilizes design thinking processes & creativity methodologies ITU developed to assess national ICT-centric Innovation Ecosystems and to cocreatively develop new solutions in multistakeholder dialogues & settings. It is strongly reliant on active participation, collaborative problem solving, group deliberation & discussion – and examines the learning curve of the participants throughout the workshop and with one formal, written test at the end.

SESSION 4: Building Digital Innovation Ecosystem Analyst Competencies – CoCreative Learning Journey (1/5)

The first part of the cocreative learning journey was dedicated to "understanding the environment: The ecosystem, its key pillars and understanding where the participants find themselves.

Central tools and concepts elaborated:
- *Ecosystem Canvas*
- *How to hold workshops*

Outline of CoCreative Learning: The participants were tasked to engage with the Ecosystem Canvas in separate groups, in order to identify main components and to develop a common agenda on vision & strategy for the group's respective hypothetical ecosystems. Each group had to create a 2-minute pitch about their ecosystem vision.

Session 4 impressions.

SESSION 5: Building Digital Innovation Ecosystem Analyst Competencies
– CoCreative Learning Journey (2/5)

The second part of the cocreative learning journey focussed on "building your innovation knowledge," to create a deeper insight into their respective ecosystems, into different stakeholder's positions, and how to conduct qualitative interviews.

Central tools and concepts elaborated:
- *Qualitative Interviews*

Outline of CoCreative Learning: In pairs of two to three people, the participants were tasked to conduct qualitative interviews used in the country review process – interchanging from the perspective of the interviewer, and from the point of view of an ecosystem stakeholder / expert. Results had to be uploaded into an online database.

Session 5 impressions.

SESSION 6: Building Digital Innovation Ecosystem Analyst Competencies – CoCreative Learning Journey (3/5)

The third part of the CoCreative Learning Journey, addressed how Current State Analyses of the ecosystems are approached, introducing the concepts of divergent & convergent phases, research filters, expert literature reviews & desktop research. The session also served the purpose to develop a list of priority objectives for the European regional ecosystem from the workshop participants' perspective.

Central tools and concepts elaborated:

- *Current State Analyses*
- *Research Filters*
- *Desktop Research*
- *Developing a Common Agenda of Priority Objectives*

Outline of CoCreative Learning: The participants were tasked to contemplate and discuss in the entire group, the current state of the regional ecosystem according to the provided research filters and elaborated approach along the lines of the key pillars of the ecosystem, and develop a common agenda on priority fields of importance & to collaboratively prepare a Ljubljana workshop stakeholder outcome document – which is up for further review among participants.

SESSION 6 – KEY TAKEAWAY

CO-CREATIVE LEARNING JOURNEY
DIGITAL INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM ANALYST COMPETENCIES:

- Current State Assessment
- Desktop Research
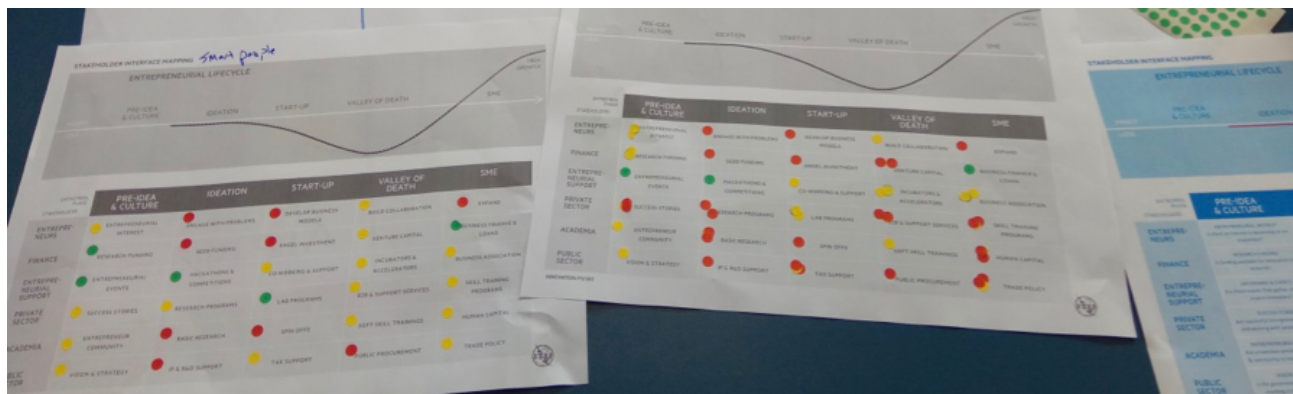- Compiling Sources

Session 6 impressions.

SESSION 7: Building Digital Innovation Ecosystem Analyst Competencies – CoCreative Learning Journey (4/5)

During the fourth part of the interactive workshop, the participants were introduced to the concept of the Entrepreneurship Journey to better understand stakeholder interactions & their roles in helping entrepreneurs bridge the "valley of death".

Central tools and concepts elaborated:

- *Entrepreneurship Journey*
- *Stakeholder Interface Canvas*
- *Stakeholder Actions*

Outline of CoCreative Learning: The participants were tasked in two groups, to discuss their ecosystem strength in view of the stakeholder interface canvas. Following the guidelines provided, the participants had to then rank & colour code the provided canvases in accordance to their ecosystem status.

Session 7 impressions.

SESSION 8: Building Digital Innovation Ecosystem Analyst Competencies – CoCreative Learning Journey (5/5)

The fifth part of the cocreative learning journey dealt with how to set priority objectives, set recommendations, where and how to start building projects. Other parts of the workshop introduced quantitative survey methods as used in the regional digital innovation ecosystem assessment of ITU Innovation Research, and briefly introduced a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Country Review process.

Central tools and concepts elaborated:

- *Project Canvas*
- *Monitoring & Evaluation Framework*
- *Recommendations & Priority Objectives*

Outline of CoCreative Learning: The participants were tasked to familiarize themselves with an online quantitative survey tool utilized in regional assessments of ITU innovation and complete the survey in reference to their own position

on the regional ecosystem, uploading their results. They were then tasked to collaboratively develop priority objectives to potential future projects, according to instructions & guidance provided.

Session 8 impressions.

SESSION 9: How to become a Digital Innovation Ecosystem Expert
– Identify where & how to start building your ecosystem

Session 9 had participants understand how to utilize the newly learned skills from the co-creative learning experience to identify where & how to start building national ICT centric innovation ecosystems. Participants were introduced into how to compile findings of a country review, and how to build and map their individual fact finding – or learning – journeys to strengthen their ecosystem.

Central tools and concepts elaborated:

- *Putting it all together: How to use your new Digital Innovation Ecosystem Analyst Competencies*
- *How to identify opportunities to strengthen ecosystems*
- *How to start building & Map Your Journey*

Further, the participants understanding of the taught concepts and skills was tested in a written assignment – which all of the participants passed. *(See Learning Evaluation and Written Tests in the Attachment.)*

Session 9 impressions.

SESSION 10: How to become an Innovation Ecosystem Builder
– National Commitment, Regional Sustainability & Global Competitiveness

Session 10 introduced participants to the discussion of European ecosystem integration and how to become an innovation Ecosystem Builder – which requires the need for national commitment, fostering regional digital integration and global competitiveness. Other aspects discussed were approaches on how to find one's place in a global community, and the benefits of ITU's anticipated knowledge sharing platform & Expert Community for Digital Ecosystems & Good Practices on Innovation for Development.

Finally, the session wrapped up with a discussion on steps necessary for the individual and regional ecosystems of the participants declaring their intent to future engagements with ITU Innovation. The session continued with an extensive feedback discussion in which participants expressed the high value and ITU's innovative capacity in this very useful training, and concluded with the official presentation of the certificates to all participants who passed the training.

Session 10 impressions.

6. Conclusion

All stakeholders were thanked for their contributions to the workshop.

All participants who passed the two evaluations conducted during Day 1 & end of Day 2 received their certificates.

The participants expressed wanting to continue their involvement with ITU in general & with ITU Innovation in multiple capacities. They also communicated to strongly welcome the new opportunities and importance of ITU activity on Innovation, Regional and National ICT centric Ecosystems.

Actions agreed upon included:

- All participants agreed to take on innovation leadership role & become national champions strengthening their ICT centric Innovation ecosystems, by using ITU toolkit on Bridging the Digital Innovation Divide.

- They agreed to utilize the outcome document which was developed as common agenda on steps to strengthen European digital ecosystem as discussion basis for creating national intent & commitment.

- Several participants reached out about explicit further collaboration with ITU.

- Several participants intend to submit papers to ITU about assessments and actions to jump start the digital innovation processes in their respective countries.

- They will revert to ITU on further action agreed to be taken at national level
  which may include :
  - National workshops to elaborate more detailed subject matter & expand upon provided learning (see below)
  - Further training at national level, to allow other stakeholders to benefit from the content & skills
  - Further trainings at national level aimed at developing experts to create country level ecosystem reviews independently, under ITU Innovation guidance & supervision
  - Potential regional trainings
  - Advisory services from ITU to provide guidance on how to develop national reviews, build flagship projects, regional integration, and global knowledge sharing
  - Establishing a Global Knowledge Network & Community Engagement platform aimed at national digital innovation for development and Good Practices and

A **feedback** questionnaire was circulated and responses reflected that, every participant found the workshop and particularly the tools and design thinking methodology of ITU Innovation highly useful and engaging, and appreciated learning about the subject matter of the digital innovation divide & its challenges, as well as the ITU portfolio aimed at addressing these issues.