

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE EUROPEAN ENTREPRENEURIAL REGIONS:  
BUILDING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS OF THE FUTURE**

**24 JANUARY 2018, BRUSSELS, COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

Three panels discussing **mapping, strengthening and making the regional entrepreneurial ecosystems future-proof** followed after opening speeches by the CoR President Karl-Heinz Lambertz, stressing the successful cooperation within the EER network, and Eva Maydell, Member of the European Parliament, who highlighted her admiration for people with entrepreneurial passion.

[2018 EER regions](#) **Central Macedonia** (Constantinos Michailides), **Northern and Western Region** (David Minton) and **Île-de-France** (Jean-Baptiste Fernandes) presented their strategies and actions undertaken in view of boosting their ecosystems. We also heard about the specificities and good practices in [Cyprus](#) (Eloiza Savvidou) and [Tel Aviv](#) (Adi Barel).

We dove into the topics of measuring the different elements of the ecosystems and the ecosystems as a whole with Erik Stam, Professor at the University of Utrecht, into mapping of the networks of serial entrepreneurs and bench-marking and comparisons of cities' ecosystems with Rhett Morris ([Endeavor](#)). Ingrid Willems ([DataScouts](#)) stressed the importance of data and of "monitoring the heartbeat of the ecosystems".

Helene Dage from DG GROW presented the European Commission's initiatives in support of evidence-based policies and interregional cooperation and Katarzyna Jakimowicz, representing the [Lisbon Council](#), stressed the importance of identifying strengths and weaknesses of the ecosystems before designing the policies.

Silke Haarich from [Spatial Foresight](#) and Ricardo Borges de Castro from the [European Political Strategy Centre](#) introduced the idea of foresight mind-set, tools and methods.

Finally, Robert Negoită, CoR Rapporteur on the [Future of the COSME Programme beyond 2020](#), concluded the conference, inviting everyone to continue the discussions at the external conference of the CoR Commission for Economic Policy in June in Bucharest.

In the afternoon session, Tel Aviv, Extremadura (Ana María Vega Fernández) and Helsinki (Christine Chang) presented their strategies and projects to set the scene for the participatory session; the EER secretariat explained the philosophy behind the [EER label](#), giving some hints and tips on the preparation of the EER application.

The following questions were further discussed during the **participatory session** facilitated by Katarzyna Bałucka-Dębska and Andre Mayer from DG GROW:

What do you need to know about your territory to design a successful entrepreneurial policy? How to map a local or regional ecosystem and identify its strengths and weaknesses?

How can you determine emerging trends, threats and opportunities that may impact the ecosystem's future development? How can these insights help you design better policies in entrepreneurship support?

How to design a successful entrepreneurial strategy that is tailor-made to the specific needs of your territory and capable of achieving desired policy objectives under conditions of uncertainty? What are the key ingredients for a comprehensive entrepreneurship policy at regional or local level?

Thanks to all for your active participation and to Josette Dijkhuizen, Professor at the Maastricht School of Management, for the inspirational conclusions of the masterclass. Ideas distilled from both the sessions follow:

### **How to build an entrepreneurial ecosystem of the future: Ideas from the conference and the masterclass**

Have the ecosystem mapped; look at its strengths and weaknesses, measure its diversity and interconnectedness, its accessibility. Benchmark yourself. Focus on what you are not strong at. Identify the gaps and find the weakest link. The more realistic picture of your region or city you get the better. Prepare a strategy for fixing the gaps and weaknesses in cooperation with all the stakeholders and involving all the societal groups: build on their collective understanding to face the challenges of a rapidly changing globalised world.

Support the future winners, but do not forget about traditional businesses.

Remember: **Building an ecosystem is not like cooking a stew, but rather like baking a cake: you need to put each ingredient in at the right time and the right quantity.** And this needs to be underpinned by a continuous process of collecting data, exchanging ideas and reviewing of policies.

Learn from the champions. Think outside of the box. Use participatory methods. Closely cooperate with all governance levels.

Role models and ambassadors of the entrepreneurial spirit and investment into entrepreneurial education are essential.

Aim at quickly transforming the ideas into action. Maintain a dialogue with the stakeholders before, during and after the intervention. Generate projects in cooperation with the business scene – the trends come from the entrepreneurial community. Ensure good dissemination of the actions.

Finance for SMEs and entrepreneurs acts as a fertilizer of the entrepreneurial ecosystems. However, access to educated talent is equally important and its lack is often underestimated. Ensure that businesses have it.

Keep an eye on the trends. Better: Become a trend yourself.

Keep a foresight mind-set: imagine and develop on possible future scenarios to be prepared for the future. 3D: Demographics, democracy and digital are among the key trends affecting EU and global ecosystems in a systemic way. Enhance the capacities in the system to be able to meet future challenges.

**Apply for the EER label. Join the EER network.**