



European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

**SPEED UP**  
Interreg Europe



**ATYPICAL**  
**ANTWERP**

# ACTION PLAN

City of Antwerp



**ANTWERP**

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## INTRODUCTION

This Action Plan is a document providing details on how lessons were learnt from the SPEEDUP Project “Supporting Practices for Entrepreneurship Ecosystems in the Development of Urban Policies” and will be further developed in order to improve the policy instrument addressed in Antwerp and Flanders.

The city of Antwerp has implemented several instruments to encourage entrepreneurship. Being the largest city in the region of Flanders, Antwerp is a key partner for the Flemish government’s economic policy. As such, it has been closely involved in the consultations leading up to the ERDF ROP 2014-2020.

Our goal in this SPEEDUP project is to improve the provision of services by local authorities vis-à-vis businesses and organizations. The SPEEDUP project presented many good practices which were valuable for this improvement. Out of this good practices we chose to develop our action plan which consist out of two actions we think are of a big need for the city of Antwerp’s start-up network and are of equally importance for our addressed policy instrument: ERDF Managing Authority (Vlaams Agentschap voor Innovatie en Ondernemerschap (VLAIO) - Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship).

Our first action will consist in the development of a digital platform and mapping system for the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The managing authority, VLAIO, is also researching how to develop such a system for Flanders and investigates the needs of the different incubators and accelerators. For the city of Antwerp we will research and develop a system which aligns with the one of Flanders and which can reinforce the ecosystem in Antwerp and Flanders.

Secondly we will develop an action around soft-landing programmes to encourage the internationalisation of entrepreneurs . We identified the need for this kind of programmes in some good practices presented by other partners in the SPEEDUP project. Being a governmental organ we can be of big importance to create a welcoming environment for entrepreneurs who want to invest in our city. The need to create administrative simplification is one of the working points we have to sort out on different policy levels. Next to that we have to make agreements with incubators and accelerators to create this programmes and welcome entrepreneurs from all over the world. Finally we have to look for opportunities on how to help our local entrepreneurs find their way on an international level.

**ACTION 1:** Developing a digital platform and mapping system, as part of our new website ‘BusinessinAntwerp’, for the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

**ACTION 2:** Developing a soft landing programme for foreign entrepreneurs and find opportunities to send our entrepreneurs abroad to expand their business.

## PART I – GENERAL INFORMATION

<b>Project Name</b>	SPEED UP - Supporting Practices for Entrepreneurship Ecosystems in the Development of Urban Policies
<b>Partner organization</b>	City of Antwerp
<b>Country</b>	Belgium
<b>NUTS2 Region</b>	Flanders
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## PART II – POLICY CONTEXT

- The Action Plan aims to impact:
- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
  - European Territorial Cooperation programme
  - Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

**ERDF Operational Programme 2014-2020 of Region of Flanders**

The ERDF ROP 2014-2020 aims to boost economic growth in the region and to contribute to achieving the Europe 2020 targets for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Through investments that will support the knowledge economy, SMEs and the transition towards a low carbon economy. It should create jobs and boost productivity. Major financial effort, namely 90% of the total allocation, goes to RTD, SMEs and low carbon economy.

The policy instrument chosen is the Spec. objective 2.1.2: Promoting a business friendly environment at local and provincial level dealing with the OT3 Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs. This policy instrument aims to stimulate a business friendly environment through better government policy and provision of services at local and provincial level, in response to the needs of businesses. Local and provincial governments need to be aware of the positive/negative impact they have on the business environment, and should – within their competencies – facilitate entrepreneurship through concrete actions, such as: improving the administrative and content related service level towards SME's and startups: facilitating new businesses in their search for an ideal location, possibly providing city managed locations; facilitating e-business and tech startup development through open digital platforms; co-creating innovation projects through e-tendering procedures, pre-commercial procurement trajectories and the outsourcing of city development programmes.

The Action Plan we will develop is of great use for the Flemish startups who are based in Antwerp or want to do business in Antwerp. VLAIO supports our actions. As mentioned in the Coalition Agreement of the new Flemish Government (page 56-57) VLAIO will support local cities to spread the policy and implementation of actions around smart cities. They will try to assemble the actions of local governments to be more efficient and cost saving.

Many actions in the new Coalition Agreement are ideas grown in the workshops where the city of Antwerp took part in. VLAIO does support international growth by exchange packages for startups. They have given FIT (Flanders Investment and Trade) the mission to make agreements with several countries/cities. The city of Antwerp will work together with them and vice versa. VLAIO will profit from agreements on soft landing packages we will make. Same story for our digital platform. VLAIO will support our actions by communicating them and by sharing data and knowhow.

## PART III – DETAILS OF THE ACTIONS ENVISAGED

### ACTION 1. Digital platform

#### Relevance to the project

The Flemish ERDF programme 2014-2020 aims to uphold/improve entrepreneurial dynamics in Flanders. Belgium and its regions have a poor track-record in promoting a business-friendly climate. Businesses perceive government regulation as a burden and as such a threshold to start-up new initiatives. The Flemish ERDF programme and the specific policy instrument for promoting a business-friendly climate aim to boost the role of (local/provincial) governments as facilitators of new businesses and enhance the role of the business incubators for the growth of (starting) entrepreneurs.

In this framework, a digital platform for (starting) entrepreneurs is a good tool to facilitate the innovative and entrepreneurial mindset in the city of Antwerp and Flanders and create, amongst other initiatives, a more business-friendly environment. The platform should be dynamic and should support an environment that facilitates contact between (starting) entrepreneurs and supporting partners in creating a lively community. It should have a mapping system of the (complete) entrepreneurial ecosystem of the city of Antwerp (as a pilot in a first phase) and Flanders (in a second phase).

This platform will allow the city of Antwerp to facilitate and understand the entrepreneurial environment, and act accordingly.

Visits and insights in the partners' initiatives gave information on good practice examples and are an inspiration on how the ideal, digital platform for entrepreneurs should look like (e.g. Made of Lisboa, Metropolitan city of Florence). Building on this good practices should help us to create an integrated platform that facilitates innovation and entrepreneurship in the city of Antwerp and Flanders.

#### Nature of the action

In phase 1 of SPEED UP we have set the goal of the platform

- We determined the purpose of the platform: "What is the long-term vision of this platform and what do we want to achieve with it? Is it only a map of the most important players in the ecosystem? And/or do we want it to facilitate

conversations between the participants? And/or do we want to add dedicated events, seminars, workshops, etc to the platform?...”

- We determined the scope of the platform: Which geographical area do we want to cover with the platform (city of Antwerp, other cities, Flanders, ...)? Can we develop a phased approach (e.g. first a pilot city)?...” .
- **Conclusion:** our website [www.ondernemeninantwerpen.be](http://www.ondernemeninantwerpen.be) will be revised and we want to implement the digital platform as a part of this website. So at first it will cover only Antwerp startups/scale-ups. Afterwards we can investigate if we can connect with other platforms in Flanders. There are already contacts between the Antwerp and Limburg Universities to use the same platform, developed by LSU Limburg, and if it works to expand it to other cities. They asked us to take part of it which we will investigate. We want an active platform consisting out of a map, event calendar, startup information, ... In phase two we still have to find out the technical details/possibilities of the platform as part of our website. The more possibilities and the more financial resources we get, the more sophisticated the digital platform.

In phase 1 we also collected information and analysis

- Good practices investigation: Investigate the good practices that were presented at the ERDF program (‘Made of Lisboa’ and ‘Metropolitan city of Florence’ )
- Market analysis: Market research to identify the existing platforms on the market, the suppliers of the platforms,...
- Stakeholder analysis: Analyze who the stakeholders (customers, suppliers,...) are of the platform. Determine the needs and expectations of these stakeholders for this platform.
- Business requirements of the platform: Determine the business requirements of the platform based on the expectations of the identified stakeholders, the city of Antwerp and the Flemish region.
- Partnerships: Investigate the possibilities of setting up a partnership with other partners that support (starting) entrepreneurs.
- **Conclusion:** we took contact with Lisboa to know more about their platform: startup costs, FTE working on it, the way they maintain the platform and so on. Their platform is a very vivid tool that created a startup community. The people working on it keep control over the information given by the startups and they also contact actively the community to keep up to date of what’s going on. The data are provided by an extern party. It takes a lot of work to keep this platform alive. Our stakeholders agreed the need of a platform but we still have some difficulties in finding active partners to help keeping a platform vivid. We do have to find a way to get some active partners because to do it solely it will cost a lot of money in FTE which we don’t have foreseen. (cfr. Lisboa)

In phase 2 of SPEED UP we will further determine the TO-BE platform.

- Platform set-up: Determine how the platform will be set up and will fit in our website
- Data collection: Analyze which data should be put on the platform and how this initial data will be collected.
- Analyzing recurrent operation of the platform:
  - o Determine who and how the platform will be managed.
  - o Determine how the platform itself will be kept up to date.
  - o Determine how to keep the data on the platform up to date.
  - o Determine who will provide support in the daily activities.
- Cost analysis: Determination of set-up cost and recurring costs of the platform.
- Development of the roadmap to implementation for the chosen scenario of the platform.
- At the end of phase 2 of SPEED UP we will implement the platform as part of our new website: [www.ondernemeninantwerpen.be](http://www.ondernemeninantwerpen.be)
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## Stakeholders involved

The role of the various stakeholders and players is highly relevant within this project. At this stage, the following partners are identified:

In Belgium:

- The city of Antwerp will develop a platform as part of their website and will maintain it
- Software suppliers to develop the platform
- Incubators/Accelerators to take an active role in keeping the platform vivid. They will have to encourage their startups to be active on the platform
- (Starting) entrepreneurs to form the community and keep their data up and running
- Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship (VLAIO) to spread around the platform and connect to other platforms
- Other supporting partners or entrepreneurs
- ...

From the Interreg programme:

- Made of Lisboa
- Metropolitan city of Florence
- ...
- 

## Timeframe

2019 and beyond

- November 2019: approval of the budgets for 2020 – 2025 by the Antwerp government
- January - march 2020: determine how the platform will fit into the website and in which timeframe this can be developed

- March – December 2020: Analyzing recurrent operation of the platform and contacting the different partners involved
- 2021: website and platform online

### **Indicative costs**

This will depend on the goal and the business requirements of the platform. The cost will amongst others consist of:

- Cost for the analysis of the platform set-up.
- Platform set-up cost.
- Marketing/promotion cost.
- ...

Note: there will also be recurring costs for the on-going platform support.

### **Indicative funding sources**

- The city of Antwerp staff costs
- Local and regional funding for the developing phase and to maintain the platform. We have foreseen 20.000 EUR a year for the development and maintaining of the platform. (under approval of the budgets for 2020-'25)

### **Expected impacts (KPIs)**

#### Quantitative KPI's

- Number of registered partners on the platform.
- Number of registered starting entrepreneurs compared to the total number of starting entrepreneurs in the city of Antwerp or Flanders.
- Number of unique visits on the website per month.
- Number of contacts made on the website per month.
- Number of events promoted on the website per month.

#### Qualitative KPI's

- Visibility of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Simplicity to find the relevant partner in an entrepreneurial context.

## ACTION 2. Soft-landing programmes

### Relevance to the project

The Flemish ERDF programme 2014-2020 aims to uphold/improve entrepreneurial dynamics in Flanders. Belgium and its regions have a poor track-record in promoting a business-friendly climate. Businesses perceive government regulation as a burden and as such a threshold to start-up new initiatives. The Flemish ERDF programme and the specific policy instrument for promoting a business-friendly climate aim to boost the role of (local/provincial) governments as facilitators of new businesses and enhance the role of the business incubators for the growth of (starting) entrepreneurs.

In this framework, well-developed soft-landing programs are a good tool to improve the business-friendly environment for especially foreign entrepreneurs who want to position themselves into the Antwerp/Flemish market. As a consequence good relationships will be built with other foreign countries which should on their turn help and trigger local entrepreneurs to expand their business in other territories.

At the moment, there is proliferation of initiatives with limited structure and cooperation in the city of Antwerp, Flanders, Belgium.

Visits and insights in the partners' initiatives gave information on good practice examples and are an inspiration on how the ideal, future soft-landing programs should look like in our region. For example Lisbon and Poland Hub have good practices we like to use in our soft landing packages. Building on this good practices should help us attracting foreign entrepreneurs who on their turn can help to uphold/improve entrepreneurial dynamics in Flanders.

### Nature of the action

We investigated the need and the potential of implementing soft-landing programmes for international entrepreneurs in the city of Antwerp and Flanders. We found out that we have to try to make the administrative procedure to work or establish a company in Flanders, more transparent. The former action of the digital platform can be a tool to create a step by step plan to make Antwerp/Flanders easier to access as a startup.

Various actions need to be undertaken before a potential implementation of the soft-landing programmes could be considered:

In a first phase we mapped already, as well as VLAIO (in their EFRO project: Vlaanderen Versnelt) the **demand side** for soft-landing programmes: We determined: "What the main needs

are of international entrepreneurs? For which specific needs do they need support? By whom?  
... “

In the second phase the **current offer** of existing soft-landing programs needs constantly to be mapped because it is changing all the time: “What is already or still existing? What is working? Who are the current players in this field? What are their services? ... “ We already have an idea of what we want to implement but we are all the time seeking opportunities for our scale-ups/startups to offer them the best packages abroad and we want to implement the most attractive packages for startups to come to Antwerp.

In a third phase a thorough analysis of **good foreign practices** needs to be conducted. Interesting cases presented in the SPEEDUP project such as Startup Lisboa, Betahaus, Startup hub Poland, Techhub Poland, Startup Estonia, ... and maybe others are already investigated but we have to constantly monitor what is really working. The good practices needs to be deducted from this cases to understand what works and what doesn't in different contexts. At the moment we already set up some cooperations with following partners to send Antwerp startups/scale-ups abroad:

- München: packages for IOT, tech-manufacturing and health startups
- Austin, USA: packages for fashion tech, service design and other creative startups
- Singapore: B-DNA/5 digital or smart building startups
- Berlin: student entrepreneurs
- From the Speedup network we communicated and promoted the Poland Prize package in our stakeholders network.

In the fourth phase a **realistic scenario** for the soft-landing programs needs to be described. We have to further investigate how the city of Antwerp (and other partners) can play a role in these programmes. We already have contacts with the incubator Start it @KBC for the implementation of a soft landing package where they can host foreign startups/scale-ups and share their community and coaches. They have branches all over Flanders, in Hungary and in the US.

The final phase describes the **roadmap** to implementation for this scenario including deadlines and responsible persons. By the end of 2020 we will have our own softlanding package. At this moment we already have some agreements with München and Austin to send our startups abroad, we now want to welcome their startups in Antwerp.

## Stakeholders involved

The role of the various stakeholders and players is highly relevant within this project. At this stage, the following partners are identified:

In Belgium:

- The city of Antwerp to develop a soft landing package in collaboration with incubators/accelerators and to finance the action

- Flanders Investment and Trade for their knowledge about international trade and to cooperate in certain countries where they develop agreements around soft landing packages
- Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship (VLAIO): our policy instrument who is also investigating the need of startups to internationalization. They can support our packages to spread around in their network
- Start it@KBC for their possibility to coach and accommodate foreign startups
- Imec: idem Start it @ KBC
- Other incubators/accelerators: idem Start it @ KBC
- ...

From the Interreg programme for partnerships and examples:

- Startup Lisboa
- Betahaus
- Startup hub Poland
- Techhub Poland
- Startup Estonia
- ...

Other international partners:

- Scale cities
- [www.startupcityalliance.eu](http://www.startupcityalliance.eu)
- ...

## Timeframe

2019 and beyond

- November 2019: approval of the budgets for 2020 – 2025 by the Antwerp government
- January - december 2020: determine which are good practices abroad to send our startups and taking contact for possible collaborations. In Antwerp searching for possible partners to develop a programme
- 2021: having developed a fist softlanding package in Antwerp

## Indicative costs

- For phase 2 of the SPEEDUP project: depending on the required level of detail of the study e.g. number of on-site visits in the local countries by the project team, number of questionnaires for foreign entrepreneurs, number of interviews with foreign local (government) organizations, ...
- For the implementation phase: depending on the chosen scenario

### **Indicative funding sources**

- City of Antwerp staff costs
- Local and regional funding for the implementation phase: The City of Antwerp has foreseen 10.000 EUR in 2020 and 15.000 EUR for the next years (till 2025) (under approval of the budgets for 2020-'25)

### **Expected impacts (KPIs)**

#### Quantitative KPI's

- Number of new foreign entrepreneurs compared to a previous period
- Number of local entrepreneurs going abroad compared to a previous period

#### Qualitative KPI's

- Improved quality of soft-landing programs
- Improved reputation of Flanders of being a business-friendly environment