**TECHREVOLUTION 2.0**

Seeking for credible and sustainable strategies to boost regional economic growth is as old as the field of economic development itself. These strategies include encouraging direct investment, attracting and retaining enterprises, and developing sectoral cluster strategies to stimulate industry cooperation and the effectiveness of clustered companies.

Recently, the strategy of building an effective ecosystem of small enterprises, especially in scope of ICT technology, has been gaining more and more recognition. These are companies that have the unique ability to customize to dynamically changing micro and macroeconomic conditions, high resistance   
to market fluctuations and build a local economy based on high-value jobs as part of the digital economy.

The evidence for the correctness of such a strategy is the data of the PFR Ventures report, according to which, Venture Capitals investments in Poland, that is investments in small and medium-sized enterprises at early stages of development, in 2020 reached the level of PLN 2.21 billion.   
This is an increase compared to the previous year by over 70%, despite the pandemic, unstable situation on world markets and uncertainty about the future situation. For comparison, the level   
of these investments in 2019 amounted to less than PLN 1.2 billion, and two years earlier - only PLN 156 million.

In addition, the Polish Startup 2020 report, carried out by the Stratup Poland Foundation, clearly shows that, unlike large corporations and despite negative forecasts for the GDP of the country and the entire EU (decrease by 4.3% and 7.2%, respectively), the startup ecosystem is quite ok. 61% of the startups surveyed declare that the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic did not negatively affect their operations, 23% assessed that it had a rather positive impact, and 11% that even very positive.

The McKinsey & Company report shows that in the period from January to May 2020, the development of the Polish digital economy accelerated sharply and was 2.5 times higher than in the previous 2 years. The development potential and prospects for start-ups in Poland are significant. According to the Deloitte report from 2019, the added value generated by such entities in 2023 may even reach PLN 2.2 billion, with over 50,000 jobs. The statistical data and forecasts for the coming years show a clear conclusion that using the potential of the startup environment may be a key element of success for Podkarpacie region and city of Rzeszów and the driving force behind its development.

Well-organized startups ecosystem and support for modern and innovative enterprises is built through appropriate programs and policies at the meeting point of individual entrepreneurs, civic organizations, structural funds and regional and local administration. Podkarpacie, known as the Polish Silicon Valley, is implementing programs and initiatives more and more effectively to expand and support this environment.

Rzeszów, which is the capital of the region and at the same time the capital of the IT industry in eastern Poland, implements many solutions aimed at building a strong startup ecosystem. This is one factor that allow the city to compete in the area of new technologies and the ICT industry with other cities, both in the country and abroad, attracting many young specialists, providing them with favorable conditions for development and building their future.

However, the scope of changes in the digital world is so great and so dynamic that testing various solutions and building them from scratch is burdened with great risk and costs. The opportunities that lie in the exchange of experiences and mutual learning with other urban centers in the country and around the world, allow to minimize this risk, and the transfer of good practices to the local ground without incurring huge financial and non-financial outlays, what allows for quick adoption of many tested and proven solutions resulting in creation of strong local digital economy.

The URBACT Transfer Network "TechRevolution 2.0" gives partner cities the opportunity to learn about good practice developed and implemented by a project leader for over 15 years, in order to transform the local economy into a digital economy based on modern, high-value jobs. The methodology of the URBACT program and the specificity of the Transfer Network make it possible to study each of good practise elements, analyze it in relation to partner local economic context and strategic priorities, and then adapt and transfer its various aspects to the local environment in order to facilitate the transformation process into the digital economy.

Participation in the transfer network under the URBACT III program allows to city of Rzeszów to acquire valuable knowledge gained by the project leader during the long and difficult path of creating   
a comprehensive support system for modern enterprises. This system is based on Enterprasing Barnsley suport program, created and developed as part of the Digital Media Center, digital Hub, office and conference infrastructure created for modern business.

These two pillars and a number of spin-off solutions, which were created in response to emerging challenges and unforeseen needs, allowed the leader to transform the local economy, once based on mining and production, into a modern digital hub, creating 1,300 new jobs per year and generating £ 23 of investment in the local economy for every £ 1 invested in the scheme.

The URBACT program, with main assumption of exchanging good practices with all professionals involved in urban policy in Europe, allows the city of Rzeszów to acquire valuable knowledge from the project leader for years while building a digital economy in local environment.

An effective method of carrying out a transfer according to the URBACT methodology is the approach based on the breakdown of the transfer to the stages "Understanding - Adjusting - Reusing". It is important to plan the right time and space for a deep understanding of the purpose of the project and a in-depth analysis of good practice, broken down into the smallest elements possible, before attempting to transfer any part of it.

Understanding good practice and the specificity of the local environment in which it operates is the first step that gives a chance for a long-term successful transfer, "in a way that is appropriate for the local context and culture ". Breaking down good practice into "modules" that can be discussed and examined separately in international meetings is a key success factor in the process of understanding the practice and identifying which aspects can be appropriately transferred to the new city.

Transfer, which consists only on passive copying given solutions, is often doomed to failure, due to the lack of in-depth analysis of local contexts and a differentiated approach depending on the local environment. The initial meeting organized directly in Barnsley and later in each of the project partner’s cities, has already allowed to generate added value in the form of various perspectives on the same issue concering good practise transfer. Therefore, it is possible to analyze good practice from various perspectives along with the ongoing exchange of observations and comments, what allows an effective analysis of these elements in terms of benefits for each partner.

During the implementation of the project, from the very beginning, a lot of emphasis is placed on the bottom-up approach which is so crucial for the entire URBACT method. Within the project, as a key element of the implementation of TechRevolution projects, there is an informal URBACT Local Action Group ULG.

ULG are the cornerstone of the program. Each URBACT partner is required to create a ULG bringing together key local stakeholders and perspectives in order to co-create the city's strategy and action plans in the area around which a given project oscillates and to generate specific solutions in the most effective and efficient way possible. ULGs also allow cross-sectional approach to the problem and effective adaptation of the transferred elements of good practice, taking into account the experience and knowledge of local practitioners in a given area.

Involvement in ULG representatives of startup ecosystem, representatives of business and the academic community or IT industry, as well as the participation of city representatives and citizens, provide this initiative with local success factors, including political will and feedback from the city users and logical alignment of the transferred practice with the wider strategy or local vision.

High efficiency in integration process of cross-sectional ULG and strong involvement into the transfer of each member, is also sign to include similar groups as a permanent element into city structure, not only as part of the project but also after its completion as effective tool for particpative democracy and gross-roots solution incubator.

The effectiveness of the Urbact Transfer Network methodology is ensured not only by the possibility of direct interaction between leader and partner, but also by the exchange between all city partners within each network. Such a comprehensive flow of experiences and knowledge, on the basis of synergy, allows to generate added value to the project by analyzing various solutions used in many local contexts, responding to the indyvidual challenges faced by each partners.

After the initial phase of the project, which is assumed to be time for learning, analyzing of the good practice, and exchanging experiences with the leader and other project partners, Rzeszów has identified several elements of good practice that can be transferred. They overlap the activities already planned to be introduced in the near future and those that are already being implemented, and they fit into a long-term approach to development entrepreneurs support system in the city.

The URBAN LAB municipal laboratory has been operating in Rzeszów for 3 years. This is an element that was implemented in the first phase as part of a pilot project, and at present it has become part of the structure of the Rzeszów City Hall. DMC is a model example of how Urban Lab may be developed in order to ensure long-term operation and cross-sectoral support provided in various areas.

The open-door approach that operates in Barnsley is also embedded in the Urban Lab policy, as an action aimed at integrating different environments and making urban resources available to various social groups, including entrepreneurs at the startup stage.

Another element that is already functioning in the Rzeszów City Hall is dedicated team responsible for supporting entrepreneurs. It is an action that was implemented at the beginning of 2022 as one of the general changes in the structure of the office. It provides business with easy path in accessing municipal administration services, in the form of the so-called One Stop Shop, where the entrepreneur are able to obtain all the necessary information in one place.

The action on which the project leader places particular emphasis in building local community integrated around DMC is rich calendar of networking events and workshops. For several years, Rzeszów has been implementing a similar approach based on the Urban Lab infrastructure, which is the organizational base for events such as thematic conferences, debates of various social groups   
or Hackhatons, the purpose of which is to bring together young talents from the IT area in order   
to create modern tools responding to problems submited by city residents.

The next step, which is already beeing planned, are events similar to those organized by the leader in the field of cross-industry networking, such as Connected Manufacturing or Connected Healthcare, which aim to connect manufacturing, industrial and healthcare sectors with the industry of suppliers of modern and innovative ICT solutions.

Breaking down good practice into small elements, in-depth analysis of each of them, the opportunity to learn from the experience and perspective of both the leader and all project partners are the key elements that contribute to the creation of favorable transfer conditions and facilitate the success   
of the network.

One of the main conclusions and reflections on the transfer methodology is the simplicity of the solutions and the possibility of cross-sectional analysis from general to detail. Simplicity makes transfer easy. This especially helped in the process of partners 'understanding' both the different aspects   
of good practice and how they could be appropriately adapted and reused in each local context.

An important conclusion emerging at this stage of the project is also that the transfer can take place at a different pace. Depending on the moment at which each partner is currently located and what elements of good practice each of them decides to transfer. The transfer may take place relatively quickly – especially with reference of specific initiatives and activities, or require longer time, especially those that are more related to processes and adapted ways of working. Regardless of time and scope of trensfered elements of good practice, participating in the Urbact Transfer Network provides partners with wide variety of options and opportunities.