

amsterdam marketing

PRESS FEATURE: STARTUPS

Amsterdam: the most connected startup city in Europe

Amsterdam was named the European Capital of Innovation 2016-2017 (by the EU innovation commission) and is one of the most popular places for startups in Europe, following London. This is partially due to the work of StartupAmsterdam, a collaborative initiative between the municipality and the startup world, begun to support and stimulate the local startup ecosystem and help Amsterdam remain one of the top three startup cities in Europe.

Worldwide, Amsterdam is ranked fifth in terms of technology, innovation and entrepreneurship. Thus there is no shortage of startups, accelerators, colleges and universities. Together, they create the ideal climate for new (international) entrepreneurs and companies, which have been opening offices in the metropolitan area en masse – a phenomenon the municipality would like to see continue. 'Quickly growing companies in the creative and technology industries are very important for the city's economy, according to city alderman Kajsa Ollongren, who is overseeing this project as part of her responsibilities, amongst others, for the city centre's economic, air and harbour development.

To help the ecosystem grow faster and broader and, thus, attract more talent, companies and capital to the city, the municipality set up StartupAmsterdam as a public/private initiative, in collaboration with about 150 startups and the national StartupDelta group, in March 2015. The goal: to ensure Amsterdam's permanent place amongst the top 3 cities for startups in Europe.

Attractive city for startups

Amsterdam is such a popular city for startups because, amongst other reasons, the local population and business world embrace technology and innovation, there is a close-knit startup community and the city is centrally located. The keyword is connection: there's a link between startup teams across the city, and also between startups and more established corporations and tech clusters in the rest of the world. The accessibility of the city – the journey between Schiphol Airport and the city centre takes about 15 minutes – and its history and reputation as a trade city are also noteworthy. Entrepreneurship and renewal are in the city's DNA – Amsterdam has been built by self-starters.

The city is also internationally oriented, safe and sustainable with a strong infrastructure and the largest data-transport hub in the world,

ensuring top internet speeds. It's not for nothing that the world's top innovative IT companies and multinationals are drawn to Amsterdam, where they are open to opportunities to work with startups and new technologies. New enterprises are responsible for the greatest proportion of job growth in the Netherlands: sixty percent.

Amsterdam has excellent accelerator programmes for startups, such as Startupbootcamp and Rockstart. The top international talent behind these initiatives are often attracted by the high quality of colleges, universities and other scientific and knowledge institutions (such as the Royal Academy of the Sciences) present in the city. In addition, the annual The Next Web event brings companies, investors and startups together. Amsterdam also maintains close connections with other tech hubs in the Netherlands and the rest of the world, including Silicon Valley and New York. And there are many incubators, accelerators and co-working spaces where startups, entrepreneurs and investors can meet: B. Amsterdam, TQ, Hackers & Founders, StartDock, Spring House and Startup Orgy are just a few of the names.

In April 2016, Amsterdam was named the 'European Capital of Innovation (iCapital)' due to the many scientific, social and business initiatives that bring organisations and residents together to develop unique new ideas. Amsterdam tends to score well in international innovation rankings, including:

- 2nd on the European Digital City Index for startup cities in Europe
- 3rd in Europe and 7th worldwide in the Innovation Cities Index
- 4th in Europe on Compass Global's Startup Ecosystem 2015 list
- 4th worldwide in the Global Innovation Index 2015
- 5th out of 40 cities worldwide in the City Initiatives for Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship report

Municipal policy

'It is important to the city's leadership that the startup ecosystem continues to grow [...], keeping the city active in this area and helping Amsterdam startups conquer the world,' says Ollongren.

StartupAmsterdam has received subsidies from the City of Amsterdam for the past four years to help startups develop, attract talent and connect with multinationals, and to convince international startups that they should choose Amsterdam as their base and ensure and develop the quality of startup events. The city's broad but cohesive startup policies are designed to appeal to the tech startups and quickly growing companies so important to staying economically competitive with other regions in this digital age. These policies help the municipality attract

promising startups and quickly growing companies and better stimulate and facilitate new initiatives.

Conditions and initiatives

StartupAmsterdam has decided to focus on five areas, which together have helped them define 15 concrete initiatives to help startups and scale-ups grow.

1. Talent

There is a need for more qualified graduates with specific knowledge and skills and a startup orientation. This includes programmers, online marketers, (online) sales and data analysts, etc. StartupAmsterdam is committed to:

- a. Attracting talent internationally.
- b. Creating startup & coding academies: special training programmes that teach the skills that are needed to work at a startup.
- c. Supporting programming initiatives in schools: digital skills should be as standard in elementary and high schools as math and language skills.

2. Clients

To experiment, test and grow, startups need access to users and business clients. For this, collaborations between large companies and startups are necessary. To build this bridge, StartupAmsterdam has begun several initiatives:

- a. The corporate partner programme: StartupAmsterdam works with corporations to realise the various initiatives of the action programme.
- b. 'Launching government': the Startup in Residence programme invites the startup community to develop solutions to challenges for which the municipality might be a customer.
- c. Launchpad Meetups, where corporations open their doors to startups who want to pitch innovation solutions that could be applied in that company.

3. Development opportunities (content)

To generate new insights, startups need access to new networks, investors and mentors. In other words: experts and potential partners. StartupAmsterdam is addressing this through:

- a. A YouTube channel where content from the startup community is blended with new content.

- b. Efforts to attract reputable foreign startups and tech events to Amsterdam.
- c. The StartupAmsterdam portal: an informative website about the startup community in Amsterdam.

4. **Capital**

Just having a creative and innovative idea is not enough for a startup to succeed. There needs to be sufficient capital for promising startups – money that can also be invested in new startups. To help in this area, StartupAmsterdam is focusing on:

- a. Capital Week Amsterdam, where investors and startups are brought together for a week-long event focused on investing.
- b. Capital connections: linking the startup world with the investment community.

5. **A facilitative environment**

To enable a healthy startup climate, the city needs to collectively stimulate the entrepreneurial ecosystem. To do this, StartupAmsterdam has begun the following initiatives:

- a. Hub-to-(tech) hubs: strategic partnerships with important tech clusters around the world to promote the growth of Amsterdam startups.
- b. Facilitating valorisation: converting new knowledge, for example from universities, into commercial products.
- c. Concentrating startup activities: collaborations between co-working locations, incubators, accelerators and workshops.

Advantages to being a startup city

Building a strong startup ecosystem takes time but offers the city many advantages. Booking.com, TomTom, WeTransfer, Ayden and Takeaway.com – just a few of the international companies that began as innovative startups with their roots in Amsterdam – make the city more dynamic and more attractive to entrepreneurs and investors. Startups, furthermore, stimulate employment, and thus the local economy.

The successes

Since it began in March 2015, StartupAmsterdam has made it its mission to secure Amsterdam's permanent place amongst the top three startup cities of Europe. To expand the connections between the corporate world and the startup scene and to help these two sectors learn from each other, initiatives like the Launchpad Meetups have been set up, where large, reputable Amsterdam companies invite startups to present

solutions to existing challenges, thereby stimulating partnerships and helping larger companies discover new technologies. Around 200 startups participated in the first edition of Launchpad Meetups.

In support of the same goal, and to help startups find the financial support they need, StartupAmsterdam has also initiated the Founders Network, the Corporate Partner Programme and Amsterdam Capital Week (which, in its first outing, attracted around 2,000 startups and 500 investors). Amsterdam's event calendar is packed with startup and tech events where startup teams can meet each other, share knowledge, get feedback, learn new (technical) skills and network – events including the TNW Conference, Big Android BBQ, Uprise, CodeWeek, Capital Tour XXL, Nerderlands, startupbootcamp and Scratch Event.

In addition, StartupAmsterdam works with, amongst others, New York, San Francisco, Paris and London via such startup programmes as Lean Landing Project, a startup-in-residence programme and bootcamps for quickly growing new companies. There are eight startup schools, where around 300 students learn everything they can about coding, design and entrepreneurship in a couple of months. In addition, Coding in Amsterdam offers coding lessons within the education sector. In 2016, the focus is on developing talent and collaborating with international startup hubs to optimise Amsterdam's position as a location for tech companies that want to jumpstart their growth in Europe.

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About Amsterdam Marketing

Amsterdam Marketing is the city marketing organisation of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, active in the fields of promotion, information, research and services. Our ambition is to put this region on the map as one of the five most attractive metropolitan areas in Europe for residents, visitors, businesses and influential groups. Under the motto 'I amsterdam', we present the region as a dynamic place to live and work, an attractive travel destination and a test market for innovation.