



EURO  
CITIES

# Lisbon Incubators Network

## Connecting entrepreneurs

Building a network of entrepreneurs and small business incubators is helping Lisbon stimulate economic growth, offer new employment opportunities for young people and ensure that talent and creativity remain in the city.

### Ecosystem for entrepreneurs

The Lisbon Incubators Network was launched in 2013 as part of the city's new strategy for economy and innovation. It currently connects six business incubators around the city. It creates a supportive 'ecosystem' designed to provide the right infrastructure and support services to help attract micro, small and medium enterprises and, especially important in the current economic crisis, ensure their survival in the early days of operation.

In May 2013 Lisbon was named as one of the '9 International Startup Hubs' to watch by Entrepreneur magazine. It offers the right environment for startup businesses: strategic access to international markets, a competitive and skilled workforce, good quality of life and modern infrastructure and spaces available to new businesses. The network has also helped enrich the city's cultural diversity by attracting entrepreneurs from many different countries.

“ Being part of a urban network of business incubators definitely adds value. It means sharing experiences, good practices and problem solving, empowering the businesses. The network is a powerful tool, a one-stop-shop bringing together many entrepreneurial activities taking place in the city. It also showcases the efforts being made by the municipality, which could be replicated throughout the world. ”

*Bruno Santos Amaro, TEC LABS innovation centre*

cities in action

August 2013

where: Lisbon, Portugal  
what: economy  
when: 2013+

## Growth of the network

The network began with the launch of the Startup Lisboa Incubator, which opened its doors in February 2012 and in just over a year of operation has received over 600 applications. This incubator is particularly unique as it was borne out of a citizens' initiative.

It was part of Lisbon's 'participatory budgeting' programme where residents were invited to vote for projects they would like to see funded under the 2009/2010 budget. One of these was Startup Lisboa.

As well as providing an environment for new businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive, the incubator has played an important role in regenerating the city centre, forming part of an urban regeneration initiative aimed at reusing old buildings. It has also helped to create a buzz within the neighbourhood by attracting young entrepreneurs.

The city opted to replicate this success by opening Startup Lisboa Commerce in November 2012. These two incubators, together with a number of others (CID-Lispolis; TEC LABS; and INOVISA) form a network that is central to the city's strategy for promoting entrepreneurship and attracting young residents to the city. It also helps to retain creative talent and avoid the negative effects of 'brain drain'.

Lisbon has been particularly recognised for its expertise in attracting and developing businesses in the area of technology.

It facilitates the exchange of knowledge and best practice across different sectors and allows for greater visibility when it comes to attracting outside investment.

Already, the city is noticing an impact. Within the network of six incubators, 149 startups have been set up, creating a total of 630 jobs and generating €14 million in turnover.

The knock-on effect in local areas is starting to show too, with increasing levels of economic activity and regeneration taking place, for example around Startup Lisboa.



## Visibility and impact

The city's role is to manage and grow the network, secure strategic partners and identify and attract new incubators. It also promotes the network on a national and international scale.

Lisbon believes that such a network is easily replicable in other cities. It sees it as an important solution for tackling the economic crisis in Europe and promoting job creation and local economic growth. It is especially important for tackling youth unemployment.

The idea of creating a whole ecosystem of incubators is particularly important for attracting a large number of entrepreneurs and creating a secure environment for startups.



Networking is an essential step towards business success, great partnerships and big projects. Being part of the Lisbon Incubators Network allows INOVISA to fit into Lisbon's ecosystem of entrepreneurs and to make more of an impact in the outside world.

**Cristina Mota Capitão,**  
**INOVISA technology and business campus**

