

OECD – Ax:son Johnson Foundation – ILO

International conference on **SMEs and the Urban Fabric**

SECOND EDITION

28-29 April 2022 | Trento, Italy

AGENDA



■ SMEs and the Urban Fabric

■ Rationale

What makes a city a thriving hub for entrepreneurship and growth? How do SMEs and entrepreneurs contribute to the attractiveness of cities?

These two questions underpin the conference series on SMEs and the Urban Fabric. SMEs and entrepreneurs can benefit from well-functioning, well-designed and well-planned cities, the same way these cities and their neighbourhoods can benefit from local entrepreneurs and SMEs that create jobs, but also authenticity, charm, social integration and social connections.

However, not all environments are conducive for a dynamic business community. It is therefore crucial to understand how economic policies, business regulation, land-use and urban planning can help SMEs and entrepreneurs thrive and integrate into the community, promote healthy business dynamics while also create attractive and liveable places.

For more information on the series and all material related to the first conference held in 2019: <https://oe.cd/SMEs-Cities>.

■ Objective

The 2022 two-day international conference on SMEs and the Urban Fabric takes a look forward on the challenges and opportunities in the coming months and years, building on the lessons learned during the current crisis.

The first day revisits the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SMEs and entrepreneurs, and the support they received. The aim is to look ahead to what needs to be addressed next and discuss what measures implemented during the crisis might be beneficial to retain post-crisis. The second day is dedicated to the changes in the way we live and work that cities undergo or have to anticipate. What do they mean for urban planning and the policies cities use to support their SMEs and entrepreneurs.

Over the course of two days, the aim is to assess what has happened since spring 2020. What do those developments mean for the interplay between SME policies and urban development today and tomorrow? Have pressures from ongoing megatrends (greening, ageing, digitalisation and globalisation) changed? Are there new ideas on how to support SMEs and entrepreneurs to develop a thriving (local) entrepreneurial ecosystem?

■ Working Language

All sessions will be conducted in English. Italian interpretation will be available during the sessions.

■ Why participate?

The conference provides an opportunity to learn and exchange with leading academics and policy makers how cities can be a vibrant place that provides a place for SMEs and entrepreneurs.

This workshop brings together researchers, policy makers and practitioners to discuss ways in which policies, regulations and planning can help create an environment for thriving entrepreneurship and SMEs, while at the same time leveraging these entrepreneurs for local development. The agenda combines presentations of academic research with practical examples from different countries and cities. Every session will allow for open discussion with all participants and long hospitality breaks will provide room to exchange bilaterally with the speakers and other participants.

The conference will also provide a dedicated space for participants to present their country's, region's or city's efforts to provide a conducive environment for their SMEs and entrepreneurs or the measures taken to directly support them (please indicate your interest during registration). The space will allow for dialogue with participants during the coffee and lunch breaks and complements the main programme. Participants can also indicate their interest to present in the Policy Speed Session planned for the second day of the conference.

■ Attending the event

The event will be in-person respecting all COVID-19-related health guidelines by the Italian authorities. For those unable to join in person a partial live streaming of the event will be available upon registration. For information on travel to Italy, participants can find the latest rules [here](#).

Attendance is free of charge but requires registration. Please register via this [online platform](#) as soon as possible and not later than **22 April 2022**. Registrations will be processed in the order in which they are received. Registrations will close once the maximum limit is reached, even if that is before the official closing date. The organisers reserve the right to limit the participation.

Food and drink are provided during the conference and all participants are invited to a conference dinner on the first day.

■ Contacts

OECD: Elisa Campestrin (cfetrento@oecd.org)
ILO: Nadege Benz (benz@ilo.org)

■ Organisers

The OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (CFE) helps local and national governments unleash the potential of entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises, promote inclusive and sustainable regions and cities, boost local job creation and implement sound tourism policies. Even before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were significant disparities across people, places and firms. The current pandemic has widened these divides, whilst also accelerating transitions such as digitalisation, new forms of work, and environmental and climate imperatives. To this end, the CFE is working to promote and provide policies to ensure that all people, all types of places, and businesses of all sizes can prosper from these transitions. www.oecd.org/cfe

The OECD Trento Centre for Local Development is an integral part of the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities. The Trento Centre uses a holistic “from data to practice” approach to policies for sustainable development to offer local policy analysis, advice and capacity building activities for improved policy implementation for people, firms and places. www.trento.oecd.org

The OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth Initiative forms a coalition of willing leaders committed to tackling inequalities and promoting inclusive economic growth in cities. It provides Mayors with a unique platform in the debate on inequality and elevates their voices in national debates and global agendas, as well as facilitates exchanges of concrete solutions. Additionally, it helps governments analyse rising inequalities, monitor material living standards and broader well-being, and design policy packages that promote equity and growth. Driven by a multidimensional approach, it goes beyond income to see how people are faring in other areas of life, like health. The Initiative launched in 2016 with the support from the Ford Foundation and has a range of Supporting Institutions, including Cities Alliance, ICLEI, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, UCLG and United Way Worldwide. www.oecd-inclusive.com

Founded in 1919 the ILO brings together government, employer and worker representatives of 187 member States, to set fundamental labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men. The **ILO's Small and Medium Enterprises Unit** seeks to unlock the potential of creating more and better jobs in small businesses - a sector where the bulk of employment is being created and provided. The unit provides policy advice and implements the 80% of ILOs technical cooperation portfolio in the field of Enterprise Development. This includes addressing informality and job quality in MSMEs, entrepreneurship training and promotion, support to women entrepreneurship, Value Chain analysis and development with a focus on jobs and decent work, support to productivity enhancements in SMEs and their eco-system as well as general business environment policy advice. www.ilo.org/empent/units/boosting-employment-through-small-enterprise-development/lang--en/index.htm

■ Partner

The Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation is a private foundation for public benefit with the primary purpose of promoting scientific and scholarly research in the humanities and social sciences. The Urban City Research department aims more specifically at generating knowledge and research on how to build cities for people – with a direct focus on the importance of public spaces in our cities. <http://axsonjohnsonfoundation.org>.



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■ Agenda

Thursday, 28 April 2022

Day 1

Venue: *Grand Hotel Trento, Piazza Dante, 20, 38122 Trento, Italy*

MORNING SESSION

08.30-09.00 ○ Registration and Coffee

09.00-09.30 ○ Opening remarks

CHAIR **Alessandra Proto**, Head of OECD Trento Centre for Local Development, OECD

SPEAKERS **Peter Elmlund**, Director of the Urban Programme, Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation

Victor van Vuuren, Director of the Enterprises Department, ILO

Nadim Ahmad, Deputy Director of the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD

09.30-10.30 ○ Keynote: **Moving beyond the crisis - Finding the right innovation policy for SMEs in Europe**

The COVID-19 pandemic emptied city centres and city streets, it has disrupted supply chains and travel. It also let firms to reassess their business models and modes of work, moving business online and connecting workers remotely to their workplaces. Going forward and moving beyond the crisis requires firms to operationalise and commercialise new ideas, new technologies and – more generally – a renewed focus on innovation. How can innovation policy help SMEs thrive and how does policy need to be adapted to suit different cities and regions?

CHAIR **Rudiger Ahrend**, Head of Economic Analysis, Statistics and Multi-level Governance Division, OECD

SPEAKER **Andrés Rodríguez-Pose**, Princesa de Asturias Chair and Director of the LSE-Cañada Blanch Centre, London School of Economics, United Kingdom

Q&A

10.30-11.00 ○ Coffee break & meet the speakers

11.00-12.30 ○ Policy session: **Lessons from SME support during the Crisis**

To combat the economic impact of measures aimed to curtail COVID-19, countries rolled out unprecedented policy responses to support viable firms facing extraordinary – but temporary – challenges. While support measures were aimed to bridge the gaps arising from firms having to close operations or facing significant falls in revenue during COVID-19, there are lessons to be learned for SME policy going forward. What are the measures that were put in place in this crisis that can be applied to SME support in the post-COVID-19 environment? What will be the consequences of debt build-ups for SMEs as support measures are unwound? What needs to be done to mitigate a sharp increase in SMEs bankruptcies?

CHAIR **Alessandra Proto**, Head of OECD Trento Centre for Local Development, OECD

SPEAKERS **Lucia Cusmano**, Deputy Head of Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Tourism Division, OECD

Merten Sievers, Value Chain Development and Entrepreneurship Coordinator, ILO

Ludger Odenthal, Team Leader, European Commission (DG GROW)

Q&A

12.30-14.30 ○ Lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

14.30-16.00 ○ Knowledge session: Cities supporting their SMEs and Entrepreneurs

SMEs and entrepreneurs often have to tackle specific barriers and require support to face a level playing field. The cities where they operate can play a crucial role in providing this support by e.g. strengthening local networks and broadly the local business ecosystem, or by providing targeted support for cluster development. What can cities do to strengthen their local businesses and attract new ones? What roles will SMEs play in the recovery from the current crisis and in revitalising urban business and commerce areas?

CHAIR **Sandrine Kergroach**, Head of SME Performance Unit, OECD

SPEAKERS **Martin Andersson**, Professor Blekinge Institute of Technology and Swedish Entrepreneurship Forum

Sameeksha Desai, Associate Professor and Director Manufacturing Policy Initiative, Indiana University O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, United States

Roberta Rabelotti, Professor, University of Pavia and Assigned Professor, University of Aalborg, Italy

Q&A

16.00-16.30 ○ Coffee break & meet the speakers

16.30-17.30 ○ Knowledge session: Building back better – Opportunities for a green and digital recovery

Vast efforts are underway to support the recovery from the current pandemic and to "build back better". The ambition is to leverage the green and digital transitions for better economies rather than a return to the "old normal". ICT firms are often concentrated in a few leading cities and more broadly the uptake of digital technologies is less the smaller a firm. What lessons can policy makers learn from the growth of Nairobi's "Silicon Savannah"? The green and in particular the circular economy can provide opportunities for new and existing SMEs but in public discourse the focus is often on the disruptions that necessary changes will bring to people's lives and jobs. How can cities help firms leverage those opportunities? Are there links between the green and the digital transitions that can be exploited?

CHAIR **Sena Segbedzi**, Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth Coordinator, OECD

SPEAKERS **Gerri Sinclair**, Innovation Commissioner, Government of British Columbia, Canada

Stuart Patrick, Chief Executive, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, United Kingdom

Q&A

17.30-18.00 ○ Closing Day 1

Victor van Vuuren, Director of the Enterprises Department, ILO

Nadim Ahmad, Deputy Director of the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD

19.30-21.30 ○ Dinner reception at Palazzo Festi & Trento Social Theatre guided tour

Address: Via Paolo Oss-Mazzurana, Trento (a 3-minute walk from the main venue)

During the buffet dinner at Palazzo Festi, a guided tour of the Trento Social Theatre will be offered to small groups of participants, to discover the origins and history of this traditional Italian theatre, and the ancient Roman ruins located in its basement. For the duration of the 20-minute tour, participants should wear a FPP2 mask and no food and beverages are allowed.

Friday, 29 April 2022

Venue: Grand Hotel Trento, Piazza Dante, 20, 38122 Trento, Italy

MORNING SESSION

08.30-09.00 ○ Registration and Coffee

09.00-10.00 ○ **Keynote: Shaping high street futures**

Traditional shopping streets (high streets) are the heart of liveable, walkable and attractive neighbourhoods. Online shopping and COVID-19 put pressure on high streets and some are even facing an existential crisis. How are these shopping streets responding to pressures? What can (and should) urban planners and policy makers do to help high streets remain places that attract people? The keynote will explore these questions with a focus on place attraction and leveraging the new "sun model" of shopping choices.

CHAIR **Morgane Schwab**, Projects Portfolio Coordinator, Urban City Research, Ax:son Johnson Foundation

SPEAKER **Matthew Carmona**, Professor of Planning and Urban Design, The Bartlett School of Planning, University College London, United Kingdom

Q&A

10.00-11.00 ○ **Policy speed session: What will be the “new normal” for SMEs and Cities?**

The policy speed session provides a forum for participants of the conference to present their cities, regions or countries approach to helping SMEs and cities in the “new normal” that follows the COVID-19 pandemic. Short pitches can be given by policy makers, practitioners or academics.

CHAIR **Alexander Lembcke**, Head of Economic Analysis Unit, OECD

SPEAKERS **Speaker 1 - 10**

Speed presentations of 5 minutes

11.00-11.45 ○ Coffee break & meet the speakers

11.45-12.45 ○ **Policy roundtable: Cities fostering SMEs and entrepreneurs**

Location has always mattered for the success of SMEs. In turn, the flourishing presence of small businesses often define the characteristics of a neighbourhood and its local community. What do cities do for their SMEs and entrepreneurs? What can national governments do to support their cities? Representatives from OECD cities of different sizes and different continents will present their own efforts and discuss among each other and with the audience what can and should be done to foster SMEs and create the right space for entrepreneurs.

CHAIR **Marco Baccanti**, Managing Director, Enea Tech and Biomedical Foundation, Italy

SPEAKERS **Rui Monteiro**, Head of Economic Development Department, Porto, Portugal

Carolina Duran, CEO Beyond Ventures and former Secretary for Economic Development Bogota, Colombia

Emilie de Rosenroll, CEO of the South Island Prosperity Partnership and Startup CEO of the Centre for Ocean Applied Sustainable Technologies, Canada

12.45-14.00 ○ Lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

14.00-15.30 ○ Knowledge session: The changing shape of cities

COVID-19 has caused a profound shift in the lived experiences of cities. The urban fabric is flexible and continuously morphing to accommodate the needs of its inhabitants. People and firms have adapted quickly to face the challenges of pandemic, and are learning to live with them in the longer term. How will cities need to adapt their planning? Will we need to rethink how space is used for different purposes? What can be done to shape cities into places that foster a conducive ecosystem for SMEs and entrepreneurs?

CHAIR **Rudiger Ahrend**, Head of Economic Analysis, Statistics and Multi-level Governance Division, OECD

SPEAKERS **Kayvan Karimi**, Associate Professor, The Bartlett, UCL, Director, Space Syntax Ltd, United Kingdom

Birgit Hausleitner, Lecturer, TU Delft, the Netherlands

Özge Öner, Associate Professor and Director of Studies, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Q&A

15.30-16.00 ○ Closing words

CHAIR **Alexander Lembcke**, Head of Economic Analysis Unit, OECD

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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