

What Ireland can learn from Holland's startup scene

When it comes to supporting and nurturing startups, there are key things Holland is doing in a systematic, strategic way that Ireland can learn from.

High-growth startups that scale rapidly are increasingly defining the way advanced economies grow and compete. In addition to creating two-thirds of new jobs in modern economies, startups such as Uber, AirBnB and Snapchat achieved billion dollar valuations in months rather than the years or decades it took in the past.

The urgency with which Ireland needs to act is underpinned by the fact that a major international ranking of startup ecosystems was released a couple of weeks ago. No Irish city made it into the top 20, but Austin (Texas, population 843,000) and four European capitals did. Equally no Irish cities have featured in some recent 'Top 5 places in Europe to start' articles but Paris, Budapest, and Estonia did.

Entrepreneurs, talent and international investors decisions' about where to locate are influenced by international rankings and what they see in media coverage of startup hubs around the world.

When I spoke at the Startup Nations Summit in Korea last November about Ireland's rapidly emerging startup sector, one piece of advice by a fellow speaker stood out for me.

"Communities must share success stories more effectively as this process gets more attention for the cluster that in turn attracts more resources. All communities must better sell their stories."

Donna Harris – Startup America Partnership

International visibility is essential to grow the critical mass of Ireland's startup sector

One of the questions I am regularly asked is that while Dublin doesn't make the Startup Compass Top 20 (which is probably the most authoritative global rankings of startup ecosystems available at the moment) is it in the ballpark?

A supplementary report was released recently by [Startup Compass](#), and the good news is that Dublin features in the runners-up along with Atlanta, Delhi, Denver-Boulder, Hong Kong, Mumbai, Stockholm, and Waterloo.

With many of these international ranking reports, there is a degree of subjectivity involved. By projecting the activities of Ireland's startup sector in a coordinated way (which a review of tech media appears [to be missing at the moment](#)), this can have a significant impact.

For a practical example of this one needs look no further than Holland. Amsterdam is the only European newcomer in the Startup Compass ranking. Underpinning this are some common factors which Ireland shares such as providing a base to hyper-growth startups such as Uber, which established their European headquarters in Amsterdam and used it as the gateway to continental Europe.

What Holland (new entrant to the Top 20) is doing differently to Ireland

There are three key things Holland is doing in a systematic, strategic way that Ireland can learn from:

Startup Delta

– To further enhance the ecosystem’s global impact, the Dutch government recently launched an initiative called StartupDelta with the tagline – ‘Europe’s West Coast for Awesome Startups’. EU heavyweight and former Vice-President of the European Commission Neelie Kroes is leading this initiative as Holland’s new Startup Envoy.

The Startup Delta team recently paid a fact-finding visit to our office to learn about Startup Ireland’s work in boosting the Ireland’s startup ecosystem and connecting it to other international startup hubs.

What stood out for us is the systemic, strategic way Startup Delta is unifying each Dutch startup ecosystem nationally to form a compelling countrywide ecosystem that can compete with the best in the world.

The Next Web

– Holland’s equivalent of the Web Summit, The Next Web has underpinned the systemic nature of Holland’s bid to take the lead in consolidating title of #1 startup hub in EU. In a recent Venture Beat article, CEO and co-founder of The Next Web weighed in behind Holland’s startup hub mission with this announcement:

“StartupDelta – a stroke of genius from Neelie Kroes to unify all of the Netherlands’ tech hubs under one banner... as a result we’ve recently pledged to replace our annual conference with a week-long tech and startup festival accommodating 20,000 people.” [Boris Veldhuijzen van Zanten](#)

UpriseStartup Festival

– While ‘The Next Web’ takes place in May, Holland is now staging a major international startup festival to bookend the year. Led by Irish man Paul O’Connell Uprise Startup Festival takes place on the 25th and 26th of September with a two-day ticket costing €38.

The key role of October's [Startup Gathering](#)

A strong statement of intent by Ireland to become a global startup hub has the potential to attract the resources needed to create the critical mass of a 'Startup Island'. That is a key goal of the Startup Gathering, presenting a coherent and media-friendly picture of an extremely active startup ecosystem across Ireland.

Whether you are a corporate, research centre, investor, state agency or entrepreneur you can play your part. You can host an event during the Startup Gathering supported by the APJ 2015 and Bank of Ireland in your city. You can also mobilise your contacts to send a clear message to the world that the whole country is united behind the message – *start, scale, succeed in Ireland*.

Eoin Costello, CEO, Startup Ireland.

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