



# Policy Round Table on Sustainable Entrepreneurship

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## 1. Executive summary

In this round table we discussed three of the most extreme policy proposals in the FIRES-longlist of possible interventions to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Participants discussed reforms in (i) the patent and IP institutions; (ii) the introduction of digital central bank currency; and (ii) experimentation with a universal basic income. All three proposed reforms were presented as ways to strengthen entrepreneurship in general, but at the same time zoomed in on aspects of sustainability and inclusion. The participants were quite positive on the proposals. Some had some reservations with the role of banks in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and some took a more nuanced approach to IP, but generally the participants agreed that the proposals made sense and would possibly promote a more entrepreneurial society in Europe. The distance to the more direct and traditional tools of entrepreneurship policy was explicitly recognized, but also appreciated. The participants also advised the project team to use this setup in Brussels with the policy makers there. They liked the “hackathon” type approach to formulating more encompassing reform proposals.

## 2. The Roundtable

### 2.1 Venue

The round table was staged under the title “Hoe ontwikkel je een succesvol entrepreneurial ecosystem op regional niveau” (how to develop successful entrepreneurial ecosystems at the regional level) in the program of the Startup Delta Summit in Arnhem, the Netherlands<sup>1</sup>.



The round tables on the program were staged in an area in the main hall of this largest start-up networking event in the Netherlands. The FIRES-project manned a small stand for much of the event and set up in the round table space for the round table that lasted from 17:00-18:00.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://startupdeltasummit.com/english/> and <https://startupdeltasummit.com> for more information, including a summary of the outcomes of the conference.



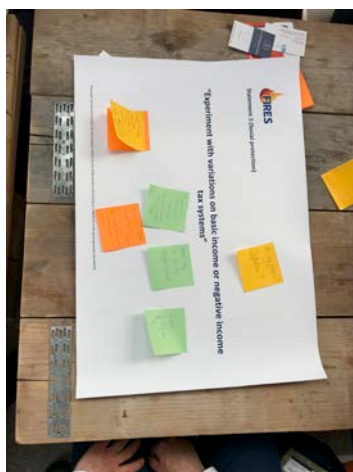
## 2.2 Participants

Participants on this round table included:

Bas Akkers	Senior Policy Maker Utrecht City
Lieke Conijn	Senior Commercial Attache, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, London
Lucien Vijverberg	Policy Officer, Ministry of Economics and Climate, the Netherlands
Dane Stangler	Policy Officer, Startup Genome, Kansas City, USA
Rizgar Saltik	Entrepreneur, Braintech Ventures & StudentsInc
Niels Bosma	Associate Professor of Social entrepreneurship, Utrecht University
Friedemann Polzin	Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship, Utrecht University
Mark Sanders	Associate Professor Economics of Transition and Sustainability (moderator)
Two ladies who joined the discussion but did not leave their contact details	

## 2.3 Setup

The setup of the round table was very simple. Mark Sanders briefly introduced the project and then the three statements/proposals. These were put on the table in the form of an A3 Print and Mark Sanders briefly explained how the proposals were linked to strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem. A brief round of questions then prepared the participants for discussion. They were asked to take a green, yellow or orange post-it and write their comments on these notes and then post them on the sheet.



Of course it was not the votes, but rather the discussion that then emerged that yielded the most interesting insights. The discussion on intellectual property rights converged on the conclusion that indeed a delicate balance needed to be struck between protection and free knowledge flows. All participants agreed that the current system and trends therein are rather on the overprotective side and benefit only large corporates, not start ups and entrepreneurial ventures. Reforms to reduce the levels of IPR protection and especially limit the monopoly rights attached to them, was generally perceived to be a helpful suggestion.

The discussion on digital central bank currency was much less unanimous. The entrepreneurs at the table doubted very much that banks could take a role in financing entrepreneurship and had higher hopes for interventions that would mobilize institutionalized savings in Europe. There was serious doubts that banks would start behaving more entrepreneurially and finance entrepreneurs, when they would be allowed to do so by regulators after payment systems had been secured. This was considered a very indirect way. The participants did agree, though, that fintech and new mediums of exchange could be sources of innovation and entrepreneurship themselves. Then it was considered less likely that central banks would lead that process.

The discussion on basic income or negative income taxes was split between those that believed it could and those that it could not be financed. Moreover, there was some discussion over the desirability of having universal rather than targeted income support. Still, overall the tables was rather positive on the idea and did clearly see the link to promoting sustainable entrepreneurship in this way.

## Conclusion

The participants were quite positive on the proposals. Some had some reservations with the role of banks in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and some took a more nuanced approach to IP, but generally the participants agreed that the proposals made sense and would possibly promote a more entrepreneurial society in Europe. The distance to the more direct and traditional tools of entrepreneurship policy was explicitly recognized, but also appreciated. The participants also advised the project team to use this setup in Brussels with the policy makers there. They liked the “hackathon” type approach to formulating more encompassing reform proposals.