



Kingdom of the Netherlands

مركز الزبير  
ZUBAIR SEC



مركز الزبير للمؤسسات الصغيرة  
ZUBAIR SMALL ENTERPRISES CENTRE



## REPORT

### SME Support Ecosystem Tour The Netherlands

Rotterdam- Delft - The Hague - Amsterdam  
Monday 22 - Thursday 25 October 2018

Organised in partnership with:



HALBE & KOENRAADS



## Background to the visit

The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Muscat and Zubair Small Enterprises Centre (Zubair SEC) invited a select group of SME support organisations to participate in a tour of the entrepreneurship ecosystem in the Netherlands, in recognition of the importance of further developing SMEs and entrepreneurship as vital pillars in the Sultanate's socio-economic development. Participating organisations share a vision and mandate to promote and support SMEs in the Sultanate through their core services.

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*"This tour across the Dutch SME ecosystem was designed with the aim of engaging 10 of the leading SME support organisations in Oman to come here, get inspired, get equipped and go back home to communicate the learnings to the wider ecosystem in the Sultanate" - Lina Hussein, Zubair SEC*

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A strong and collaborative relationship has existed between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for many centuries, wherein both have sought to identify mutual goals. Collaboration in the area of SME development is no exception, with both countries sharing many strategic and sustainable development objectives. For many years the Dutch approach towards SME development has been recognised as world-class and as such it provides an excellent example for Omani SME support organisations wishing to learn more about how Dutch SMEs have managed to grow and flourish. In turn, they will be able to pass on the benefits of that experience to the Sultanate while considering the adoption of some of the best practice models in the area of entrepreneurship and SME growth.

This comprehensive and diverse trip was conceived around four key themes; to Inspire, Engage, Equip and Communicate. **Inspiration** came from showcasing Dutch initiatives and expertise, exposing participants to replicable business models and demonstrating the importance of SMEs as vehicles for societal and environmental impact. Participants were also inspired by understanding the workings of the ecosystem in the Netherlands, specifically in regard to how support organisations foster collaboration. **Engagement** with ecosystem builders facilitated future contacts, connections, and potential collaboration between the two countries. The participants also learned from their Dutch counterparts and were encouraged to apply this to their own role and position in the ecosystem. Omani participants also had opportunities to promote Oman as destination for trade. During the tour, an action learning approach was deployed to **equip** participants with tools and ideas applicable to the Omani ecosystem. The programme also allowed for reflection and the development of concrete individual and joint action plans. Finally, the tour considered how to promote effective **communication** of outcomes and learnings to enhance collaboration in Oman and increase awareness among all stakeholders of possible approaches to SME development.

The tour was designed and organised as part of the existing Scope of Collaboration between the Embassy of the Netherlands in Muscat and Zubair Small Enterprises Centre (Zubair SEC). The collaboration dates from late 2016 and has resulted in other activities, such as an empirical two-part

research; the first part a study of the SME ecosystem in the Sultanate and a mapping of the SME support ecosystem, and the second part shedding light on how SMEs can seize opportunities in the tourism sector in Oman<sup>1</sup>. Roundtables and workshops followed the research publication, tapping into the expertise of the Erasmus Centre for Entrepreneurship (ECE) and Halbe&Koenraads, leaders in SME support in the Netherlands.

## Programme

### DAY ONE

Day One of the ecosystem tour focused on **providing a broad understanding of the Dutch SME ecosystem and its supporting infrastructure**. The day began in the inspiring environment of the [Rotterdam Science Tower overlooking the port and home to a number of young SMEs](#). In addition to an overview of the Dutch SME ecosystem presented by ECE, including an outline of their activities, the participants engaged with, and got key insights from, enthusiastic and knowledgeable representatives of the [Rotterdam Food Cluster](#), [PortXL](#), [BlueCity](#), [RDM Rotterdam](#) and [RDM Makerspace](#).

### The role of SMEs in the Dutch economy

Even though the Netherlands is small in size (one can drive across the entire country in a mere few hours), it has a thriving economy with significant innovation output and a lively start-up scene. 99% of all enterprises are Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which, unlike the Sultanate, fall within the OECD definition (see Figure 1).

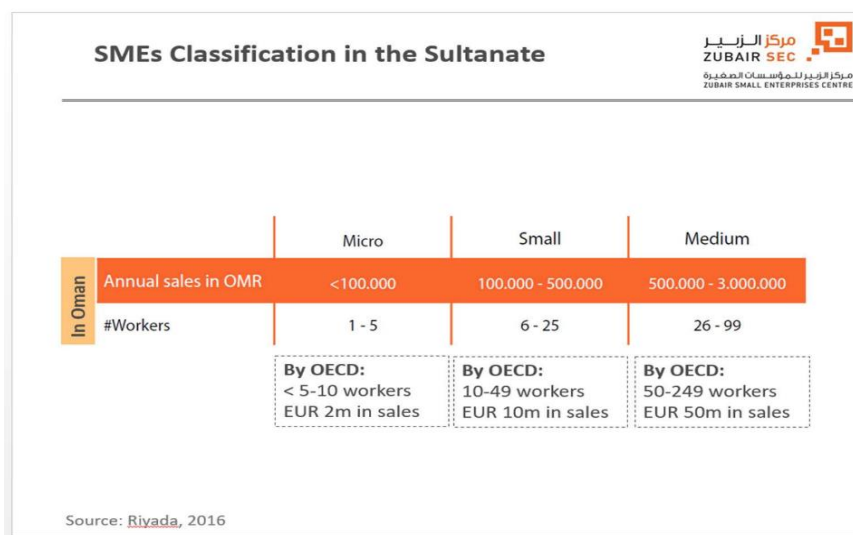


Figure 1: SME Classification in Oman vs. OECD

<sup>1</sup> For more information please see: [http://zubairsec.org/en/page/Published\\_Report](http://zubairsec.org/en/page/Published_Report)

The ecosystem in the Netherlands has seen strong growth in entrepreneurship over the last decade and there are now more than 1.3 million SMEs. Almost one third of them are what are termed ‘SME entrepreneurs’, and nearly two thirds are self-employed. It is the former group that contributes most to innovative capacity in the Netherlands. This they achieve by developing new and scalable business models. SMEs in general account for more than 60% of GDP in the Netherlands and 70% of employment<sup>2</sup>). In addition, there are around 3200 scale-ups<sup>3</sup> (*exact numbers vary according to definition used*), which are fast-growing companies with an especially important contribution to economic growth and job creation.

### **Success factors of the Dutch SME ecosystem**

There is growing recognition that a strong support ecosystem is necessary to unlock entrepreneurial and SME potential. The Dutch SME ecosystem, as mapped by Halbe&Koenraads, identifies more than 400 SME support organisations<sup>4</sup>. Despite ongoing questions about its quality and the overlap between initiatives, a strong ecosystem is accepted to be one which is connected and coordinated and one in which key stakeholders collaborate to improve the environment for SMEs. In sum, the better connected, the better SMEs are supported in each phase of their life cycle. A great example of this is the connectedness between Yes!Delft and RDM Rotterdam, who work closely together to make sure that SMEs know where they should go for different types of help and at each stage of their development.

In the Dutch SME ecosystem discussions are ongoing about whether some organisations are superfluous and how to differentiate value-adding organisations from non-value-adding ones. In general, the ecosystem is only as strong as its weakest link, meaning that efforts are spent on ensuring that the minimum level is as high as possible.

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*“An ecosystem is only as strong as its weakest link” - Martin Luxemburg, ECE*

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Apart from collaboration between SME support organisations, participants also gained insight on the importance of building relationships with knowledge institutions, government entities and other businesses. RDM Rotterdam provided the example of Hogeschool Rotterdam which has a physical campus and, by setting up innovation teams, ensures students and businesses are actively working together.

Related to this, entrepreneurial education in the Netherlands plays a significant role in developing the Dutch SME ecosystem. Training people to develop entrepreneurial skills and competences, relevant to today’s businesses, is hugely important, not only for nascent entrepreneurs but as a general approach to life. Early age education is especially effective in embedding an entrepreneurial spirit.

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<sup>2</sup> MKB service desk (2018): <https://www.mkb servicedesk.nl/569/informatie-over-midden-kleinbedrijf-nederland.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Erasmus Centre for Entrepreneurship (2017). Scale-up Research: <https://ece.nl/research/scaleup-research/>

<sup>4</sup> Halbe&Koenraads (2018). Startup Infrastructure Diagram The Netherlands: [www.halbekoenraads.com](http://www.halbekoenraads.com)

## How collaboration between different SME support organisations fosters innovation

A great example of collaboration between different SME organisations is provided by the Rotterdam Food Cluster. This encompasses the so-called triple helix of entrepreneurs, government, and education. These parties should not only talk, but really cooperate and work on different strategic cases together. In addition, interaction between the city and rural areas is important for the Dutch ecosystem and for the food sector in particular, since people from rural areas have a different perspective on business and are therefore able to contribute significantly to the development of the ecosystem. Support organisations should not only focus on the Netherlands, but also on internationalization. This is achieved by spreading the word of what is happening in the Netherlands and contributes to developing different industries globally in a sustainable way. Even if some activities are not necessary in the Netherlands (e.g. vertical farming), we still develop and export knowledge in these areas, an eagerness to learn and to innovate being key characteristics of the Dutch ecosystem. Besides, Rotterdam Food Cluster gets in touch with entrepreneurs by offering the 'Get Started Programme' to assist them to grow their company in a sustainable way.

Another example of an impactful innovation hub is BlueCity. In an inspiring environment - a former tropical swimming pool - a hub is being developed that ultimately aims to be self-sustaining while providing space and facilities for sustainability entrepreneurs. Real-life examples from innovations developed in BlueCity include tiles made from plastic bottles or damaged fishing nets and leather made from fruit. This challenges us to think differently about waste and see business opportunities in waste streams.

In outlining their activities, RDM Rotterdam, an innovation hub, stressed that they do not want to be the biggest port of the world, but the smartest, on the basis that the only certain thing about the future is that it is uncertain. They really believe in trial and error, and learning by doing, despite being a semi-governmental organisation! It is not a problem if start-ups fail, as long as they learn from the experience and are able to improve the next time they try. Supporting organisations' key role is supporting them to develop business models that enable them to capitalise on start-up idea(s); this is at the heart of what RDM Rotterdam offer to startups through its "RDM Makerspace" ([rdmmakerspace.nl](http://rdmmakerspace.nl)).



*Day 1: Tour at BlueCity*



*Day 1: Tour at RDM Rotterdam*

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*“We do not want to be the largest port in the world, but the smartest” - Jouke Goslinga, RDM Rotterdam*

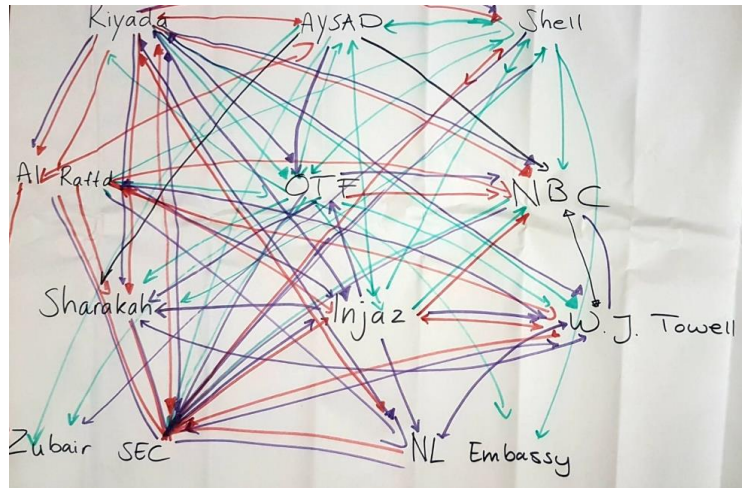
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*Day 1: Participants arrive by watertaxi to RDM Rotterdam*

A key theme throughout the day was **collaboration**: participants expressed surprise at how well support organisations work together and how little competition there seems to be between SMEs. This does not mean it is easy and straightforward. However, the Dutch tend to recognise the need to be vulnerable and accept the fact that organisations cannot be an expert in everything. In this context, SME support organisations tend to identify and focus on doing what they do best, and to collaborate with other support organisations to offer SMEs full lifecycle support.

The participants also took part in an exercise to indicate the degree to which they are connected in the ecosystem in the Sultanate. The participants were asked to draw connections on a large sheet of paper to show which other participating organisations they are collaborating with. Different colours indicated a different type of connection: a red line indicates an active collaboration, purple a personal connection, and green means no connection as of yet but interest to start a new collaboration. The outcomes were used as a basis for discussions later in the programme.





## DAY TWO

Day Two aimed to **provide an understanding of the different pillars of the SME ecosystem in the Netherlands and the role of support organisations in each**. Participants spent time studying the SME support ecosystem mapping for Oman and discussed the positioning of their respective organisations in the map, and what their key role and contribution is. The group later met with Dutch support organisations to exchange ideas and experiences. They visited the tech incubator [Yes!Delft](#), and had roundtable discussions with representatives from [4impactvc](#), [World Startup Factory](#), [Dutch Incubation Association](#), ECE and [Impact City](#). The participants also gained insights into the role of government in the ecosystem through a series of presentations at the [Netherlands Enterprise Agency \(RVO\)](#), from [NL In Business](#), [International Enterprise Department](#) at Ministry of Foreign Affairs and [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy](#).

Zubair SEC gave a presentation on the SME ecosystem in Oman, and presented a case study on how collective support by public and private entities dramatically helped a small enterprise stabilize its business and access wider markets. The group also had an opportunity to network with others in government and some Dutch SMEs in the early evening. The Chargé d’Affaires of the Embassy of Oman in the Netherlands joined the afternoon and evening sessions.



*Day Two: Reflection and discussion with participants at Yes!Delft*

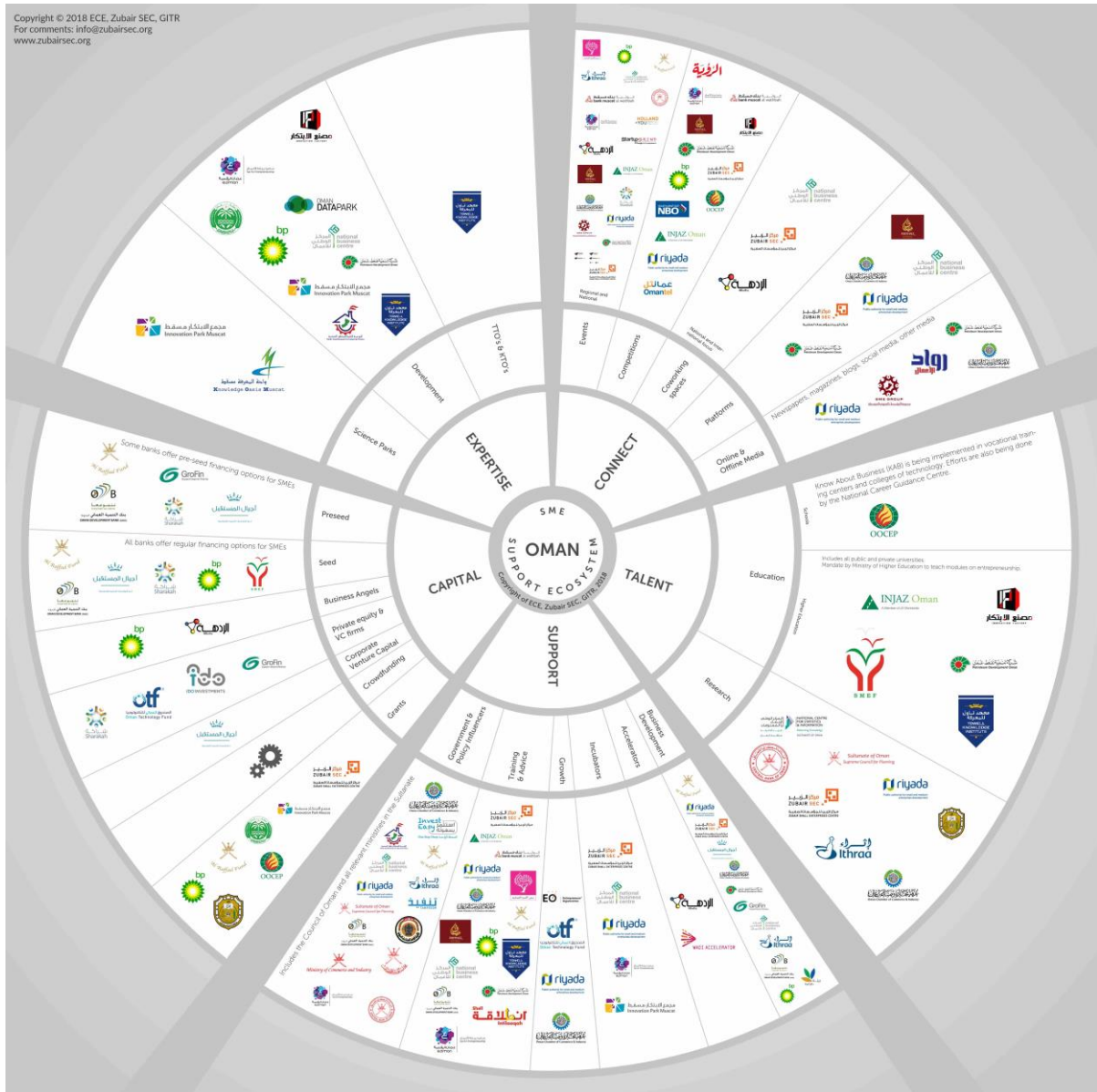


Figure 2: SME Support Ecosystem in the Sultanate of Oman<sup>5</sup>  
(Copyright © 2018 ECE, Zubair SEC, GITR)

<sup>5</sup> For more information please see: [http://zubairsec.org/en/page/Published\\_Report](http://zubairsec.org/en/page/Published_Report)

## Ensuring the right level and type of support is available



Day 2: Tour and presentation at Yes!Delft

During the second day of the ecosystem tour, the participants were able to explore further the role of Dutch SME support organisations through active engagement. Tech incubator Yes!Delft was presented to the participants as an example of full life-cycle support. The participants learnt how entrepreneurs are able to enter the Yes!Delft incubation programme with a business idea, but only once it is validated and tested during a Discovery Day and Validation Lab. The strict selection criteria to enter the programme account for the high success rate (85%) of the businesses participating in the tech incubator, the aim of which is to “build tomorrow’s leading firms”. The incubator stimulates an open and collaborative environment through, for example, creating open spaces and a relaxed atmosphere. It also, however, protects ideas by not allowing visitors to take photographs in workspaces and not accepting businesses that might compete with existing start-ups in the incubator. It also takes subtle measures to develop and encourage success. When a start-up has something to celebrate they ring a bell, and all gather to listen to their success story. For many ‘techy’ types, public speaking can be a challenge, but the incubator is seen as a safe place to practise.

Yes!Delft has successfully created a local ecosystem in close collaboration with the municipality (stimulating job creation), the Technical University Delft (trying to retain talent), and the Netherlands Organisation for applied scientific research (TNO) (looking for innovative spin-offs). This provides SMEs with access to the support they need. Yes!Delft is a different incubator model, which challenged the participants to compare and contrast with other models they had encountered during the visit.

During roundtable sessions at Apollo14, where ImpactCity is based, the participants met with a number of SME support organisations and discussed in more detail their roles and the challenges they face. A key theme discussed during these sessions was how SMEs identified the most suitable sources of help in the ecosystem. Impact fund 4impact.vc explained their strategy of trying to create awareness by participating in events where they meet SMEs, going to incubators and accelerators, getting introduced through government entities and trying to encourage word-of-mouth promotion. Engagement with the wider support ecosystem to create awareness of the scope of their activities and get referrals to relevant SMEs was seen as critical.



*Day 2: Roundtable sessions with Dutch SME support organisations*

Representatives of the Dutch SME support organisations emphasised that it is important to create a strong profile on a specific topic, theme or specialism. ImpactCity, for example, has created a strong brand and platform around impact. This has been made possible by taking into account the existing strengths of The Hague, where it is located, and the presence of 150 NGOs being a clear distinguishing factor from other cities. It also uses its contacts with government to provide access to business opportunities for SMEs. One example is the Residence Programme, wherein SMEs are informed of particular challenges the municipality faces e.g. waste collection, and invited to compete to come up with innovative solutions. The SME winner then supplies the service / product to the municipality, giving them ready access to clients and referrals. At the same time, ImpactCity also acknowledges what they are not - for instance that they are *not* the design city of the Netherlands (which is Eindhoven) – and so refers SMEs to whoever is most appropriate while at the same time looking for possible synergies.

Further discussions centred on supporting entrepreneurs through incubation and acceleration programmes, with examples provided by the Dutch Incubation Association and World Startup Factory.

### **Role of government**

The Dutch government has many instruments available for SMEs, as highlighted during the presentation by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) at their premises. The government support for SMEs ranges from business services to knowledge sharing, networking, funding and promotion. RVO explained that as government agencies, their role is **not to be “doers” but rather “facilitators” and collaborate with the existing other SME-support organisations to “execute” certain services**; this approach has proven to be more effective, helping both public and private organisations to focus on what they do best. An interesting example is the vouchers offered by RVO, enabling SMEs to “buy” a specific service such as coaching or consultancy from private-sector service providers, as opposed to RVO extending that service themselves. RVO noted that a lot of coordination between the different instruments available is necessary to ensure they are of optimal use to SMEs.

Despite the many support options available from government, and the important role government institutes play in creating a favourable environment, the representatives stressed that, in general a market-led approach, wherein market forces are allowed to play out, is best in terms of ensuring SMEs’ long-term success.

In the same meeting at RVO, Zubair SEC presented and elaborate on the SME ecosystem in the Sultanate and the various available mechanisms of support by the public and private sectors. Zubair SEC also presented a case study on how one women owner of a small enterprise in Nizwa benefited from the diversity of available support in the country, and how the collective impact and support of various organisations helped her stabilise and scale up her business, and expand her market reach.



*Day 2: Zubair SEC's presentation of Oman's SME Ecosystem*

### **Areas for future exchange that are most valuable between the governments of the Netherlands and Oman**

It is evident from the interactive session with representatives from RVO, NL Business, the International Enterprise Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economic and Climate Policy that they are open to collaboration. Any requests for assistance can either be made direct or through the Embassy in Muscat.

The MENA region, including the Sultanate, is among the top nine markets for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Netherlands. The Dutch already have a strong connection in the Gulf, and have launched a multi-year strategy to develop the water, energy and food sectors sustainably in the region. The partnership contains a triangle-interaction between government, industry and research and society. The campaign will include a range of activities in the run-up to, during and after Expo 2020 in Dubai, focusing on innovative solutions that the Netherlands has to offer the entire Gulf region in these sectors. Besides, the campaign includes multiple trade missions, fairs, exchange programmes, seminars and conventions. Extensive market research has also been conducted. For the energy sector, Dr Jacques Kimman, Senior Advisor on the National and International Energy Transition, explained how the Netherlands seeks to be a leader in energy transition. Such Dutch expertise and their integral approach to supporting SMEs could be valuable for the development of the Omani markets too.

Representatives from RVO and NL in Business explained their role in helping Dutch SMEs access international markets. RVO provides a two-sided programme for start-ups. On the one hand, it creates a strong position for Dutch start-ups in foreign markets. On the other hand, it positions the Netherlands as an attractive ecosystem for foreign start-ups. Their business development coaches get

in touch with local networks and help with preparations for missions and events. Through a centralized platform, NL in Business assists SMEs to identify interesting business ideas, access knowledge and insights about doing business in international markets, and get practical help in starting or expanding into other markets. This provides an interesting point of entry to the market in the Sultanate too and can attract more SMEs.

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*“The RVO journey and achievements were very insightful. Some of the information shared was an eye opener. It is good to know that we have some similar challenges particularly in relation to getting accurate SME data” – Participant*

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### Promoting contacts between Omani and Dutch SMEs

The engagement between the Omani SME support organisations and their Dutch counterparts has fostered talk about future development of business relationships and jointly promoting contacts between SMEs in both countries. World Startup Factory suggested the mutual referral of SMEs by support organisations in both countries and sharing of knowledge and expertise regarding how to best support them. The support organisations can facilitate contact and make introductions to local partners. This is also the case for SMEs that focus on social and environmental impact. Impact investing is gaining huge momentum globally and in many GCC countries, and Dutch expertise can be used to help SMEs or social entrepreneurs in Oman to grow further in this field.



Day 2: Presentations at RVO

## DAY THREE

Day Three of the ecosystem tour aimed to **stimulate active engagement between participants and Dutch ecosystem builders by allowing them the chance to exchange expertise and insight, establishing a basis for future contacts, making new connections, and taking the first steps towards future collaboration.** The delegates participated in a programme at [B.Amsterdam](#), which started with a presentation from [StartupDelta](#) and was followed by a session hosted by [StartupAmsterdam](#). Afterwards, the participants joined a brief talk by [StartupBootcamp](#) and got a tour of the building. During the community lunch, the participants had the opportunity to exchange ideas on SME support stories and talk to SMEs who had benefited from support programmes. During the afternoon participants were free to explore the tourist sites of Amsterdam / Rotterdam.



*Day 3: Participants arriving to B.Amsterdam*

### **Benefits of increased collaboration at the national level**

StartupDelta's revenue model illustrates the mutual benefits that the presence of an SME support ecosystem umbrella organisation can bring. StartupDelta is a not-for-profit organisation funded, on the one hand by corporate sponsors, and on the other hand by the government. Corporates invest in the initiative to get connected to good start-ups that can deliver high quality innovations. Increasingly, corporates realise they are reliant on start-ups for innovation. StartupDelta helps by creating an infrastructure that facilitates corporates and start-ups working closely together. Every euro collected from corporate sponsors is matched by the government (capped at a certain limit) and the fact that StartupDelta is not solely dependent on public funding, means it must truly demonstrate its relevance, so incentivising it to maximize its added value to the ecosystem.

StartupDelta covers 13 regions in the Netherlands, all of which are distinct from each other. These regions, or hubs, also make financial contributions to StartupDelta and gather quarterly to discuss progress in the ecosystem. StartupDelta's role is to make sure there is collaboration between the hubs and that there is no overlap between support organisations in the country. In addition, StartupDelta engages with government on behalf of these hubs. The representatives of different hubs help to shape the agenda based on the contact they have with support organisations in their respective regions. This has proven to be an effective way to put certain topics on the agenda and nudge start-ups to focus on high-potential industries or areas of innovation where the Netherlands has competitive advantage. For example, StartupDelta encourages start-ups to focus on blockchain technologies by connecting them to corporates who are already very actively engaging with such innovations. In this way, support organisations can influence the direction of the overall ecosystem development.



Day 3: Presentation by Willem Drost, StartupDelta

Increased collaboration at the national level as facilitated by an umbrella organisation also increases the connectedness between the different stakeholders in the ecosystem; indeed this, and a general alignment of efforts and priorities, are seen as key objectives. Individual SME support organisations benefit, since increased collaboration gives them the opportunity to really focus on their own specific area of expertise and outsource other activities to others who are better at it. As described earlier, **connectedness is key for a successful SME ecosystem.**

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*“Holland is not a dense country, but an open city.” - Willem Drost, StartupDelta*

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## Elements / key factors for successful collaboration

During the various sessions, participants learnt of numerous factors that contribute to success in developing extensive networks and collaboration. A first step is thinking about the specific **strengths** of a country and then gathering resources to fully commit to developing them further. A great example is Singapore, which is moving to biotech and focuses on acquiring the right talent to maximise its success. **Broad-based industrial countries offer more room for innovative start-ups as they can serve a boarder spectrum of market and industry needs.**

Second, **culture** can be a determining factor for the success of collaboration. Similar to Silicon Valley, the Netherlands is described as an open society where failure is tolerated, and people are willing to share ideas and best practices to bring the ecosystem to the next level together. A great example is



provided by Startup Bootcamp’s mentoring approach, where mentees are matched with businessmen with enough experience related to the specific sector in which their mentees seek to operate. By offering the right exposure and insights, mentors really help start-ups in reaching the next level. Other cultural aspects that are key in fostering collaboration are aiming high (no mediocrity), focusing on making a difference, developing an entrepreneurial culture and creating a highly competitive start-up vibe. Even if particular elements are not present in national culture, it can still be helpful and important to include them. For example, during the discussion it came up that mergers and acquisitions are not very common in Oman. However, this can be an important strategy for corporates to work with start-ups: corporates scan the market, find innovations that are changing the market, buy or invest in these companies, nourish them, let them grow and eventually integrate them.

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*“Collaboration, collaboration, collaboration. We need to surround the little guys with all the resources to really bring them to life” - Willem Drost, StartupDelta.*

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Although it is definitely possible to change culture and create a culture for entrepreneurship and innovation, it is challenging as well (especially for traditional cultures like Oman). Umbrella organisations, such as StartupDelta in the Netherlands, can play an important role in supporting the government during the transition period. As an umbrella organisation, it is important to facilitate dialogue and meetings with innovation hubs on a regular basis. During these meetings, the role of the government, resource allocation, and recent developments within the ecosystem are discussed. Transition takes time and the country should have a realistic vision on this. One of the big debates in Oman is why the country has been spending much money on entrepreneurship and creating jobs for the population. There is a desire for immediate results, but it should also be acknowledged that transitions might take years before the effects become visible. Characteristic of the Dutch culture is the willingness of individuals and organisations to give something back to the ecosystem when they are successful. In the Netherlands, entrepreneurs consider support as a privilege; they appreciate it and they want to give back.

Next, **infrastructure** and role of the (local) government also fulfil an important support role. StartupAmsterdam demonstrated that it is very important to map all support available to SMEs from the very beginning and regularly to get a proper overview of the gaps and opportunities for collaboration. When collaboration works out in a particular region, such as Amsterdam, it will prompt it to take root elsewhere. Thus, it could be helpful to start in a specific area and expand collaboration and connectedness from there. Events where investors meet start-ups and competitions are critical to foster collaboration in a country. StartupAmsterdam organises and maps



Day 3: Presentation by StartupAmsterdam

events taking place, generating high levels of connectedness and stimulating collaboration between different stakeholders.

On a more local level, once again the importance of the **physical environment** in stimulating collaboration was highlighted. B. Amsterdam has created an ecosystem with three buildings where both corporates and start-ups become members and establish offices or workspaces. When setting up, the owners of the building were very selective about whom they allowed in. Only people who shared the same ethos/vision were selected, which prompted the space to be filled by others with similar visions and ways of working. As mentioned by one of the SMEs, it was indeed the reputation of B. Amsterdam that attracted them here. The open lay-out of the building with various communal spaces, as well as the regular events, social gatherings and community activities facilitate interactions between members.

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*"It's not about how great it looks - the energy in the building depends on the people that you have inside it" – Yeni Joseph, B. Amsterdam*

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*Day 3: Tour at B. Amsterdam*



*Day 3: Networking lunch at B. Amsterdam*

Finally, the importance of **measuring impact** was discussed on various occasions. StartupAmsterdam shared examples of the data they collect about their ecosystem, including number of start-ups, HQ locations in Amsterdam, talent, etc. It is difficult to measure the impact of support initiatives, especially on a national level, and it is recommended that organisations should combine forces to deal with this challenge. This was discussed further during the final day.

## DAY FOUR

Day Four of the ecosystem tour aimed to **equip participants with tools and draw up actions applicable to the Omani SME support ecosystem**. The delegates listened to an inspirational, and somewhat controversial, presentation from Professor Hein Roelfsema, Chairman of [Dutch Centers for Entrepreneurship](#), on “How Not to Build an Ecosystem”, then they took part in a measurement workshop run by Lars Crama, founder of [Innovators Inc.](#) Afterwards, the participants discussed in depth key takeaways of the programme and ended the day at [Venture Cafe](#), where they met with SMEs at a weekly Thursday networking session. They also met the founders of Omani logistics SMEs, who were in the Netherlands for a two-week programme sponsored by ASYAD and the Dutch government.

### Challenges in building the SME support ecosystem

Professor Hein Roelfsema presented five major obstacles to building entrepreneurial ecosystems. First, a **focus on entrepreneurial clusters** often results in a very linear approach to ecosystem development. Instead, Roelfsema suggests the focus should be on individual entrepreneurs who are better able to take a holistic view. Second, Roelfsema urged participants to be critical of the role of umbrella organisations. The risk of having one **“do it all” umbrella organisation** that connects everyone in the ecosystem, is that there is no need for individual support organisations to connect any more. On this basis, no one organisation should conduct all the work in the ecosystem, but rather different organisations should seek complementarities. These complementarities should be considered as magnets which automatically attract each other, although they will need space to be able to do so. Next, within ecosystems we often see a focus on how **actors (not actions) are connected**, which is a very narrow view. An ecosystem should be considered as a business model, meaning that it is not a set of actors but a set of *actions*. There can also be a **lack of leadership** and an erroneous perspective towards leadership. It is a process, not an individual and it should emerge largely by itself through good performance. Finally, certain **rules and regulations** set up by the government can prove really harmful for SME performance and could even disable entrepreneurship, being a rather top-down approach that runs the risk of squashing innovation. In general, universities are better equipped to play a coordinating role as they do not have an agenda due to their long-term vision and focus on education. They also naturally seek to engage with all stakeholders in the ecosystem, and tend to have access to space, funds and staff.



*Day 4: Presentation by Hein Roelfsema, Dutch Centres for Entrepreneurship*

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*“You compete when you have substitutes, and you cooperate when you have complementarities” - Hein Roelfsema, Dutch Centres for Entrepreneurship*

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After Professor Roelfsema’s presentation, the participants discussed possible blockers for innovation in the Omani SME and start-up ecosystem, under the guidance of Lars Crama. The participants wrote down the most significant challenges faced by SMEs and start-ups in Oman as being: regulations, risk of failure, fear of change, lack of motivation, lack of guidance / communications, no clear designation of responsibility, lack of a clear vision, no market, poor connectedness, lack of technical support, no availability of data, and a lack of expertise. This list is challenging, but can best be tackled incrementally, accepting that some small issues may need to be addressed before moving on to address major issues.



*Day 4: Workshop by Lars Crama: identifying challenges in the Omani SME ecosystem*

## **How can we, as SME support organisations individually and in collaboration with others, both within Oman and internationally, best equip SMEs to succeed?**

According to Hein Roelfsema, by solving the five challenges he described, SMEs' chances of success will increase. In other words, support organisations are advised to: 1) focus on individual entrepreneurs, rather than clusters; 2) re-visit the roles of organisations that 'do everything'; 3) focus on actions, not actors; 4) identify universities who can take a leading role in the ecosystem.

Innovation and increases in productivity over the long-term are not only generated by start-ups and scale-ups. They can come from entrepreneurs within larger organisations / companies who identify problems and work towards solving them. Entrepreneurship policies should be about providing organisations in the ecosystem with the right **tools** for rapid innovation, for example training employees in ideation or business model development. In the Netherlands, ECE is a frontrunner in this area. Another critical aspect for SME support is **inclusiveness**. It is important to maintain an inclusive culture in which organisations build on initial ideas and not criticize them. In addition, an organisation that is truly inclusive is able to facilitate **dialogue** between different SME support initiatives. In this way, SME support organisations can change the horizontal / linear entrepreneurial into a more lean / agile innovation process. This is of enormous importance in the current economic climate.

One of the main takeaways of the sessions is that a bottom-up approach can be highly effective. Many Dutch SME support organisations started without a clear path mapped out, but merely with some initial ideas that grew and changed along the way. In the same vein, according to Roelfsema, the term SMEs should not be the focal topic. Instead, he suggested we talk about entrepreneurship, start-ups and scale-ups, and entrepreneurship policies. In this way an environment for innovation is more readily created and 'a different feeling' is engendered in those setting up businesses.

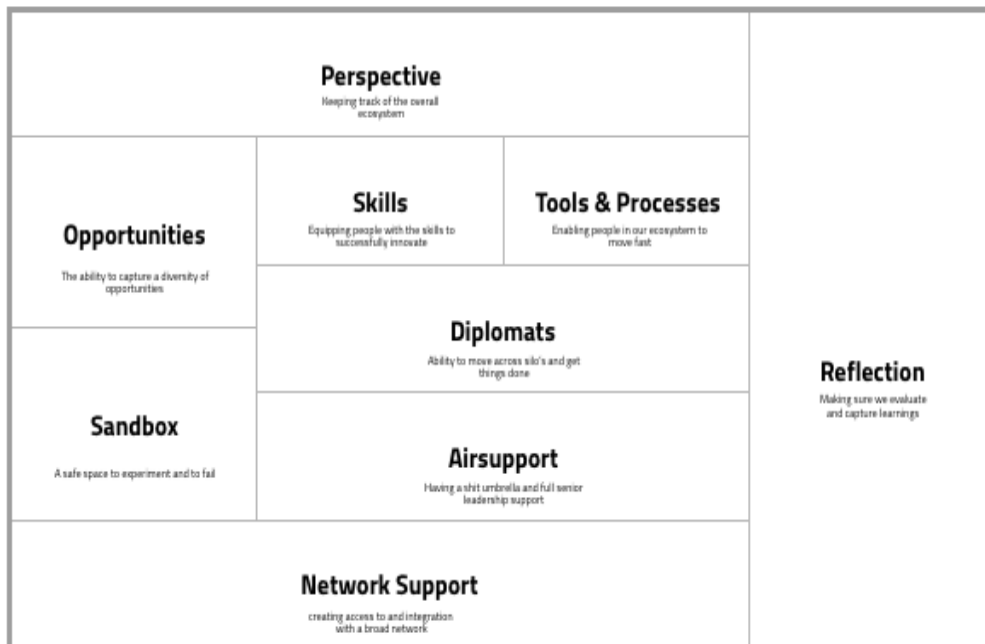
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*“If you look for something new, talk about entrepreneurship, start-ups and scale-ups.” - Hein Roelfsema, Dutch Centres for Entrepreneurship*

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The metric tools provided by Lars Crama can be very helpful for SME support organisations in measuring impact and making results more tangible. By measuring the following nine elements, the actual effect of support organisations on SMEs can become clearer. The participants were asked to suggest indices for each element and encouraged to think of them for their own organisations and to identify the most important indices for the ecosystem as a whole.

## Ecosystem:



**INNOVATORSINC.**

(Ecosystem canvas: all credits to Tristan Kromer, Kromatic)

## Key outcomes and recommendations

### Key takeaways by participants

The key outcomes of the programme can be grouped into four main categories. These were identified by participants at the end of each day on feedback sheets and in discussion.

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*“This trip has been an eye-opener for me personally, since I realize Oman has great potential. We need to come together, connect, and join forces in order to develop the Omani ecosystem further” - Khaula Al Harthy, Injaz Oman*

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### Collaboration and connectivity

One of the major takeaways has to do with the importance of collaboration and connectivity amongst support organisations within the ecosystem. These are the key factors that contribute to the success of the Dutch ecosystem and could play a very important role in the Omani ecosystem as well. Written feedback (with minor edits) was as follows:

- ❖ Networking and connectedness are vital, not only amongst SMEs and start-ups but also amongst support organisations; we need to have more of these. The more connected an ecosystem is, the more it will flourish;
- ❖ It is important to identify specific and clear roles for each partner/ support organisation in the ecosystem to achieve comprehensiveness rather than competitiveness and avoid redundancy of offered services. To achieve that, interaction and engagement need to be encouraged further between the support organisations to work out together how they can collectively develop the services and offerings within the ecosystem;
- ❖ Each organisation should focus on its core activities and cooperate with ecosystem partners to complement its offerings to its members;
- ❖ Strategic efforts need to be in place to increase communication between the public and private sectors, in order to leverage the collective performance;
- ❖ Every country and geographical location has its own sets of challenges. What has worked in the Netherlands might not necessarily work in Oman. We need to look at matters in context and see what we can best apply in Oman to achieve best value.

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*“One thing I'm taking back [to Oman] is that we need to have more collaboration between us and other organisations, and have a common vision towards achieving this in the coming years”- Abdulla Al-Jufaili, Sharakah*

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### Culture and mindset

Another very important element to improve in the Omani SME ecosystem is certain aspects of the culture and mindset of organisations. As described during day three, culture is considered as an essential driver of a successful support ecosystem. Here, participants' takeaways are:

- ❖ Failure should be accepted and embraced;
- ❖ There is a need to appreciate more the “try it out” approach (i.e. bottom-up approach) to allow for innovation;
- ❖ Adaptability: start with a vision, but learn and change along the way;
- ❖ Collaboration between SMEs and start-ups needs to be encouraged further; this could be in the form of exchanging expertise if that doesn't risk the business, and also encouraging cross-selling amongst them.

### Tools and models

Next, the representatives were equipped with tools and models applicable to the Omani ecosystem. These enable participants to foster collaboration, stimulate innovation, and develop further the support ecosystem.

- ❖ Provision of the right environment and technology; there are many ideas we can adopt from the Dutch models we visited;
- ❖ The more we invest in advancing our ecosystem, the more value we achieve not only for local SMEs, but also in seeking to attract foreign investment;
- ❖ Usually, SME ecosystems grow organically if the various players from public and private sectors can create synergies. For instance:
  - To avoid a laid-back approach by tenant incubated start-ups, there needs to be some driving forces to encourage them to grow; for instance, increasing the incubator rent year on year so they try to move out as soon as they are on solid ground and encouraged to have a place of their own;
  - Incubated start-ups need to be validated very well before being hosted;
  - Environment matters - create an attractive environment and an atmosphere where success is celebrated;
  - Let the market do what the market does best. Rely on the private sector as much as possible to provide advice, expertise, services, and extend financial facilitation/ investment opportunities;
- ❖ Encourage and enhance the relationship between different incubators and celebrate their successes together

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*“We can implement some of the models we've seen, but it is important to modify the business models so they fit the Omani context.” - AlMutajaredah AlMandhari, Riyadh*

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### Measuring impact

Having impact as a support organisation is important, however, measuring it is crucial as well, and can be rather challenging!

- ❖ Objectives or development indicators are forever changing, and it is necessary to have dynamic ones if they are to accommodate changes in the economic or social environment;
- ❖ It is vital to put in place an impact and performance measurement process that is based on properly identified and reflective indicators; support organisations sharing similar objectives are encouraged to work together to develop such indicators and exchange insight and results. This could feed into a wider collective performance measurement across the SME support ecosystem;
- ❖ Support organisations need access to a database that provides information and insight on SMEs and start-ups in the country, the support and funding they have received, indicators on their performance, and location. Such access to data is vital for the progress of the SME support ecosystem and for measurement of the ecosystem performance overall.

### SWOT Analysis of the SME Support Ecosystem in the Sultanate

The participants worked together on applying a SWOT analysis of the existing SME Support Ecosystem in the Sultanate. The findings are summarised below:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An embedded culture of trading</li> <li>- Youthful dynamic population</li> <li>- High level support for entrepreneurship</li> <li>- Funding in place, although diversity is needed</li> <li>- Strong advocates for entrepreneurship from various facets of society and the economy</li> <li>- Historic global connections</li> <li>- Empowered women in business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insufficient integration of support services</li> <li>- Lack of sufficient business acumen</li> <li>- Lack of clear opportunities for SMEs</li> <li>- No enough scale-ups and relevant support</li> <li>- Some competitiveness among support organisations, as opposed to collaboration</li> <li>- Some focus on individual successes rather than collective achievements</li> <li>- Insufficient market / sector insights and data There is a need for more statistics, research, and an accurate representative SMEs database</li> <li>- Lack of transparency by SMEs</li> <li>- Lack of innovation in support services</li> <li>- Lack of sufficient post-incubation support for innovative start-ups</li> <li>- Insufficient entrepreneurial competencies</li> <li>- Little diversity in available funding tools</li> <li>- Too much free support for start-ups and SMEs</li> </ul>

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating a national SMEs database accessible by support and research organisations in Oman</li> <li>- Creating a master events calendar for the ecosystem activities and events</li> <li>- One place to promote all existing support entities for easier allocation by SMEs</li> <li>- Establish a bottom-up support approach to be partially led by SMEs</li> <li>- Explore new funding schemes and tools</li> <li>- Further development of the incubation and post-incubation programmes for innovative start-ups</li> <li>- Highlight success stories locally and internationally</li> <li>- Encourage mergers, acquisitions and business clusters, but let that be developed by SMEs</li> <li>- Launching a stock market for small enterprises below OMR 5 million in capital</li> <li>- Leverage on upcoming regional events (ex. Expo 2020, World Cup 2022)</li> <li>- Encourage SMEs to improve the quality of their goods/services and start expanding regionally</li> <li>- Embed technology for all businesses at all levels; use available tools and applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weak culture of collaboration between SMEs and support organisations could lead to disintegration of efforts</li> <li>- Most activities are centred in/around Muscat which can exclude SMEs in other governorates</li> <li>- Challenges with access to capital could lead to a drop down in the number of new SMEs or reduce the scalability of existing ones</li> <li>- Not performing well enough in matters of SME ecosystem performance compared to other countries in the region might mean the ecosystem is considered less attractive for investments and business collaboration</li> </ul>

*Figure 2: SWOT analysis of the Omani SME support ecosystem*

Omani support organisations can find ways to complement each other and overcome the perception of being in competition. By focusing together on further developing the SME support ecosystem and exchanging knowledge, ideas and analyses, they can become leaders in the field. A great example is ECE and Utrecht Centre for Entrepreneurship. While considered competitors, they have combined forces to work together within the Dutch Centres for Entrepreneurship and on other projects. In such cases, spending time getting to know each other, such as during this trip, can be the catalyst for change and for a commitment to build and expand relationships amongst SME support organisations on return to Oman.

## Agreed action plans

At the end of the programme, the delegates were asked to draw up an action list to be considered and discussed when back in Oman:

1. Create **connectedness and transparency** between Omani support organisations. We request Riyada to bring players in the Omani SME support ecosystem together for topic-based meetings on a frequent basis;
2. Develop a **collective assessment** scheme for the performance of the SME support ecosystem in Oman. On an individual level, each organisation will choose its own matrix to measure or assess its impact and performance in the SME support ecosystem. Insights can then be combined and discussed during a collective assessment gathering by various stakeholders;
3. Establish a **database** of the existing SME landscape. Everyone (i.e. support organisations, decision makers, strategists, SMEs) will benefit from knowing what SMEs are currently in the market and in which sectors. The participants will consult widely in developing the database and set it up as a collective resource;
4. Generating a **public event calendar** that clearly presents all SME support-related events taking place in Oman. It is suggested that Riyada develops this calendar with input from the other support organisations, especially those who have an existing Memorandum of Understanding with Riyada. The event calendar could contribute to an increased focus on quality and to the rationalisation of activities. This will bring the added benefits of ensuring that SMEs are not overwhelmed by the number of opportunities available and of enabling SMEs and those within the SME ecosystem to get to know each other better;
5. An opportunity: collaboration in setting up specific **industry-based, start-up incubators**. An assessment of the various models visited in the Netherlands could be made and the one that best fits the Omani ecosystem could be selected and adapted further, as necessary. These could potentially be located at currently unoccupied government buildings and focus on the sectors of strength already identified by the Omani government;
6. A possible effort by public sector organisations, such as Riyada or Ithraa, to **collaborate** with SME support organisations in nominating successful and growing SMEs. These would then be promoted at **regional and international roadshows**, in an effort to promote business collaboration with other companies outside the Sultanate.

## Annexes

### Programme outline

#### Monday October 22<sup>nd</sup>

Time	Activity	Content	Location
09.00-09.30	<b>Welcome word</b> by Martin Luxemburg (ECE)	First meeting: Oman - the Netherlands	Rotterdam Science Tower
09.30-10.00	<b>Inspirational introduction</b>	Introduction of the Dutch ecosystem (i.e. key strengths, key players etc.)	Rotterdam Science Tower
10.00-10.45	<b>Rotterdam ecosystem</b> by Rotterdam Food Cluster	Insights in the Rotterdam start-up ecosystem	Rotterdam Science Tower
10.45-11.45	<b>Facilitated discussion</b>	Exchange ideas about the ecosystem development	Rotterdam Science Tower
11.45-12.30	<b>Tour</b>	Inspirational example of a successful hub in the innovation ecosystem	Rotterdam Science Tower
13.45-14.45	<b>Presentation and tour</b> by BlueCity	Inspirational example of an incubator to support innovative start-ups	BlueCity
15.15-16.00	<b>Tour and start-up meet-and-greet</b> by RDM Rotterdam	Understand the factors that make RDM an innovation catalyst	RDM Rotterdam
16.00-17.00	<b>Innovation presentation</b> by RDM Makerspace	Introduction about the concept of makerspace as playground for pioneers	RDM Makerspace

#### Tuesday October 23<sup>rd</sup>

Time	Activity	Content	Location
09.00-09.30	<b>Reflection on previous day</b>	Discuss the main takeaways of Monday's programme	Yes!Delft
09.30-10.30	<b>Tour and presentation</b> by Yes!Delft	Consider how Yes!Delft as international best-practice supports entrepreneurs throughout the start-up funnel	Yes!Delft
10.30-11.20	<b>Revisit ecosystem pillars</b>	Understand own positioning and role of the Omani representatives in the ecosystem	Yes!Delft
12.00-15.00	<b>Roundtable sessions</b> with 4impact.vc, Dutch Incubation Association, ECE, ImpactCity, World Startup Factory	Match best-practices in the Netherlands with the representatives to exchange ideas, challenges, opportunities	Apollo 14

15.30-18.00	<b>Visit, presentations and discussion</b> by Ministry of Economic and Climate Affairs, RVO	Explain Dutch government role in building ecosystem and supporting SMES  Presentation by Zubair SEC on Oman's SME ecosystem and a case study of collective support	Ministry of Economic and Climate Affairs & RVO
18.00-19.30	<b>Networking reception</b>	Informal networking with key players of the Dutch SME support ecosystem	Grandcafé de Wens

### Wednesday October 24<sup>th</sup>

Time	Activity	Content	Location
09.45-10.15	<b>Reflection on previous day</b>	Discuss the main takeaways of Tuesday's programme	B. Amsterdam
10.30-11.30	<b>Building a local ecosystem:</b> StartupAmsterdam	Explain StartupAmsterdam's approach in creating a strong local network and global brand	B. Amsterdam
11.30-12.30	<b>Role of an umbrella organisation:</b> StartupDelta	Explain StartupDelta's successes in supporting and representing the Dutch ecosystem and advice on how to set up an umbrella organisation	B. Amsterdam
12.30-13.30	<b>Community lunch with start-ups</b>	Engage with Dutch start-ups and exchange their support stories	B. Amsterdam
13.30-14.30	<b>Feedback &amp; Discussion</b>	Reflect on the insights provided during the sessions	B. Amsterdam
14.45-19.30	<b>Tourism/recreational</b>	Time off in Amsterdam's city centre	Amsterdam

### Thursday October 25<sup>th</sup>

Time	Activity	Content	Location
08.45-09.00	<b>Reflection on previous day</b>	Discuss the main takeaways of Wednesday's programme	Rotterdam Science Tower
09.00-10.00	<b>Inspirational speaker:</b> Hein Roelfsema	Inspiring future perspective about the development of the SME ecosystem and examples of exciting responses	Rotterdam Science Tower
10.00-11.00	<b>Facilitated discussion</b>	Discuss the future development of the Omani ecosystem, using best-practices and recommendations	Rotterdam Science Tower

11.30-13.00	<b>Ecosystem measurement workshop</b> by Lars Crama	Share tried and tested tools to enable representatives to foster collaboration with other partners and stimulate innovation	Rotterdam Science Tower
13.30-16.30	<b>Reflection &amp; Evaluation</b>	Prioritise actions and agree on the next steps resulting from the overall programme	Rotterdam Science Tower
16.30-17.00	<b>Tour meet-and-greet with start-ups</b>	Venture Cafe as the example of a successful builder of innovation communities	Venture Café
17.00-20.00	<b>Thursday gathering (networking)</b>	Get examples of Dutch solutions to global challenges, while meeting more interesting start-ups	Venture Café

## List of participants

Name	Company	Position
Abdullah Al-Jufaili	<a href="#">Fund for Development of Youth Projects – Sharakah</a>	General Manager
Ahmed Al-Sawaei	<a href="#">Shell Development Oman (representing Intilaqah Shell &amp; secondee by PDO)</a>	External Relations Manager- New Business Opportunities
AlMutajaredah AlMandhari	<a href="#">Public Authority for SME Development - Riyadh</a>	Director of Mentorship and Training
Badr Alzadjali	<a href="#">Oman Technology Fund</a>	Marketing & Communications Manager
Fahad Al Harthy	<a href="#">Al Raffd Fund</a>	AGM for E-Service and Quality
Fathiya Al Hakmani	<a href="#">Public Authority for SME Development – Riyadh</a>	Director of Incubators and Business Centers
Ibrahim Al Bakri	<a href="#">ASYAD - Ibhar</a>	Human Capital Programme Director, Oman Logistics Center
Janet Breeze	<a href="#">Embassy of the Netherlands</a>	Senior Policy Officer
Khaula Al Harthy	<a href="#">Injaz Oman</a>	Executive Director
Lina Hussein	<a href="#">Zubair Small Enterprise Centre (Zubair SEC)</a>	Head of Communication & Social Impact
Mujtaba Zafar	<a href="#">W.J. Towell – Ajyal Al Mustaqbal</a>	Project Manager
Mulkie Al Hashmi	<a href="#">National Business Centre (NBC)</a>	Director of Media & Marketing



## Participating Dutch organisations

Organisation	Type	About	Website
<b>4Impact.vc</b>  <b>4IMPACT.VC</b>	Venture Capital	4Impact.vc provides commercial, intellectual and financial capital for tech-startups focussing on societal impact and financial return. Their investment areas include environment, economic inclusion, health & well-being.	<a href="http://www.4impact.vc">www.4impact.vc</a>
<b>B. Amsterdam</b>  	Coworking space	B. is a creative workspace for innovation, education, and growth. They build a bridge between start-ups, creatives, and corporates and bring them together, setting up ways to connect with-, learn from- and grow with each other.	<a href="http://b-buildingbusiness.com/amsterdam/">http://b-buildingbusiness.com/amsterdam/</a>
<b>Blue City</b>  	Coworking space / Incubator (Circular Economy)	BlueCity is an incubator for circular entrepreneurs in and around Rotterdam. Their goal is to provide start-ups and scale-ups with access to circular resources, knowledge and talent, and to turn ideas into action. Ultimately Blue City aims to help sustainable entrepreneurs to grow from intention to impact.	<a href="http://www.bluecity.nl">www.bluecity.nl</a>
<b>Dutch Incubation Association</b>  	Incubator (Association)	The Dutch Incubator Association (DIA) provides the Dutch incubators with a common platform on behalf of professionalization and positioning on a national, European, and international level.	<a href="http://www.dutchincubator.nl">www.dutchincubator.nl</a>
<b>Erasmus Centre for Entrepreneurship (ECE)</b>  	Centre for Entrepreneurship	ECE is the leading centre for entrepreneurship in Europe. They create entrepreneurs through the knowledge and network of the Erasmus University Rotterdam, thereby striving to embed entrepreneurship in people's DNA.	<a href="http://www.ece.nl">www.ece.nl</a>
<b>Get in the Ring</b>	Collaboration	Get in the Ring is an innovation marketplace. They facilitate partnerships between entrepreneurs and large organisations like corporates and governments with the aim of	<a href="http://www.getinthering.co">www.getinthering.co</a>



creating joint innovation projects. In collaboration with their global partner network, they identify, assess, match and guide promising innovations towards successful collaborations that are scalable.

**ImpactCity**

Point of entry

ImpactCity is the community of The Hague for startup and scale-ups that deliver a societal contribution. They help innovative entrepreneurs to start successfully and to grow their business by opening doors to investors and offering access to a comprehensive business network, inspiring company locations, international trade missions and competitions.

[www.impactcity.nl](http://www.impactcity.nl)



**Ministry of Economic and Climate Affairs**

Government

The Ministry promotes the Netherlands as a country of enterprise with a strong international competitive position and an eye for sustainability. It is committed to creating an excellent entrepreneurial business climate, by creating the right conditions and giving entrepreneurs room to innovate and grow.

[www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-economic-affairs-and-climate-policy](http://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-economic-affairs-and-climate-policy)



**PortXL**

Accelerator (Port & Maritime)

PortXL is an ecosystem of start-ups, corporate partners and mentors – all changemakers, creative thinkers and problem solvers who work collaboratively to disrupt the status quo. The company aims to cultivate a spirit of innovation within the global maritime industry, thereby changing the way people think about the maritime industry.

[www.portxl.org](http://www.portxl.org)



**RDM Rotterdam**




Innovation catalyst / Science Park

RDM Rotterdam is the hotspot for innovation in the port where the manufacturing industry of the future is taking shape. It is home to a range of private-sector, education and research initiatives. They work on a variety of innovations that will contribute to a 'smarter port'.

[www.rdmrotterdam.nl/en/about-rdm-rotterdam/](http://www.rdmrotterdam.nl/en/about-rdm-rotterdam/)



<p><b>Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland (RVO)</b></p>	<p>Government</p>	<p>The Netherlands Enterprise Agency stimulates entrepreneurs in sustainable, agricultural, innovative and international business. It helps entrepreneurs with funding, networking, know-how and compliance with laws and regulations. The agency aims to improve opportunities for entrepreneurs and strengthen their position.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.english.rvo.nl">www.english.rvo.nl</a></p>
			
<p><b>Rotterdam Food Cluster</b></p>	<p>Collaboration</p>	<p>Rotterdam Food Cluster organises projects in association with companies, knowledge institutions, interest groups and authorities, with the aim of stimulating employment, innovation, knowledge sharing and marketing in the region of Rotterdam.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.rotterdamfoodcluster.com/?lang=en">www.rotterdamfoodcluster.com/?lang=en</a></p>
			
<p><b>Rotterdam Science Tower (RST)</b></p>	<p>Coworking space</p>	<p>The Rotterdam Science Tower is a multi-company building: a mixture of lab spaces, offices and facilities for laboratory education.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.rotterdamsciencetower.eu">www.rotterdamsciencetower.eu</a></p>
			
<p><b>Startup Amsterdam</b></p>	<p>Point of entry</p>	<p>StartupAmsterdam's role is to showcase Amsterdam's start-up community, the overarching start-up ecosystem and the initiatives that facilitate connection. They promote and accelerate opportunities for everyone: start-ups, scaleups, talent, corporates, investors, mentors and other start-up cities.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.iamsterdam.com/en/business/startupamsterdam">www.iamsterdam.com/en/business/startupamsterdam</a></p>
			
<p><b>StartupDelta</b></p>	<p>Point of entry</p>	<p>StartupDelta is an independent public-private partnership that aims to merge the Dutch start-up ecosystem into one single connected hub and improve access to talent, capital, networks, knowledge and markets.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.startupdelta.org/">www.startupdelta.org/</a></p>
			

<p><b>Venture Cafe</b></p> 	<p>Point of entry</p>	<p>Venture Café Rotterdam Foundation is a non-profit organisation and part of a global network. Their goal is to build an innovation community and to accelerate innovation within the regional ecosystem.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.venturecaferotterdam.org">www.venturecaferotterdam.org</a></p>
<p><b>World Startup Factory</b></p> 	<p>Accelerator</p>	<p>World Startup Factory (WSF) offers acceleration programs to start-ups with impact driven solutions and convincing business models.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.worldstartupfactory.com/">www.worldstartupfactory.com/</a></p>
<p><b>Yes!Delft</b></p> 	<p>Incubator (Tech)</p>	<p>Yes!Delft enables tech start-ups to scale their business by offering start-up programs in the areas of: Blockchain, MedTech, Artificial Intelligence, Aviation, CleanTech, Robotics and Complex Technology. They are only supporting start-ups that can solve real-life problems.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.yesdelft.com">www.yesdelft.com</a></p>

## Thank you

The organisers would like to extend their thanks to the participating organisations from both countries for their commitment and insights during the tour.

### About the organisers

This visit was supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Muscat.

#### **Zubair Small Enterprises Centre (Zubair SEC)**

Zubair Small Enterprises Centre (Zubair SEC) is one of the initiatives which emanated from The Zubair Corporation's social responsibility strategic vision towards the Omani society. The vision reflects the corporation's belief in the importance of small enterprises in enhancing the national economy and contributing to sustainable socio-economic development. Established in 2013, Zubair SEC is today a professional body that capitalises on its high professionalism, diversified offered knowledge, wide range of accumulated expertise, and its own global and local network and strategic partners. The Centre also builds on The Zubair Corporation's strengths to lead positive change in the local business environment, which supports small businesses and promising initiatives in the Sultanate. Services extended to Zubair SEC members include clinical solution-based advisory, capacity building, networking platforms, business development, and a yearly programme that selects ten winners who receive a financial grant, as well as intensive advisory services, branding, packaging, product stabilization, as well as business development.

More information: [www.zubairsec.org](http://www.zubairsec.org)

#### **Erasmus Centre for Entrepreneurship (ECE)**

The Erasmus Centre for Entrepreneurship (ECE) is the leading centre for entrepreneurship in Europe. Fuelled by our belief that entrepreneurship is the primary driver for innovation, we strive to embed entrepreneurship in the DNA of people. We don't create companies, we create entrepreneurs through the knowledge and network of the Erasmus University Rotterdam, a university founded by entrepreneurs more than 100 years ago. ECE offers actionable executive training and development on entrepreneurship both to strategic board level and to innovation teams. We apply an integral perspective on corporate entrepreneurship because we fully understand the complexity of building and sustaining an entrepreneurship competence to create new business. This integral approach is the USP of ECE.

More information: [www.ece.nl](http://www.ece.nl)

#### **Halbe&Koenraads**

Halbe&Koenraads is a boutique consultancy firm specialising in innovation ecosystems. We at Halbe&Koenraads firmly believe in the added value of a strong innovation ecosystem with an infrastructure that helps start-ups start and grow. Together with our network of universities, corporates, start-ups and government, we connect, strengthen and grow ecosystems.

More information: [www.halbekoenraads.com](http://www.halbekoenraads.com)



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