

Make-IT in Africa II

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Make-IT in Africa in a nutshell: We believe in African innovation

Make-IT in Africa believes in the catalytic power of African innovation and digital technologies for green and inclusive development. In close collaboration with digital visionaries like start-ups, innovation enablers, and political partners, we empower African innovation ecosystems. Together, we aim to strengthen an environment in which the full potential of African digital innovation can unfold.

African digital visionaries develop innovative solutions that can have a significant positive impact on the lives of people and their environment. But since many African countries lack an enabling environment in which innovative ideas can effect genuine change, a lot of innovators face certain challenges on their way to breakthrough. From difficult access to skills and markets to a lack of networks and enabling conditions, there are several factors that hinder innovative ideas to reach their full potential.

We believe only a collaborative and systemic approach that combines the strengths of all actors in the ecosystem can overcome these obstacles.

Our goal is to make innovation ecosystems future-ready—to build a resilient environment for digital visionaries and their partners. So, they can create impactful change in Africa—socially, environmentally, and economically.

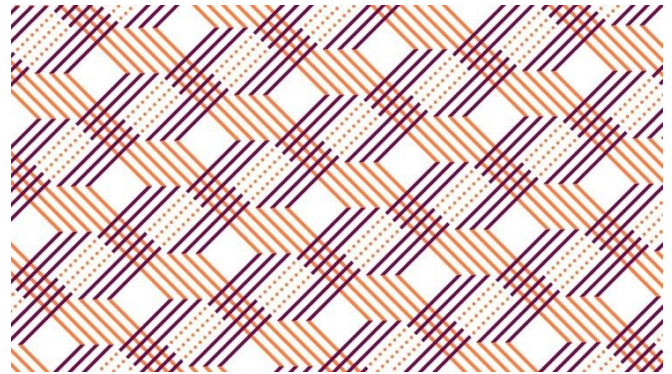
African innovation: There is so much potential

What African countries do *not* lack are young, creative, and motivated start-ups who want to find solutions to local problems. Whether in healthcare, sustainable agricultural technology, education, or urban development—African digital start-ups offer future-oriented products for all sectors. Yet, despite these promising factors, they often can not achieve investment and scaling, enter international cooperation, or gain the trust of large corporate partners. As a result, the innovative ideas—of which there are many—rarely reach the people.

In addition, the existing supportive environments of innovation enablers (e.g. networked innovation hubs or well-

developed association structures) still need further support to refine their services and improve collaboration on all levels. Furthermore, the state framework conditions for setting up a company or getting patent rights are largely lacking in many African regions.

For empowered entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems, all these loose ends must be connected and channeled. To achieve this goal, Make-IT in Africa and its partners work in different areas and on different levels at the same time.



The power of collaboration: Co-designing African #InnovationEcosystems

With our partners' and our own experience, we co-create a strong foundation for innovation by empowering #InnovationEcosystems. From start-ups to innovation enablers to policymakers, everyone needs to get actively involved. What start-ups need often correlates with what innovation enablers offer. But if they are not connected, it is hard to create synergies. Both types of actors are in many ways dependent on the policy frameworks in which they operate. Therefore, it is even more important to work with all relevant ecosystem actors at the same time and towards a common goal.

Against this background of a holistic approach, we implement support measures for start-ups as well as intermediaries and policy makers. In the right environment, every ecosystem actor can thrive. Start-ups can develop digital solutions to create impactful change. To do so, we offer them trustworthy support for reaching potential partners, acquiring the necessary skills and establish access to partners, investors, mentors, and networks. To implement these measures, we work in close cooperation with African and international companies and organisations. In this context, for example, we have established accelerator programmes with partners such as Airbus and Merck, whose experiences offer great value to all beneficiaries.

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African start-ups develop future-oriented digital solutions and products for all sectors.

With more competencies and business opportunities comes the need to network, share ideas, and look for new markets—mostly via innovation enablers. To facilitate the connection of stakeholders and to support hubs or associations in providing start-ups and other ecosystem actors high-quality services, such as co-working spaces, exchange platforms, or the testing of new technologies, we promote the development of networks (e.g. investor networks). Together with our partners, we therefore provide innovation enablers with strategic support, relevant learning tools, advice on resilience building, and more.

Since neither start-ups nor innovation enablers can operate independently of the political framework, it is also important to support the development of political methods and tools for creating an innovation-friendly environment. National and international politics are a vital part of an enabling ecosystem for thriving start-ups in Africa. To connect public and private sector partners in Africa and Europe, we facilitate peer learning and networking and create visibility, for example, through target-group-specific dialogue formats or publicly accessible information on start-up funding policy. Together with partners like the Smart Africa Secretariat and the i4Policy Foundation, we could thus foster ecosystem collaboration and play a supporting role in implementing certain legislations like several Start-Up Acts.

Our approach works—what we have achieved already

We believe that the greatest impact can only be achieved through a systemic approach. The most promising innovations emerge from strong networks and the exchange of knowledge. That is why we are even more proud of our achievements so far.

Start-ups

- 494 start-ups from 26 African countries were supported
- 53% of supported start-ups have women in their founding team
- 100 million Euro investment was raised by supported start-ups

Innovation enablers

- 60 innovation enabler organisations were supported
- 526 professionals/employees of innovation intermediary organisations were supported

Policy makers and framework conditions

- 5 national and pan-African policy frameworks have been co-developed

Connecting dots in the #InnovationEcosystem

- 276 mentors have been matched with start-ups
- 8 joint accelerators were implemented with (international) corporate partners
- 68 investor pitch events have been organised
- 72% of ecosystem stakeholders confirm improved framework conditions
- 79% of ecosystem stakeholders confirm improved collaboration in their ecosystem

Impact of the supported Start-ups

- 4,015 jobs were maintained or created in the supported start-ups
- 12 products were scaled internationally

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