A CONVENING IN BRUSSELS | 30 NOVEMBER – 1 DECEMBER 2026

Innovation Districts and a Competitive Europe

Europe has set a clear direction on competitiveness, innovation and economic security. The challenge now is delivery. Innovation districts – dense, walkable urban geographies of innovation – are active implementers of European ambitions: they bring together research institutions, companies, start-ups, investors, government and talent to turn research into commercial activity, support company growth and advance industrial transformation.

On 30 November and 1 December 2026, innovation districts from across Europe will meet in Brussels with EU policymakers, cities, research institutions, industry, investors and delivery partners to show what districts deliver, identify what limits their impact, and inform emerging EU approaches.

WHY NOW

Europe is moving from strategy to implementation. The 2028–2034 EU budget has been proposed, including a new European Competitiveness Fund and a strengthened Horizon Europe, but their final design and delivery are still open. This is the moment to connect these choices with evidence from the places already building Europe's innovation ecosystems.

DAY 1 Monday 30 November

Policy meets place | A workshop with EU policymakers

09:15 – 10:00	**Registration and coffee**
10:00 – 10:20	**Welcome** GIID and GIID Europe on innovation districts as a supportive implementation arm of EU policy.
10:20 – 11:00	**Innovation districts: A global and European phenomenon** The global innovation district phenomenon, where they align with EU priorities and where stronger alignment can unlock new opportunities.
11:00 – 11:20	**Break**
11:20 – 12:10	**District voices** District leaders share the challenges they face, how they intervene and the impact. The room identifies gaps limiting districts' – and Europe's – ambitions. *All participants can share input in real time through an online platform.*
12:10 – 12:40	**EU representative introduction** Representatives from DG RTD, DG GROW, DG EMPL, EIC and EIT introduce themselves and give quick reactions.
12:40 – 13:35	**Standing lunch with EU representatives**
13:35 – 14:00	**How strategic investment drives national and inclusive local growth** A fireside chat with The Crown Estate and GIID on the impact of a national platform for innovation: why innovation ecosystems are stronger together, and the implications on the national and local scale.
14:00 – 14:50	**Innovation district impact on the local level** City government leaders on how innovation districts help take on specific challenges and the impact districts create for their city.
14:50 – 15:10	**Break**
15:10 – 16:30	**Strengthening the link between districts and the EU** DG RTD, DG REGIO, and DG GROW dive deeper on where EU priorities and district delivery could be strengthened and how. *All participants can share input in real time through an online platform.*
16:30 – 17:00	**Report and synthesise** Rapporteurs draw out initial priorities for a European action agenda for innovation districts. Attendees respond.
17:00 – 18:30	**Networking reception**

DAY 2 Tuesday 1 December

From dialogue to action | Collaboration, priorities and next steps

For innovation districts and district partners

08:30 – 09:00	**Arrival and coffee** Registration for Day 2 attendees; time to pick up conversations and set meetings.	
09:00 – 09:15	**Welcome: carrying Day 1 forward** GIID synthesis of what we heard on Day 1.	
09:15 – 09:30	**Opening remarks** Isidro Laso Ballesteros, DG Research and Innovation, draws on Day 1 with a call to action: how districts can organise differently to reach a new level of outcomes and impact.	
09:30 – 11:30 *Parallel tracks*	DISTRICT LEADERS **District-to-district exchange** Matched conversations between districts with similar institutions or shared challenges, with time for open networking and follow-ups.	PARTNERS **Partner workshop** A large group workshop on action agenda priorities, early revenue streams, and options for structuring a Brussels-based alliance or entity.
11:30 – 12:15	**Signing of the Innovation District Declaration** Participating districts sign the Declaration in person.	
12:15 – 13:15	**Lunch and open networking** Partners join district leaders for open networking over lunch.	
13:15 – 14:25	**How do districts maintain a voice in Brussels?** An open discussion on how districts can engage more intentionally in Europe, reflecting on the top priorities for an action agenda and how the work is shaped in Brussels.	
14:25 – 14:30	**Closing**	

Convening goals

- **Demonstrate delivery:** show how districts integrate research, industry, government, investment and talent to move ideas to market.
- **Surface accomplishments and barriers:** identify what works and what still slows commercialisation, company growth and industrial transformation.
- **Inform EU choices still being shaped:** examine where emerging programmes and instruments align with district realities, and where refinements could increase impact.
- **Connect districts across Europe:** find practical opportunities for collaboration, investment and company scaling across European markets.
- **Build a European action agenda:** define a focused set of priorities that strengthen the role of innovation districts in Europe.

Outcomes beyond the convening

- The Innovation District Declaration, signed in person by participants.
- A shared European action agenda for innovation districts, refined by participating districts and partners.
- Clear recommendations on where EU instruments could better connect with place-based innovation ecosystems.
- Early direction on a Brussels-based alliance or entity to represent innovation districts.

Agenda, speakers and timings are subject to change.

EU policy references reflect the status of European Commission proposals as of September 2026 and remain subject to the applicable EU legislative and budgetary processes.