



## An incubator for our commons?

One of the issues addressed in the citywide ULG, and also in the Urbact program "Refill" is the need for legal-administrative support of the commons. That's why we want to find out how we can install an 'administrative-legal incubator' in Ghent. This incubator idea stems from the findings and experiences of the Citizen's Budget.

The 'citizen budget' project took place in 2017 and gave local initiatives the opportunity to claim part of the city budget to set up their own initiatives. Many initiatives had to set up an association for this purpose, which was not always that simple. The evaluation note of the Citizen's Budget states the following about this:

*"Once it is clear which projects will be realized, concrete, multidisciplinary project support from the City is required, both initiators and colleagues from city services agree. For example, the fact that a number of operations first had to put 'their papers' in order has certainly caused the necessary stress, anxiety and delay".*

*"For these legal-administrative tasks, a script with information or some start-up advice on insurances, permits, legal entities, finances, ... would have been useful. But even better there is "something like a start-up-labo where you can go with all your questions".*

*"Such concrete support, supported by a number of crucial services of the City, could also have tempered the sometimes mutual distrust," says one of the initiators. "We could have learned more from each other", another thinks, "because at the start of such a project you as a project submitter do not always think about what could be involved".*

## Points of attention

> An 'administrative-legal incubator' is preferably a kind of a 'not-for-profit' of the starting organizations, where district budget-holders can address concrete questions on a business, administrative and legal level (e.g. organization-legislation, accounting, insurance, ...), and



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where they are given the time to grow; it is 'a service provider for starting citizens' initiatives' that offers support (for a limited period of time) in a number of administrative-legal tasks.

> It is wise to roll out this 'administrative-legal incubator' initially only for one neighbourhood, or for example for the new project “Neighbourhood Budget” (= Citizen’s Budget 2.0). In this way we keep it limited and well-organised.

> The role of incubator can only be performed by an external partner. After all, as a City it is **impossible to be both a provider of subsidies and a supporter**; the City cannot place itself in a competitive position in relation to other (paying) consultants, umbrella organisations, ..... However, the City can work through a public contract for e.g. x FTE(s) for x-number of months with partner x; or by splitting x-number of tasks for partner x, y, z, ... These avenues require further research.

> The cabinets of Mayor De Clercq and vice-mayor De Bruycker may now have offered room to set this up within the framework of the district budget, but for the time being no budget has been provided for this. However, without an extra budget such an incubator is impossible to realize.

In the next few months we will discuss with a few experts and commoners to further shape this idea.

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