Hackathon challenge description from METACITIES Excellence Hub in Southeastern Europe

'Innovative technology-driven solutions for smart cities technologies: Shape the future of European Municipalities!'

Welcome to the METACITIES Joint Hackathon for students, young researchers and entrepreneurs who want to think creatively and develop innovative solutions! This hackathon aims to explore new tools and procedures for municipalities and regional governments that meet the specific needs for safe and inclusive mobility, energy efficient buildings and sustainable urban planning in changing city environments.

Taking into account the following challenges and needs for optimization in urban areas:

- Strategic design and implementation of innovative solutions for smart cities and regions integrating the research outcomes of digital twins and metaverse technology
- Feasible short-term demonstrations and testing of optimized technologies and infrastructures required to support reliable, cost-effective and sustainable plans for Southeastern European municipalities (especially in Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria)
- Evidence-based research on digital transformation in cities which may have an impact on citizens (including people with disabilities), entrepreneurs/businesses and regional authorities in terms of accessibility, inclusion, safety and energy saving

We invite you to contribute your ideas and develop innovative concepts that address the following questions:

- How can cities and regions become "smarter" by adopting technologies such as digital twins and metaverse?
- What innovative solutions would you suggest in daily operations and community activities to improve mobility, energy efficiency in buildings or appropriate urban planning to optimize several aspects in the cities you live in?
- How would you promote your solution for the empowerment of city/region innovation even at an initial level of maturity?
- What innovative business models could you develop to offer environmentally friendly products and services to stakeholders that would invest into them?

Think creatively and develop innovative ideas that not only fulfil the above criteria, but also take into account the geographical area of Southeastern Europe, the EU policies and the available toolkits.

Whether you are an entrepreneur or you are studying/ carrying out research in fields related to digital technologies and smart cities (e.g. engineering, economics/business/marketing, environmental sciences etc.) your perspectives and ideas are needed. Take the opportunity to actively contribute to the digital transformation of cities and regions and help us shape a sustainable, reliable and cost-efficient future. The challenge not only offers you the opportunity to develop your creative concepts, but also to exchange ideas with like-minded people and learn from experts. We're looking forward to your innovative solutions!

SMALL-GROUP PITCHING WITH NABC

NABC: a structure for pitching

The most important element of a pitch is the presentation of the offer in a way that stimulates the interest of the target audience. A simple, but powerful, tool to make sure the important parts are present within a pitch is the NABC structure. NABC was developed by the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) and is one of the cornerstones of their innovation process.

The pitch should address the following questions:

- What is the market's/ target audience's important **Need** that you will address?
- What is your **Approach** to addressing this need?
- What are the **Benefits** of this approach for the market/ target audience?
- Are there **Competitors** also addressing this need? If so, how is your approach better or complimentary?

When using the NABC for a pitch, you should start with an opening **Hook** - often a counter-intuitive or surprising fact related to your topic - to catch people's attention, and end with an **Offer**, which is a succinct summary of the value of your proposed activity.

The body of the pitch is the **Need** you meet; the **Benefit** your **Approach** gives the recipient and an indication of what **Competition** is present. It is not necessary, or recommended, to spend equal time on each element of NABC in your pitch; all should be covered, but you must emphasise what is most relevant in your case.

You should practice your pitch to give you the confidence to adapt it to different settings (place, time, audience). If you get less time to pitch than the standard **four minutes** of NABC, then the main focus should be to get the audience's attention and make them sufficiently interested to ask for more information later. If you get more time to pitch, start with getting the audience's attention and use the time to go more in-depth. Always use all the time you get.

Repeated practice is the key. Start with typing your pitch, then read it out loud and time it. Keep practising until you get a feel for how long the different parts of your pitch take to present.