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## **BERLIN CAN BE A ‘MAGNET FOR ENTREPRENEURS’ – IF LEADERS WORK TOGETHER TO ENCOURAGE INNOVATION**

**Think-tank 2020Plus to help Berlin attract new creative businesses to place the city at the heart of the innovation revolution.**

Berlin is well positioned to become a magnet for young entrepreneurs – given forward-looking leadership that encourages innovation, according to international think-tank 2020Plus.

Social futurist Mal Fletcher believes Berlin can have a bright future as a regional hub of innovation, which is attractive to young entrepreneurs. He will be unveiling his vision of how that could happen to civic and business leaders at *2020Plus Berlin* on May 22.



Fletcher, an innovation expert, will spell out the factors that could position Berlin for future success. These include the current growth in the internet technologies sector and the need to further develop research in cutting-edge areas such as nanorobotics.

The key to success, he believes, is to create an environment that will attract forward-thinking small to medium-sized businesses and help them scale up their reach. However, Fletcher cautions that ‘*innovation hub*’ status can only be achieved through hard work and vision.

*‘At 2020Plus we’ve studied the developments of innovation hubs in various parts of Europe and the US. Although Berlin is showing signs of attracting startups and entrepreneurs, its future is uncertain. The city has an ageing population and a perceived lack of opportunity when it comes to new businesses, because of bureaucratic procedures and a shortage of affordable housing for younger people.’*

*‘In the international examples we’ve studied, civic, business and third sector leaders got together to establish a culture of innovation in which creative people could flourish. They set out to engage young entrepreneurs who would bring in the creativity and risk-friendly attitudes so essential to growth. And that is a key lesson for Berlin.’*

Berlin’s future young entrepreneurs have two basic needs that city leaders must meet, he



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believes. The first is the support and stability they need to grow. The second is a culture that will encourage opportunity, inventiveness and forward-thinking.

Leaders need to show these young entrepreneurs that Berlin is open to new business and social enterprise. And that comes down to more than just logistics and infrastructure. *'It's about establishing the right culture in business and civic life – which is the key role of leadership,'* says Fletcher.

He adds: *'Innovation cultures quickly go viral. They spread rapidly, particularly among the "millennial generation", aged 18 to 30. These are the people who have embraced global digital communications. They're eager to work with their peers on developing solutions and telling their stories. They're looking for opportunities to collaborate in creative, problem-solving enterprises.'*

Capital cities hold attractions for the 'millennial generation', including the opportunity to experience risk and collaboration, which are vital to personal and economic growth, says Fletcher. A good example is the Berlin-based 6Wunderkinder group, creator of the to-do app "Wunderlist", voted last year's Mac App of the Year.

Berlin could also learn from the so-called Silicon Fen in Cambridge, UK. It has a reputation for innovation in the technology sector. While there are differences in scale with Berlin, it is the culture of the Silicon Fen, not its size, that is often cited as a reason for success.

*'It has a reputation for people who are helpful to start-up companies,'* says Fletcher. *'And that could be even more true of Berlin, especially given this city's global reach. Civic and business leaders in innovation hub cities recognise that young entrepreneurs are crucial to building the innovation cultures that guarantee a bigger future. Understanding the unique mindset and skills they bring to an area is essential.'*

*'When enough leaders really set their minds to build innovation cultures, we see the emergence of innovation ecosystems. And it's then that the tone of a region changes, from one of benchmarking and maintaining the status quo, to one which brings meaningful change for the common good.'*

Mal Fletcher, who is the chairman of think-tank 2020Plus, will be speaking to civic and business leaders in Berlin about 'Engaging the Millennial Generation through Innovation', at 2020Plus Berlin on May 22 09.00-12.00 at AMANO Rooftop Conference Centre – Rosenthaler Straße 63, 10119 Berlin, hosted by Futureminded Group.

For more details, please see <http://2020plus.net/berlin> and <http://www.future-minded.de/2020plus/>.



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### **About Futureminded Group:**

Futureminded Group ([www.future-minded.de](http://www.future-minded.de)) is a Berlin-based think-tank founded in 2013 that combines research on the challenges the city of Berlin faces with concrete projects supporting positive social change. The think-tank's approach focuses on how social entrepreneurship and leadership innovation can be applied in different sectors to contribute to the well-being of society as a whole. Projects linked to Futureminded Group are the City Kindness Partnerships involving the coordination of volunteers to benefit struggling KITAS, elderly homes, immigrant centers and community hubs as well as the fashion project redco. transforming broken materials into fashion pieces for a social cause.

Further projects are a local campaign to support charity:water, an innovative non-profit organisation based in New York bringing clean drinking water to people in developing countries, and the 2020Plus Berlin Event helping business and civic leaders identify opportunities for building a better future for Berlin. The team consists of 13 researchers, project and event managers from different cultural and educational backgrounds.

### **Notes to the editor:**

For further information or to arrange an interview with Mal Fletcher, please call Linda Guddat of Futureminded Group. Pictures of Mal Fletcher, video and stills of 2020Plus events can be downloaded [here](#).



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