

Interreg



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A4SUSTINNO

IPA ADRION

Good Practice Cases Supporting Start-ups and SMEs





INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Adriatic-Ionian region has witnessed a growing recognition of the need to strengthen its innovation ecosystems—especially in less-developed areas where support structures for startups and SMEs are often fragmented or under-resourced. The A4SUSTINNO project (A distributed one-stop shop FOR more SUsustainable STartups and INNOvative SMEs) addresses this common challenge through a novel, distributed, and transnational approach to business support. Funded under the Interreg IPA ADRION programme (Priority SO 1.1), A4SUSTINNO brings together nine partners from eight countries, representing a rich diversity of regional innovation ecosystems. These include science and technology parks, universities, regional development agencies, centre for entrepreneurship, chambers of craft and small business, and public authorities:

| |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| LP1 – PATRAS SCIENCE PARK S.A. (PSP) form Greece, |
| PP2 – Nuovo Circondario Imolese (NCI) from Emilia-Romagna Region, Italy, |
| PP3 – Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region (FVGAR) from Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region, Italy, |
| PP4 – Centre for Entrepreneurship (CZP) from Croatia, |
| PP5 – Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia (OZS) from Slovenia, |
| PP6 – University of Sarajevo (UNSA) from Bosnia and Herzegovina, |
| PP7 – Regional economic development agency for Sumadija and Pomoravlje (REDASP) from Serbia, |
| PP8 – AULEDA - Local Economic Development Agency, Vlora Region (AULEDA) from Albania, |
| PP9 – University of Donja Gorica (UDG) from Montenegro. |

Together, they aim to develop and pilot a highly replicable business model aimed at boosting the innovation potential of startups and SMEs by embedding sustainability and quality management (QM) into acceleration and training programs. One of the project’s core achievements will be the establishment of Distributed Local Networks (DLNs)—multi-actor hubs built on the quadruple-helix model—operating in each partner region. These DLNs will enable knowledge exchange, matchmaking, and capacity-building through an innovative digital one-stop-shop platform. This platform will be designed to diagnose the needs of startups and SMEs and match them with tailored training modules, co-developed across borders. To support this effort, a Good Practices Guide has been created, presenting insights and transferable examples from each of the nine partner regions. These good practices reflect real-world experiences in:

- **designing and implementing sustainable acceleration programs,**
- **developing context-specific tools and methodologies,**
- **engaging stakeholders in policy design,**
- **promoting cross-sectoral collaboration,**
- **strengthening local ecosystems through international cooperation.**

By highlighting these practices, the guide not only captures the rich diversity of approaches across the ADRION area but also demonstrates how transnational collaboration can lead to scalable and sustainable innovation support mechanisms. The aim is to inspire and inform other regions, policymakers, and support organizations who are striving to enhance the resilience and sustainability of their own innovation landscapes.



Good Practice Cases Supporting Start-ups and SMEs

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| ITALY | 12 |
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GREECE



Proof of Concept

A Proof of Concept (PoC) is a demonstration or type of evidence deriving from an experiment, design idea, assumption or pilot project, which main purpose is to verify that certain concepts, business proposals or theories have the potential to turn into a reality application. A proof of concept is meant to determine the feasibility of the idea or to verify that the idea will function as envisioned.

PoC is sometimes also known as proof of principle.

A proof of concept is not intended to explore market demand for the idea, nor is it intended to determine the best production process. Instead, its focus is to test whether the idea is viable. In software development, for example, a proof of concept would show whether an idea is feasible from a technology standpoint. For startups, a proof of concept would demonstrate financial viability.



Patras
Science
Park

Επιστημονικό
Πάρκο
Πατρών

"PROOF OF CONCEPT"



PLAY VIDEO
IN BROWSER



WHY IS IT NEEDED?

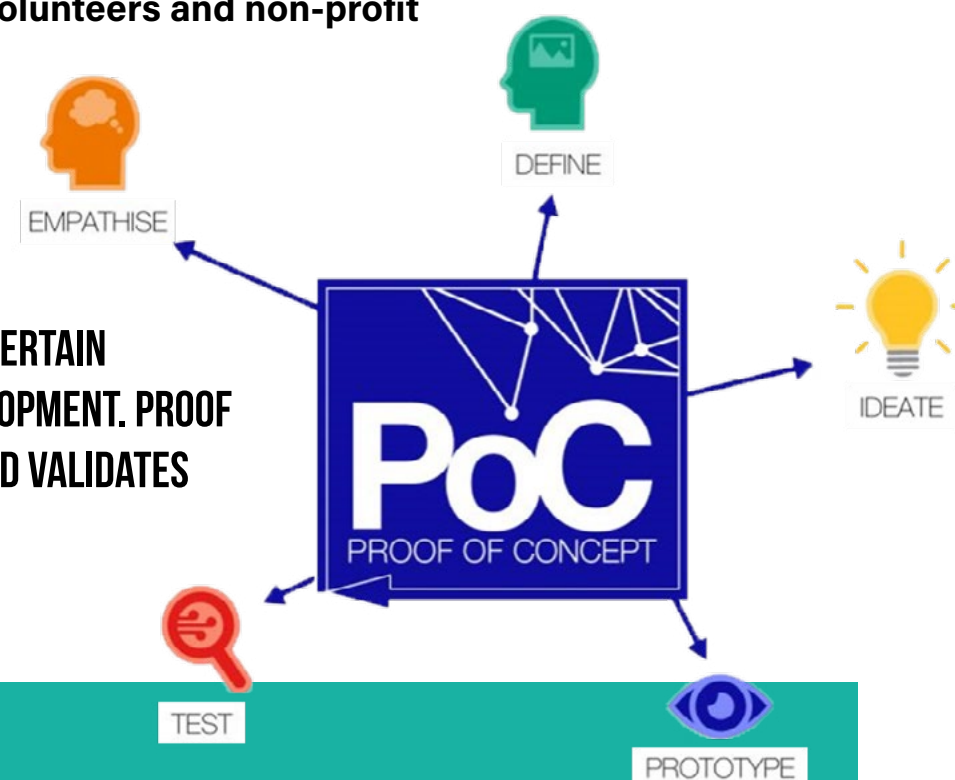
An effective proof of concept (PoC) bridges the gap between expectations and reality. Most intellectual properties/technologies are very early-stage and require further development for technology transfer.

Proof of Concept (PoC) financing can facilitate the validation (prototype, demonstrator, proof of market, etc.) and assessment of commercialization options for technologies developed within Public/ Private Research Organisations (PROs) and micro-enterprises/SMEs all over in Greece, through:

- Licensing procedures for a new or existing company, or
- Financing a start-up company by venture capital, taking into consideration the nature of the idea, the potential of the market and the plan of the inventors. Innovations that will mature will be channeled to investors but also to social and environmental stakeholders, including social entrepreneurs, volunteers and non-profit organizations.

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF POC?

THE MAIN GOAL OF DEVELOPING A POC IS TO DEMONSTRATE THE FUNCTIONALITY AND TO VERIFY A CERTAIN CONCEPT OR THEORY THAT CAN BE ACHIEVED IN DEVELOPMENT. PROOF OF CONCEPT APPROVES THAT IT CAN BE DEVELOPED AND VALIDATES THE TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY.



OBJECTIVES OF POC

PoC projects can thus aim at verifying the potential for the realization of commercial innovations (such as a new or significantly improved product, process, service or method of production) and/or societal innovations (novel solutions that can reduce or radically solve a relevant social need). Such novel solutions include new products, processes or services, but also new principles, a new piece of legislation, a new social movement, an intervention or a new form of participation, for instance.



Working on Business Model Canvas

A PROOF OF CONCEPT PROGRAM WILL HELP THE GRANTED TEAMS AMONG OTHERS TO:

Establish viability, technical issues and overall direction

Clarify IPR position and strategy

Provide feedback for budgeting and other forms of commercial discussion

Provide connections to later stage funding

Cover initial expenses for establishing a company

Provide early-stage financial support to address, in particular, the “gap” between Technology Readiness Levels 3 and 4: Proof of Concept and Laboratory Validation

Provide support to a range of ancillary activities that can advance Technology Readiness Levels and accelerate technologies to a point where they are “Investment Ready”

Increase the capacity of researchers and intermediaries to identify robust routes to market and build strong commercialisation strategies

Encourage knowledge exchange and technology transfer across and beyond the region



POC 1st round awards





SHORT-TERM RESULTS / KPIS OF POC

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 75 APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED AND 83 JUDGES | 8 GRANTED PROJECTS IN COMMERCIALIZATION PROCESS |
| 10 WORKSHOPS | RAISING TRL FROM 1 AND 2 TO 4 OR 5 |
| € 50.000/12 MONTHS TYPICAL FUNDING | 7 NEW RECRUITMENTS |
| 1 COLLABORATION BETWEEN STARTUPS | COOPERATION WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR |

Go To Market Strategy

Μέσα από την οπτική του Sales Funnel
(Από την Θεωρία στην Πράξη)

Δημήτρης Παξιμάδης – Παντελής Κονταξάκης

Σεπτέμβριος 2020

PLAY VIDEO
IN BROWSER

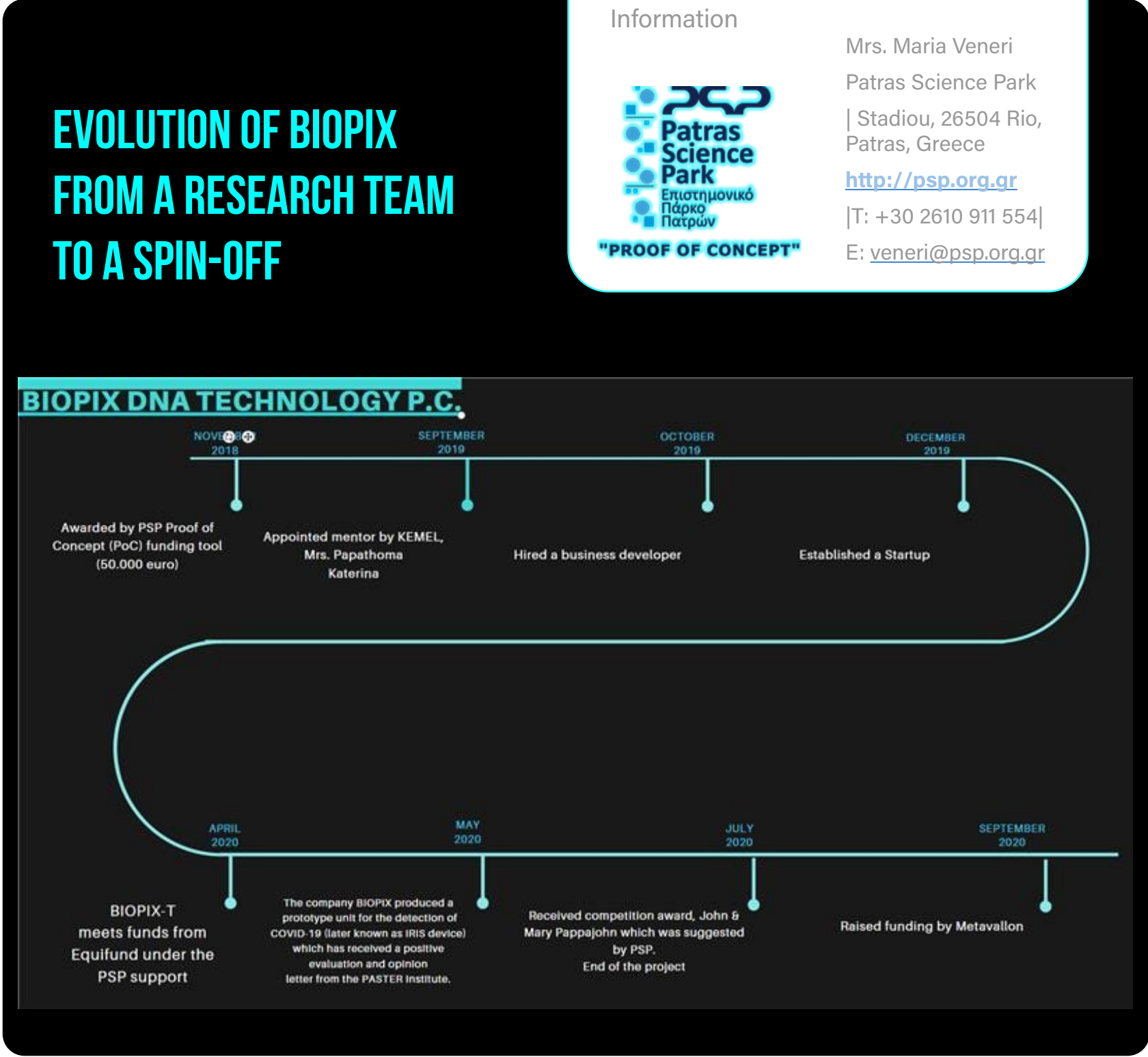


SUCCESS STORY

BioPix-T funded by the Equity fund Metavallon, VC, one year after the end of the PoC programme.



ANDREAS MENTZELOPOULOS
FOUNDATION





ITALY

Nuovo Circondario Imolese

Officina Digitale Imola represents a dynamic response to the local and regional challenges of fostering innovation, retaining young talent, and bridging the gap between education and enterprise. Established originally in 2015 and formalized as a consortium in 2021, Officina Digitale is more than just an incubator: it is a collaborative ecosystem where education meets industry, and ideas grow into sustainable businesses.

THE CHALLENGE

The Imola area, despite its industrial strength, has historically faced difficulties in engaging youth in local economic development and in integrating innovation into traditional sectors. Many start-ups struggle to find structured support, while companies lack access to fresh, agile entrepreneurial ideas. Furthermore, the region contends with a digital skills gap and brain drain of young talent.

THE SOLUTION

Officina Digitale was born to reverse these trends. It brings together schools, start-ups, and established companies through a distributed incubation model. Start-ups are embedded within corporate environments, receiving real-time feedback, mentorship, and technical resources. After the incubation period, the host companies may invest in or adopt the start-up solutions, while the entrepreneurs continue independently, empowered with experience and connections.

**LOW YOUTH ENGAGEMENT
IN LOCAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

**LACK OF STRUCTURED SUPPORT
FOR START-UPS**

**DIGITAL SKILLS GAP AND BRAIN
DRAIN OF YOUNG TALENT**

**CREATION OF A DISTRIBUTED
INCUBATION MODEL LINKING
SCHOOLS, START-UPS, AND
COMPANIES**

**EMBEDDING START-UPS IN
CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTS
WITH ACCESS TO MENTORSHIP,
RESOURCES, AND REAL-TIME
FEEDBACK**

**PROVIDING HANDS-ON
EXPERIENCE AND
PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS TO
RETAIN TALENT AND FOSTER
DIGITAL AND ENTREPRENEURIAL
COMPETENCIES**



Educational integration

Shared innovation

Business mentorship

Regional integration

KEY ACTIVITIES

Mentorship and training programs combining business strategy and technical development

Integration of start-ups into host companies for hands-on incubation

Support for digital transformation and sustainability practices

Promotion of alternative financing models (e.g., microfinance, crowdfunding) as needed

STAKEHOLDERS ROLES:

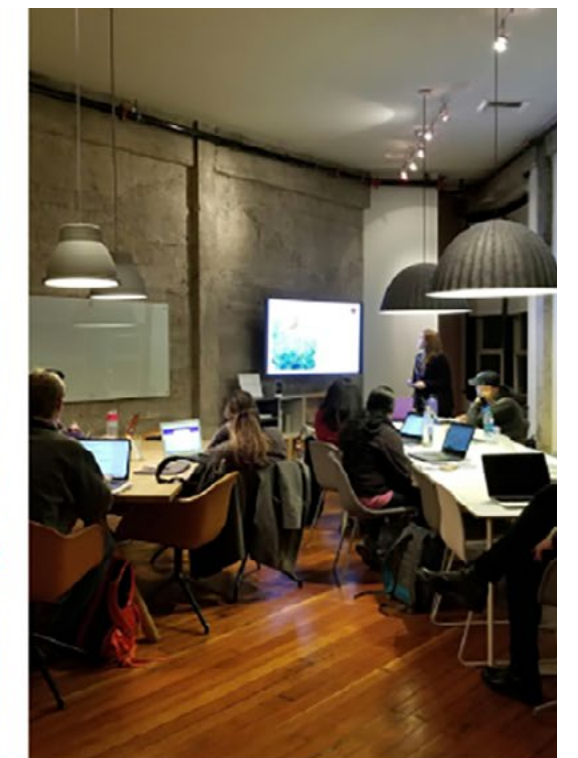
Overview

Corporate Partners (e.g., Cefla, CLAI, SACMI): Provide facilities, funding, and business expertise

Educational Institutions (Polo Tecnologico Imola, local schools): Train students and promote entrepreneurial mindsets

ART-ER: Acts as the regional anchor for innovation and scalability

Start-ups: Engage in real-world learning and business development



WHY IS THIS A GOOD PRACTICE?

Officina Digitale fosters strong collaboration between the business world and emerging entrepreneurs. It successfully addresses the region's need to modernize industrial sectors, develop digital competencies, and retain young professionals. The model ensures mutual benefit: companies access innovative solutions and talent, while start-ups receive concrete support.

Strong Collaboration

Mutual Benefits

Regional Relevance



“AT OFFICINA DIGITALE, OUR MISSION IS TO FOSTER INNOVATION IN IMOLA BY BUILDING A HUB WHERE START-UPS AND BUSINESS IDEAS CAN TAKE ROOT, GROW, AND THRIVE. THE COBO POWER UP INCUBATION PROGRAM IS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO ATTRACT YOUNG ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURES AND HELP THEM BRING THEIR IDEAS TO LIFE. THROUGH A NETWORK OF EXPERTS AND A COLLABORATIVE ECOSYSTEM, SELECTED START-UPS WILL GAIN ACCESS TO CUTTING-EDGE RESOURCES AND A VIBRANT ENVIRONMENT WHERE INNOVATION CAN TURN INTO REAL, SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS. THIS COMMITMENT TO INNOVATION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT NOT ONLY DRIVES ECONOMIC GROWTH BUT ALSO HELPS SHAPE A DYNAMIC AND INTERCONNECTED COMMUNITY—READY TO FACE FUTURE CHALLENGES WITH CREATIVITY AND RESILIENCE.

DAVIDE BARONCINI: GENERAL DIRECTOR, OFFICINA DIGITALE IMOLA

IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Economic: Encourages start-up creation, strengthens local business ecosystems

Environmental: Supports enterprises in adopting sustainable processes

Social: Trains local youth in digital skills, entrepreneurship, and collaborative innovation

Policy: Recognized by ART-ER as an official accelerator supporting Emilia-Romagna's innovation strategy



FUTURE GOALS

Regional Tech
Ecosystem

Sustainability focus

Talent Retention

European integration

Contact information

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EUREKA Fair of Culture and Creativity

CLEAR PROBLEM SOLUTION

Context:

Since the last decade, the role of CCIs in the European economy has grown, producing several policies on the topic on different levels. Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region, thanks to the Department for culture and sports, is involved in the growth path of CCIs as a regional government authority, because of the strong economic value in the regional ecosystem. Working on promoting and supporting local CCIs with different policies, partnerships and projects, many of them developed at a cross-border level, the Department raised an initiative to enhance CCIs and their economic asset.

The challenge was to support CCIs in becoming aware of their potential in the local economic path. The concept of Eureka was born as part of European project which ambition was to create a stable and long-term ecosystem where CCIs and other stakeholders could meet and learn from each other. The solution to value CCIs' production system came out as a fair, a dynamic platform where to bring together the cultural and creative industries, make them expose their products and competencies, and meet with other SMEs.

The action resulted in a growth and upskilling opportunity for all the participants and laid the foundations for future cross-sectoral collaborations to create innovation and have opportunity for business.

That is how Eureka - Fair of culture and creativity came into the world, and thanks to the resounding success of the first edition Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region established to stabilise the concept of the Fair, that is going to show up with its 3rd edition 2026 in Pordenone.



THE SOLUTION Eureka fair – first regional fair of culture and creativity

On the 20th and 21st of January 2022, the Department for Culture and Sport of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region launched Eureka, the region's first fair dedicated to culture and creativity. Held at the Pordenone fairground, the event brought together cultural and creative industries (CCIs) from across the region, marking a key moment for the sector's development.

The two-day fair featured morning conferences with national experts discussing European, national, and regional policies, as well as major trends and innovations in the sector. On the second day, a business-to-business session connected CCIs with traditional companies to foster collaboration and new growth opportunities.

The event served as a valuable learning and networking opportunity, covering topics such as the economic impact of CCIs, policy support, European best practices, and emerging technologies. It also sparked early-stage collaborations and idea development among diverse actors.



RESULTS OF THE 1ST EDITION OF EUREKA FAIR:



Thanks to the success achieved by EUREKA - the first regional culture and creativity fair, the Regional Government of Friuli Venezia Giulia established to transform Eureka into a stable and permanent initiative to be held every two years and also to create a one-day intermediate event between two editions of the fair, which was called Eureka Day, that was suggested by the local stakeholders and companies.

Eureka Day 2023

Eureka day 2023 was held on October 13, 2023, at Villa Manin in Passariano. The theme of was set as “Culture and Creativity 4.0” and was by invitation only for regional CCIs and SMEs. The day was structured around two core activities: a morning conference focused on emerging trends and technical topics, and an afternoon of B2B meetings designed to connect professionals and spark new business opportunities. Beyond its strong turnout, the event emphasized the growing economic role of the cultural and creative sector, aiming to strengthen the local production system and boost the competitiveness and skills of regional CCIs on both national and international levels.

RESULTS OF THE 1ST EDITION OF EUREKA DAY:





Eureka fair 2024

Keeping all this experience in mind, the regional Department for Culture and Sports organized the 2nd edition of the Fair of culture and creativity in 2024.

Eureka 2024, which took place in the Pordenone fairground on 29th and 30th October 2024, continued to develop and innovate the concept of the fair. In fact, with this edition, Eureka opened the possibility for companies operating out of Italy to join the fair.

RESULTS OF THE 2ND EDITION OF EUREKA FAIR:





REGIONE AUTONOMA
FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA



EUREKA 2024
FAIR OF CULTURE AND CREATIVITY

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Eureka Fair was conceived to enhance the economic impact of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region. Born from the SACHE project, funded by the Interreg Central Europe Programme (2014-2020), Eureka aims to create a stable and long-term ecosystem where CCIs and other companies can meet, collaborate, and innovate. With its second edition, the fair continues to serve as a dynamic platform to showcase the products and competencies of CCIs, fostering growth and upskilling opportunities for all participants.

EUREKA 2024

Dates: October 29-30, 2024
Location: Pordenone Fairground, Italy

Highlights

- Exhibition Hall:** Up to 100 CCIs showcasing their products and innovations.
- Conference:** Morning sessions with technical experts and successful entrepreneurs discussing the impact of culture and creativity on the economy, new trends, and technologies.
- Workshops:** Technical workshops on the latest tools to raise business competencies and examples of best practices in the cultural and creative sector.
- B2B meetings:** Bilateral business-to-business meetings to foster new synergies and networking opportunities.

Target audience: CCIs, traditional SMEs, technical experts, and entrepreneurs from all over Europe.
Main objective: to support the role of the CCIs sector in Italy, highlighting the value of these enterprises in the local economy.

MEMORIES



PREVIOUS EVENTS

Eureka 2022
Over 75 CCIs participated, resulting in over 200 B2B meetings.

Eureka Day 2023
200 professionals and over 100 companies involved, with more than 400 B2B meetings.

CONTACTS

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In preparation for Eureka Day 2025, the Department for culture and sports of Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region is organizing a series of six meetings to be held in May and June throughout Italy, with an additional meeting in Slovenia in September.

Each event will introduce Eureka Day 2025 and facilitate connections between cultural and creative industries, cultural operators, and traditional businesses.

These meetings aim to kick-start thematic discussions and involve companies from the participating regions in a collaborative process leading up to the event on 3 October 2025.





REGIONE AUTONOMA
FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA

IO SONO FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA

EUREKA

29-30 OTTOBRE 2024
FIERA DI PORDENONE

PLAY VIDEO
IN BROWSER

FIERA NAZIONALE
DELLA CULTURA
E CREATIVITÀ



eurekaexpo.com

STAKEHOLDERS ROLE

The success of the GP initiative is powered by a strong network of key stakeholders, each playing a vital role in bringing the vision to life.

Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region: Institutional leader ensuring governance, strategic alignment, and public support for the initiative.

Pordenone Fiere (Development Partner): Responsible for organizing and structuring the event, facilitating participation, and coordinating with industry stakeholders.

Chambers of Commerce (Pordenone-Udine & Venezia Giulia): Institutional sponsors supporting business engagement, networking opportunities, and facilitating participation of local and international enterprises.

The initiative benefits a wide range of groups. Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) gain business development, networking, and collaboration opportunities with museums and businesses. Museums and cultural institutions become innovation hubs, engaging with CCIs to explore new business models. Local businesses and entrepreneurs access fresh partnerships, investment opportunities, and valuable knowledge-sharing, helping them grow in a changing market. Together, these groups will shape the future of the industry.





WHY WE CHOSE EUREKA AS OUR GOOD PRACTICE?

EUREKA fair stands out as a best practice because it takes a well-rounded approach to boosting innovation, collaboration, and economic growth in the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs). It successfully combines cultural, economic, and tech elements to build a strong and sustainable ecosystem. One of Eureka's key strengths is its involvement of multiple stakeholders. The initiative brings together public bodies, private companies, creatives, and universities, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing. Eureka also helps creative businesses expand internationally by providing them with direct access to clients, investors, and industry experts, supporting cross-border partnerships and market growth. Additionally, Eureka encourages cross-industry innovation by connecting CCIs with sectors like technology, manufacturing, and tourism, sparking new ideas and business models. The event incorporates structured networking activities, such as B2B meetings and workshops, making collaboration more efficient. Eureka places a strong focus on sustainability, promoting environmentally friendly and socially responsible business models within the creative sector. Finally, the Eureka framework is scalable and can be easily adapted to other regions looking to grow their creative economies through collaboration and targeted policies.



COMPANIES PARTICIPATING IN EUREKA 2024 HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE IN DISCUSSIONS, NETWORK WITH OTHER BUSINESSES IN THE INDUSTRY, COLLABORATORS, AND EVEN COMPETITORS. IT'S A CHANCE TO GROW, FIND NEW INSPIRATION, BUILD COLLABORATIONS, AND DISCOVER NEW PATHS FOR CONTINUOUS GROWTH.

FRANCESCO CONTIN, DITEDI – DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY DISTRICT FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA



THE BEST FEATURE OF EUREKA IS ITS ABILITY TO BRING TOGETHER, ON A VERY UNIQUE THEME LIKE CULTURE AND CREATIVITY, MANY DIFFERENT ENTITIES THAT WORK TOGETHER ON A COMMON AND INNOVATIVE TOPIC.

GIULIA TOTIS, 4DODO



VIDEOS:

<https://youtu.be/hQGb-P3waBM?feature=shared>
<https://youtu.be/5Zew0bl-Rq0?feature=shared>

INTERVIEWS, TESTIMONIALS:

[EUREKA 2024 Fiera della Cultura e Creatività – Giulia Todis, 4DODO](#)
[EUREKA 2024 – Francesco Contin, DITEDI – Distretto tecnologie digitali del Friuli Venezia Giulia](#)
[EUREKA 2024 Fiera della Cultura e Creatività – Selina Rosset, TEC4I FVG](#)
[EUREKA 2024 – Mario Anzil, Vicepresidente della Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia](#)
[EUREKA 2024 Fair of Culture and Creativity – Jana Rodic, LiveViewStudio \(Belgrado, Serbia\)](#)

WEB

Eureka Website: <https://www.eurekaexpo.com/>
 Eureka Page on the FVG Autonomous Region website: www.regione.fvg.it/rafvfg/cms/RAFVG/cultura-sport/progetti-bandi-europei/FOGLIA25/
<https://www.regione.fvg.it/rafvfg/cms/RAFVG/cultura-sport/progetti-bandi-europei/FOGLIA19/>
[Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia - Eureka Day 2023](#)
[Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia - Eureka 2022 - Fiera regionale della cultura e della creatività](#)
 YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/@FieraEureka
 Facebook: www.facebook.com/fieraureka
 Instagram: [Fiera \(@eurekafvg\)](#) • Foto e video di Instagram

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CROATIA

ZICER Acceleration Catalysing Innovation and Growth in Croatia's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

The Startup Factory, spearheaded by the Zagreb Innovation Centre (ZICER), represents Croatia's pioneering no-equity startup acceleration initiative. Launched in 2016 and backed by the City of Zagreb, it has evolved into a multifaceted platform supporting technology-oriented startups through a unique blend of educational, financial, and infrastructural resources. It serves as a transformative model for nurturing innovation and entrepreneurial spirit in a transitional economic environment.



OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE

The core mission of Startup Factory is to accelerate the development of early-stage, tech-oriented startups by providing access to mentoring, financial grants, market validation, and visibility among investors and industry stakeholders. Its objective is to bridge the critical early gap in startup development—between having a promising idea and turning it into a marketable product or service.

STARTUP FACTORY COMPRISES THREE TAILORED ACCELERATOR PROGRAMS:

- Startup Factory (for teams or startups under 12 months old)
- Global Growth (for investment-ready software startups <5 years or hardware startups <7 years looking to scale internationally)
- Tech Transfer (for commercialization of innovations stemming from scientific research)

Each of these programs is free of equity and fees, ensuring accessibility and fairness. Selected startups benefit from grant funding—drawn from a €300,000 annual fund from the City of Zagreb—alongside structured mentorship and use of ZICER's cutting-edge facilities.





IMPLEMENTATION AND EVOLUTION

Since its inception, Startup Factory has seen sustained growth. Originating as a pilot project of the Zagreb Development Agency in 2016, the program partnered with top academic and industrial entities, including IBM Croatia, FER (Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing), SmartIS, and the University of Zagreb. The initiative rapidly gained momentum. A dedicated 7,313 m² facility—equipped with 118 modular offices and six high-tech labs—was completed in 2018, marking a key infrastructural milestone. Over the years, new tracks like Tech Transfer (2024) and Global Growth (2023) were added, responding to the evolving needs of Croatia’s innovation ecosystem. By 2025, ZICER was running 230+ educational events annually, with 50+ expert mentors and over 120 teams supported overall.

ADDRESSING A CRITICAL GAP IN STARTUP FINANCING

Startup Factory emerged in response to significant structural gaps in Croatia’s support ecosystem. Due to complex criteria, most Croatian startups lack access to European funds, especially during early development. The ZICER model, funded municipally, offers more flexible, startup-friendly financing—including microgrants and convertible loans—often the only viable lifeline for fledgling ventures. Crucially, ZICER provides opportunity where other instruments fall short. It champions early-stage innovators—those with just a concept and vision—helping transform abstract ideas into viable enterprises.



PLAY VIDEO
IN BROWSER



RESULTS AND IMPACT

Since launch, ZICER Acceleration program has awarded over €1.000,000 in funding, organized 200+ workshops and events, and mentored more than 140 teams. Its portfolio includes startups innovating in AI, robotics, green technologies, ICT, healthcare, sustainable transport, and tourism. Many of these have become globally competitive, showcasing Croatian innovation on the world stage.

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| €1.000,000 IN FUNDING | 200+ WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS |
| 140 TEAMS MENTORED | 176 PROMOTIONAL EVENTS ORGANIZED |
| 2,123 MENTORING PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS | STARTUPS INNOVATING AI, ROBOTICS, GREEN TECHNOLOGIES, ICT, HEALTHCARE, SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, AND TOURISM |

THE PROGRAMS OFFER TANGIBLE OUTCOMES:

- Startup Factory teams develop business plans, refine MVPs, receive PR support, and pitch to investors.
- Global Growth refine international strategies and engage in B2B matchmaking globally.
- Tech Transfer provide support for scientific research projects, helping bridge the gap between academia and business.

The socio-economic ripple effects are substantial. Participating startups create jobs, contribute to technological advancement, and reinforce a positive narrative around entrepreneurship in a region long burdened by post-socialist scepticism toward private enterprise.



SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSFERABILITY

Economically, ZICER’s model ensures the growth of high-value companies that can scale sustainably and operate internationally. Socially, it enhances job creation and promotes innovation among youth and academia. Environmentally, ZICER supports green-tech startups contributing to Croatia’s sustainable development goals.

KEY ENABLING FACTORS INCLUDE:

- Strong institutional backing from the City of Zagreb
- Alignment with Croatia’s smart city and tourism development strategies
- Integration with academia and global innovation networks
- Though precise data on human or technological resource needs is unavailable, the model’s success relies on a lean core team, strategic public-private partnerships, and adaptable funding tools.

ZICER’s Acceleration programs stands as a flagship initiative in Croatia’s entrepreneurial landscape. It is not just an accelerator—it is a comprehensive ecosystem builder that fuses innovation, policy, education, and industry. With its equity-free, accessible model and growing global footprint, it offers a replicable best practice for cities and regions aiming to foster innovation in a challenging economic environment. Through continuous iteration, ZICER transforms Croatia’s latent creative potential into tangible, globally relevant entrepreneurship.

For more, visit: <https://www.zicer.hr/akcelerator/?lang=en>

START:UP SLOVENIA

Start:up Slovenia is an independent open platform of the Slovene start-up ecosystem that supports innovative entrepreneurship in Slovenia.

The program was launched with the aim of promoting entrepreneurship in society and contributing to the development of a national startup ecosystem. Venture Factory are the contact, coordinator and promoter of the stakeholder network of the Slovene startup ecosystem in Slovenia and abroad. This includes startups, investors, supportive environments, entrepreneurial experts and enthusiasts, both individuals and organizations, who are changing Slovenia for the better with their activities in the startup ecosystem.

THE INITIATIVE WAS DEVELOPED TO TACKLE SEVERAL CHALLENGES PRIOR TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF START:UP SLOVENIA, THE SLOVENIAN STARTUP ECOSYSTEM FACED:

- FRAGMENTATION,
- LIMITED ACCESS TO FUNDING, AND
- A LACK OF COORDINATED SUPPORT FOR EMERGING ENTREPRENEURS.

These challenges hindered the growth of innovative businesses and their integration into the broader economy. Start:up Slovenia was developed to address these issues by unifying various stakeholders, streamlining access to resources, and promoting a culture of entrepreneurship.

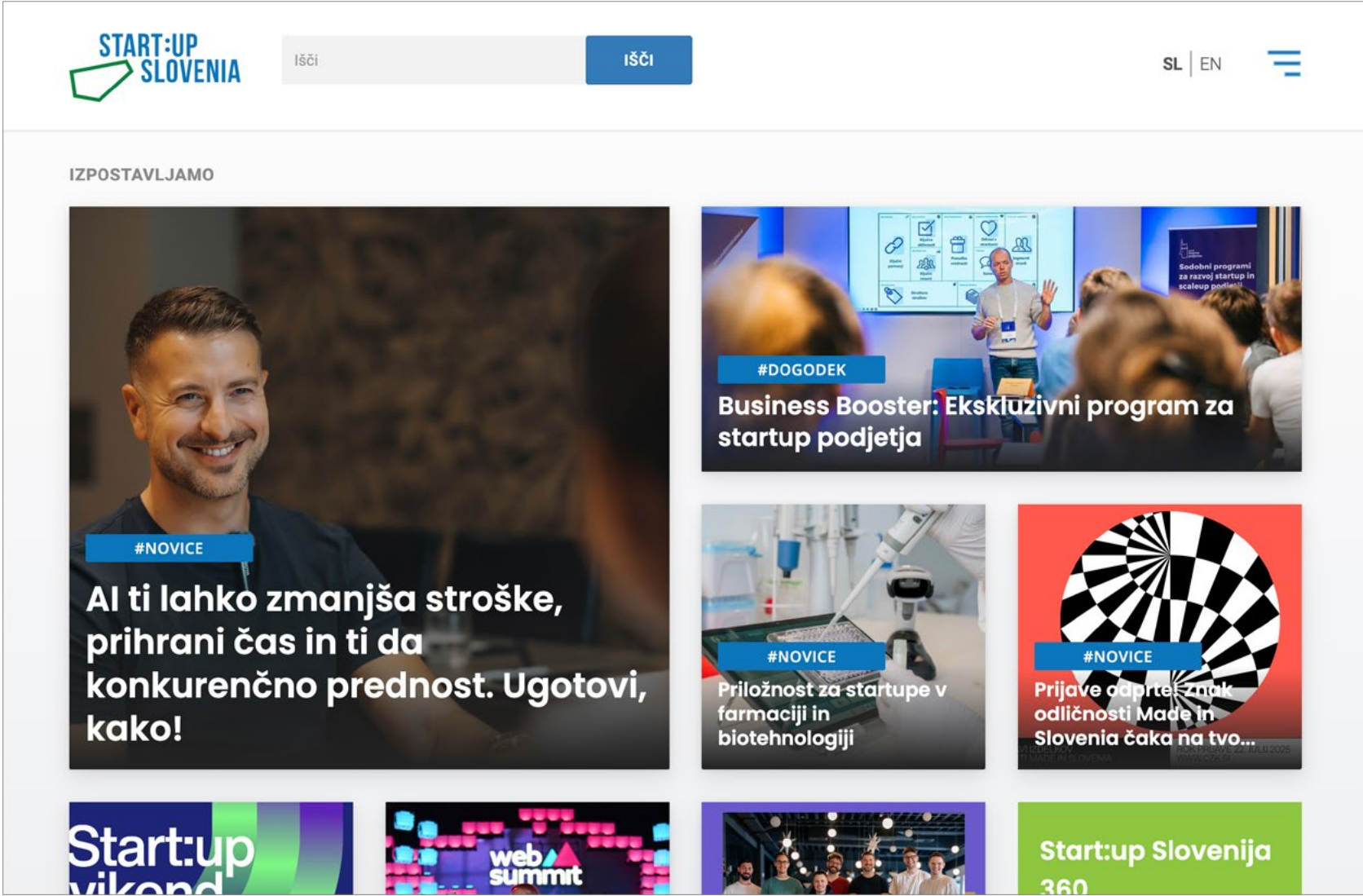




Start:up Slovenia is considered a Good Practice due to its comprehensive approach to fostering a vibrant startup ecosystem in Slovenia. By providing a centralized platform that offers resources, networking opportunities, and support programs, it has significantly contributed to the growth and success of startups in the region. The initiative's collaborative efforts with public and private sectors have created a conducive environment for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Launched in 2004, Start:up Slovenia has implemented several **KEY ACTIONS:**

- 1. Establishment of a Central Platform:** creating Startup.si, the central website of the Slovenian startup ecosystem, to disseminate information and resources.
www.startup.si
www.startup.si/en-us



- 2. Annual PODIM Conference:** organizing one of the most influential startup and tech events in Central and Eastern Europe, facilitating networking and knowledge exchange.



- 3. Slovenian Start-up of the Year Award:** recognizing and promoting outstanding startups to inspire and motivate the community.

Official site:
www.startup.si
www.startup.si/en-us
venturefactory.org/sl/o-nas/startup-slovenija
venturefactory.org/about/startup-slovenia

Video:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5P8BoclgMc
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ei7b9CkozAk
www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMV9DR1FtwY
www.youtube.com/@startupslovenija

FB and TikTok
www.facebook.com/startupslovenija/videos?locale=ms_M
www.tiktok.com/@startupslovenia

- 4. Policy advocacy:** collaborating with government bodies to identify and remove legislative barriers, enhancing the startup environment.





Start:up Slovenia has achieved significant milestones:

- increased start-up formation – the number of startups in Slovenia has grown, with 238 startups per million residents as of recent data,
- increased start-up activity – the ecosystem boasts over 150 active startups,
- enhanced investment – efforts are underway to increase investment in startups tenfold, aiming for 410 EUR per capita by 2030,
- integration of advanced technologies – more and more of Slovenian startups are implementing AI, blockchain, or advanced analytics, driving digital transformation across various sectors.

MILESTONES



SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

- by nurturing startups, the platform has stimulated economic growth, increased employment opportunities, and enhanced Slovenia’s competitiveness in the global market.
- several supported startups focus on green technologies and sustainable solutions, contributing to environmental conservation and the promotion of eco-friendly practices.
- the platform fosters an entrepreneurial culture, encouraging innovation and collaboration, which strengthens community ties and promotes a forward-thinking societal mindset.



Start:up Slovenia has influenced regional policies by demonstrating the economic potential of a well-supported startup ecosystem.

KEY IMPACTS INCLUDE:

- policy adaptations** – the success of the initiative has led to adjustments in Slovenia’s Smart Specialization Strategy (S4), integrating start-up-friendly policies into broader economic development strategies,
- funding expansion** – observing the program’s positive outcomes, regional authorities and EU bodies have increased funding allocations for R&D, technology parks, and startup accelerators,
- legislative improvements** – the initiative has contributed to policy discussions on tax incentives, startup-friendly regulations, and intellectual property protections, making it easier for new businesses to scale.

START:UP SLOVENIA SERVES AS A MODEL FOR OTHER REGIONS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, ILLUSTRATING HOW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS, PRIVATE INVESTORS, AND STARTUP HUBS CAN DRIVE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND INNOVATION.

STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR ROLES:

- Venture Factory:** manages the initiative, coordinates activities, and serves as a central hub for startup support.
- Slovene Enterprise Fund:** provides financial support and resources to startups, facilitating access to funding and investment opportunities.
- The Ministry of the Economy, Tourism and Sport:** offers policy support and strategic direction to enhance the startup ecosystem’s development.
- Startups and entrepreneurs:** engage with the platform to access resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities.
- Investors and business angels:** provide capital and mentorship to emerging startups, fostering growth and scalability.
- Supportive environments (incubators, accelerators):** offer infrastructure, training, and support services to startups.



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Tech 4 Impact: Fueling Bosnia and Herzegovina's Startup Revolution

INTRODUCTION

In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), early-stage startups struggle to access capital due to an underdeveloped venture capital ecosystem, rigid regulations, and a lack of investor trust. Young entrepreneurs, despite having innovative ideas, often lack the funding, mentorship, and networks necessary to launch and sustain viable businesses.

The Tech 4 Impact Fund, managed by the Mozaik

Sarajevo Foundation, addresses this funding gap through equity investments in promising startups. This fund operates in a venture capital model, designed to provide equity investments to early-stage startups. These include tech innovations, renewable energy, FinTech, HealthTech, EdTech, agro-industry, and smart mobility. The mission of the Tech 4 Impact Fund is to provide young and innovative entrepreneurs with the necessary capital to bring their ideas to life, driving both economic and societal development. More than just capital, the fund offers mentorship, strategic guidance, and access to networks that empower entrepreneurs to transform ideas into scalable businesses.

The funding is structured as equity investment, meaning that the fund takes ownership stakes in startups rather than providing loans. This approach aligns the interests of the fund with the long-term success of the businesses it supports. The returns from these investments are reinvested into new startup projects, creating a self-sustaining cycle that allows the fund to continuously support the next wave of entrepreneurs.

tech4impact.fund



FUND OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIC VISION

The primary objective of the Tech 4 Impact Fund is to facilitate the development of innovative businesses in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), which faces challenges in accessing capital for early-stage projects. In the context of BiH, where venture capital markets are underdeveloped, young entrepreneurs often struggle to find alternative sources of financing. The fund addresses this gap by providing much-needed investment capital and strategic guidance for startups that would otherwise have difficulty attracting financing through traditional methods, such as bank loans or grants.

The fund also plays a critical role in mentoring entrepreneurs and validating their business ideas. In many cases, entrepreneurs have innovative concepts but lack the skills, experience, or resources to turn those ideas into sustainable businesses. Tech 4 Impact helps them refine and scale their ideas by offering expertise, networking opportunities, and market insights, making it easier for them to navigate the challenges of building a successful startup. By doing so, the fund contributes to the creation of a thriving and innovative business ecosystem in BiH.

www.instagram.com/fondacija.mozaik/reel/Dlvx8XToJvd

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND ORGANIZATIONAL ROLES

Several key organizations play critical roles in the implementation and success of the Tech 4 Impact Fund:

Mozaik Sarajevo Foundation: As the managing entity of the fund, the Mozaik Foundation is responsible for overseeing operations, managing investor relationships, assessing project proposals, and ensuring the overall success of the fund's investments.

Arti Analytics: This consulting partner provides expertise in Artificial Intelligence, helping guide the fund's investments in tech and AI-driven startups.

FabLab Sarajevo: A consulting partner with a focus on robotics, FabLab offers specialized support for startups involved in robotics and similar technological fields.

These organizations work together to provide a comprehensive support system for startups, offering not only financial backing but also access to critical knowledge and expertise.

www.instagram.com/fondacija.mozaik/reel/DHn1sxgy3QI/



TARGET BENEFICIARIES AND IMPACT

The beneficiaries of the Tech 4 Impact Fund are primarily young entrepreneurs, many of whom are launching their first business ventures. These entrepreneurs typically face significant barriers to entry, including limited access to capital and a lack of established networks. By investing in these early-stage ventures, Tech 4 Impact allows entrepreneurs to overcome these obstacles and focus on what matters most: developing and scaling their businesses.

In addition to providing capital, the fund offers valuable resources such as mentoring, business development advice, and networking opportunities. This holistic approach is essential for helping entrepreneurs refine their business ideas and improve their chances of long-term success. Furthermore, the fund's screening process ensures that investments are focused on the most promising and sustainable business ideas, maximizing the likelihood of positive returns for both investors and the broader community.

www.instagram.com/rolify.zajednica/reel/DGn0gPbK78C

FUND GROWTH, PERFORMANCE, AND RESULTS

Since its inception in 2016, the Tech 4 Impact Fund has supported over 50 entrepreneurial projects. This includes businesses funded under the previous "Mozaik Startup Studio" platform, with three current active projects and 8-12 more in preparation. The fund has demonstrated its ability to withstand longer investment horizons (up to 7 years), allowing startups the time needed to grow and mature before achieving significant financial returns.

One of the defining features of Tech 4 Impact is its flexibility. While traditional venture capital funds may focus on quicker returns, Tech 4 Impact understands that sustainable success for startups may take several years. This longer-term investment strategy has proven successful, as the fund has already seen positive results within 2-3 years of investing in many of its projects.

The sectors that the fund targets — such as renewable energy and smart mobility — are increasingly important on a global scale, making the fund's investments particularly timely and relevant. By focusing on industries that promote sustainability and technological innovation, Tech 4 Impact is well-positioned to contribute to the long-term growth and modernization of the BiH economy.

www.instagram.com/fondacija.mozaik/reel/DllfpMnvbWd

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

The main challenges faced by the Tech 4 Impact Fund arise from the regulatory environment in BiH, which is often rigid and insufficiently flexible to support venture capital initiatives. Venture capital is still a relatively novel concept in the region, and the regulatory framework has not yet evolved to accommodate such investment models effectively. This has made it difficult to secure substantial financing from institutional investors and has created some skepticism among potential investors, particularly foreign ones.

Despite these obstacles, the fund has found ways to navigate the regulatory challenges by working closely with administrative authorities to identify workable solutions. The fund's ability to remain flexible and adaptable has been key to overcoming these barriers. Additionally, the close relationships it maintains with investors and beneficiaries help mitigate risks and ensure the continued success of the fund.

ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SOCIAL IMPACT

The Tech 4 Impact Fund's investments contribute to sustainable development in all three pillars of sustainability:

Economic sustainability: By providing financial support to startups in key sectors, the fund promotes the growth of new businesses and helps strengthen the local economy. Additionally, by funding businesses that focus on innovative solutions, the fund fosters an entrepreneurial ecosystem that encourages further investment and economic development.

Environmental sustainability: With a focus on renewable energy startups, the Tech 4 Impact Fund is directly contributing to the promotion of environmentally sustainable practices in BiH. By supporting businesses that focus on clean energy solutions, the fund is helping reduce the environmental impact of traditional industries.

Socio-cultural sustainability: Tech 4 Impact is also contributing to a shift in the BiH business landscape, moving from traditional industries to modern technology-driven enterprises. This transformation has significant implications for the socio-cultural fabric of the country, as it encourages a new generation of entrepreneurs to innovate and create businesses that address the global challenges of the 21st century.

<https://tech4impact.fund/portfolio/>

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Tech 4 Impact is looking to expand its investment base, with an initial capital of EUR 2.2 million. This provides a unique opportunity for investors who want to be part of an initiative that is not only financially promising but also socially impactful. By investing in the Tech 4 Impact Fund, investors can help accelerate the growth of sustainable businesses in BiH while also benefiting from the returns generated by successful startups.

www.instagram.com/biz.studiobihac/reel/Dl-TyYzbMxMP

Contact:
 Office Address: Splitska 14, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
 E-mail: info@tech4impact.fund



CONCLUSION

The Tech 4 Impact Fund represents a powerful opportunity for both investors and entrepreneurs. With its focus on equity investments, mentorship, and sustainable business practices, the fund is helping to create a vibrant and innovative startup ecosystem in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By supporting young entrepreneurs and driving the growth of industries that are critical to the future of the global economy, Tech 4 Impact is poised to make a significant and lasting impact on the region's business environment.

www.instagram.com/rolify.zajednica/reel/Dl-4wGtqgm

Web sites: tech4impact.fun
mozaik.ba
www.linkedin.com/company/tech-4-impact-fund



SERBIA

Where Ideas Take Shape: REDASP's Support for the Future of Business

PROBLEM IN ŠUMADIJA AND POMORAVLJE, MANY STARTUPS AND SMES FACE:

LIMITED ACCESS TO FINANCE,
 LACK OF BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE AND
 LOW AWARENESS OF SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES.

SOLUTION

REDASP response is comprehensive support system that offers business advisory services, training, and funding facilitation.

Through partnerships with the Development Agency of Serbia, Ministry of Economy, and the Development Fund, REDASP bridges the gap between national programs and local businesses—helping them grow, innovate, and survive.

WITH REDASP'S SUPPORT, I REALIZED THAT STARTING A BUSINESS DOESN'T HAVE TO BE
 INTIMIDATING. THEIR GUIDANCE, FUNDING, AND MENTORING TURNED MY IDEA INTO A
 THRIVING ENTERPRISE.



BUSINESS ISN'T ROCKET SCIENCE WHEN YOU HAVE THE RIGHT SUPPORT. THANKS
 TO REDASP'S MENTORING AND RESOURCES, I TURNED A CHALLENGE INTO A REAL
 OPPORTUNITY.

REDASP SHOWED ME THAT BUSINESS IS NOT A MYSTERY—IT'S A PROCESS. THEIR
 TRAINING, FUNDING, AND MENTORSHIP HELPED ME GROW BOTH PERSONALLY AND
 PROFESSIONALLY.

THEY HELPED ME SEE THAT ENTREPRENEURSHIP ISN'T OUT OF REACH. REDASP GAVE
 ME THE TOOLS AND CONFIDENCE TO BUILD SOMETHING REAL.

REDASP MADE IT CLEAR: BUSINESS ISN'T JUST FOR THE BIG PLAYERS. WITH THEIR
 HELP, I FOUND THE KNOWLEDGE, FUNDING, AND COURAGE TO SUCCEED.

I USED TO THINK RUNNING A BUSINESS WAS OVERWHELMING. REDASP CHANGED THAT.
 THEIR SUPPORT OPENED THE DOOR TO STABILITY, GROWTH, AND PURPOSE.

STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR ROLES:

REDASP: Business advisory, training, and technical support

Development Agency of Serbia: Framework and funding programs

Ministry of Economy: Policy and strategy coordination

Development Fund of Serbia: Direct financial support to enterprises





ACTIVITY ESTIMATED VALUE

2,205

SME ADVISORY SERVICES PROVIDED

251

TRAININGS ORGANIZED

2,836

TRAINING PARTICIPANTS

176

PROMOTIONAL EVENTS ORGANIZED

2,123

MENTORING PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

73

MENTORING PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

194

FIELD INSPECTIONS CONDUCTED

I USED TO THINK RUNNING A BUSINESS
WAS OVERWHELMING. REDASP
CHANGED THAT. THEIR SUPPORT OPENED THE
DOOR TO STABILITY, GROWTH, AND PURPOSE.



Contact for Further Information:

Regional Economic Development Agency for
Šumadija and Pomoravlje – REDASP

www.redasp.rs

office@redasp.rs

+381 (0)34 302-704



ALBANIA

One-stop boost for startups: AIDA's game-changing support

THE CHALLENGE

Startups and SMEs in Albania face a tough climb—limited access to funding, mentorship, and resources has held back innovation, growth, and job creation. Entrepreneurs often have the ideas, but not the tools to bring them to life.

THE SOLUTION

AIDA – the Albanian Investment Development Agency – a public powerhouse supports startups and SMEs to grow, scale, and succeed. Acting as a “One-Stop-Shop”, AIDA bridges the gap between visionary entrepreneurs and the tools they need: funding, mentorship, business services, and investor networks.

“AT AIDA, WE SEE OURSELVES AS ECOSYSTEM BUILDERS. WE CONNECT THE DOTS
BETWEEN STARTUPS, POLICY, AND FUNDING. OUR MISSION IS TO EMPOWER THE NEXT GENERATION
OF ALBANIAN ENTREPRENEURS TO SUCCEED REGIONALLY AND GLOBALLY.”

— LAURA SARO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AIDA

EXPORT ALBANIA
Powered by AIDA



PLAY VIDEO
IN BROWSER





WHAT AIDA DOES:

- Offers 4 annual funding schemes tailored to different stages of business development
- Connects startups with national and international investors
- Organizes capacity-building and mentorship programs
- Promotes innovation and export potential
- Aligns closely with Albania’s entrepreneurship and digital economy strategies



ARTICLES

- <https://neweuropeaneconomy.com/fdi/albanian-investment-development-agency-helping-you-make-albania-your-next-investment-destination/>
- <https://www.tradefinanceglobal.com/export-finance/export-credit-agencies-eca/albania-investment-development-agency-albania-eca/>
- https://issuu.com/jarpin2008/docs/trailblazing_magazine_february_2023/s/21557418





IMPACT

150+
STARTUPS FUNDED

€10M+
INVESTMENTS RAISED

450+
SME'S SUPPORTED

SINCE 2010
SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT IN PLACE

STAKEHOLDERS & THEIR ROLES:

Startups – Program beneficiaries
Investors – Funding providers

Government & NGOs – Policy and financial support

Universities & Mentors – Training and guidance

Local Development Agencies – Deliver acceleration services

Business Incubators – Provide ongoing business support



PLAY VIDEO
IN BROWSER



Contact: Laura Saro

Email: info@aida.gov.al

Website: aida.gov.al/aida



MONTENEGRO

UDG International Market of Entrepreneurial Ideas

Where the journey of champions begins,
where memories are made

Fuel the Flame of Innovation—Join the
Entrepreneurial Dreams!

CLEAR PROBLEM/SOLUTION NARRATIVE:

The Market of Entrepreneurial Ideas is a project that has been implemented for 15 years in a row at the University of Donja Gorica, and which represents a collision of youth, creativity and innovation with the energy of the economic sector, true businessmen and companies ready to support young people in entrepreneurial ventures.



PLAY VIDEO
IN BROWSER




While analyzing the Montenegrin market, a noticeable gap was identified in entrepreneurial thinking, energy, and the necessary support for young people to develop and implement their ideas. There was a lack of structured initiatives to inspire and guide young individuals towards innovation and entrepreneurship. Recognizing this opportunity, the International Market of Entrepreneurial Ideas was designed to address these challenges by creating a platform where creativity meets support. The initiative brings a fresh perspective to the region, fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and offering young minds the resources, mentorship, and visibility needed to thrive. Each year, the program evolves, incorporating lessons learned and ensuring its impact continues to grow. The goal of the Market of Entrepreneurial Ideas is to encourage the development of entrepreneurial, i.e. business ideas, primarily among students and high school students, which is what this event succeeded in during the previous period.




The Market of Entrepreneurial Ideas is an event where students present their entrepreneurial and business ideas ("offer of ideas"). The ideas were processed according to the methodology established within the University of Donja Gorica. Business ideas are submitted to the organizer who performs their preliminary selection. Accepted business ideas (11 of them) are presented at the quotation of business ideas to representatives of "demand" - companies and successful entrepreneurs. Ideas that arrive at our address, but do not qualify among the 11 best, are presented in a special edition of the "Book of Ideas", so everyone present has the opportunity to receive information about these ideas as well. All these ideas represent the "offer" side of the Market Exchange. On the "demand" side, there are interested organizations, primarily companies, banks, institutions and individuals both from Montenegro and abroad.



This is a project that enables young entrepreneurs (high school students and students) to present their entrepreneurial ideas (early stage) to investors, representatives of the most successful companies primarily from Montenegro, but also from the region and beyond. After all the stages of the project and the competition, and after the presentations at the central event, the directors and owners of the companies bid for each idea, and the company that offers the most financial resources buys the right to negotiate with the idea owner about the further implementation of the idea. The idea owner uses these funds for further development of the idea. It is very important to note the great self-sustainability of the project. Numerous individuals who were on the supply side in the first years of the project are now on the demand side, that is, they are in leadership positions in companies that today support young people and new ideas. This circular approach has created a large network of successful entrepreneurs who support young people every year, and who every year pay both the registration fee for participating in the project and invest in the ideas themselves.



Government of Montenegro
Ministry of Culture



X IDEALAND

TOP **11** IDEA OWNERS GET THE OPPORTUNITY TO
PRESENT THEIR IDEAS IN FRONT OF MORE THAN **30** COMPANIES
AND INSTITUTIONS FROM **MONTENEGRO** AND **EUROPE**

APPLY AT WWW.PREDUZETNISTVO.ME

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| DEADLINE: | SUPPLY DEMAND | RESULTS ANNOUNCEMENT: |
| APRIL 24, 2020 | | APRIL 27, 2020 |

1. INDUSTRIAL DESIGN 2. FASHION DESIGN AND TEXTILE DESIGN 3. IMPROVING THE LIVING ENVIRONMENT






4. ICT WITH FOCUS ON DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE VIDEO GAMES

5. ICT WITH FOCUS ON DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE MOBILE APPLICATIONS

6. OTHER CREATIVE, INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVES

MAY 9, 2020

UNIVERSITY OF DONJA GORICA, THE VALLEY OF IDEAS, ST. OKTOIH 1,
DONJA GORICA, MONTENEGRO



THE MARKET WASN'T JUST A COMPETITION — IT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT OURSELVES, OUR IDEA, AND WHAT WE BELIEVE CAN BRING CHANGE TO OUR COMMUNITY. WE LEARNED THAT THREE MINUTES CAN BE ENOUGH TO MAKE A POWERFUL IMPACT.

IGOR D., STUDENT, FINALIST

The best 11 authors of ideas (representatives of the offer) pitch their ideas to the representatives of the demand, after which a quotation is made where the representatives of the demand invest money in the ideas of young people, and buy the right to exclusive negotiations regarding the further development of the idea.



TEACH YEAR THE IDEAS BECOME MORE MATURE AND INNOVATIVE. AS A COMPANY, WE FOUND A TEAM WE ARE NOW DEVELOPING A PILOT PROJECT WITH.

ANTON JUROVICKI, PAST PARTICIPANT, CEO OF COINI

“

SO FAR, WITHIN THIS PROJECT, ONE OF THE LARGEST ENTREPRENEURIAL EVENTS IN THE REGION:

1,500+

APPLICATIONS FROM 22 COUNTRIES HAVE ARRIVED

€ 250,000+

HAVE BEEN INVESTED IN THE BUSINESS IDEAS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

THE MARKET OF ENTREPRENEURIAL IDEAS REMINDS US OF SOMETHING WE OFTEN FORGET — YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FULL OF SOLUTIONS, THEY JUST NEED THE SPACE TO EXPRESS THEM.”

ALEKSANDRA RADOVIĆ, CEO OF KRUŠO COMPANY

“





MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT ARE:

- Entrepreneurship promotion among young people;
- The realization of new business ideas;
- Encouraging young people to think in an entrepreneurial manner;
- Providing an opportunity for young people to earn money;
- Providing an opportunity for young people to find potential investors for their ideas;
- Networking young people with potential employers;
- Creating new working positions.

PITCHING WITHOUT SLIDES? CHALLENGING, BUT WITH THE RIGHT PREPARATION – POSSIBLE. THE MARKET TAUGHT US HOW TO TELL OUR STORY CLEARLY AND CONVINCINGLY.

KSENIJA D., HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT FROM NIKŠIĆ

THIS WAS OUR FIRST CONTACT WITH THE REAL MARKET. WE PITCHED IN FRONT OF ACTUAL INVESTORS, RECEIVED FEEDBACK AND SUPPORT – AND THAT EXPERIENCE IS PRICELESS.

LUKA M., STARTUP TEAM MEMBER

STAKEHOLDERS ROLES:

- The primary stakeholders include students, high school participants, investors, business entities, the University of Donja Gorica, and public institutions. Each of these groups plays a crucial role in ensuring the project's success.
- University of Donja Gorica:** Organizer, trainer, and developer of the project's methodology.
- Business Entities:** Investors and mentors offering financial support and industry-specific expertise – more than 30 companies.
- Public Institutions:** Provide recognition, logistical support, and policy alignment - Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, Chamber of Economy Montenegro...
- Partner Companies:** Active participants in investing and mentoring young entrepreneurs.
- Students:** Those who have ideas and who seek for support of investors. They are the idea generators and active participants, presenting innovative concepts and seeking support to develop them further.



CONCLUSION

The examples of good practices collected in this guide—spanning nine regions across the Adriatic-Ionian area—demonstrate the strength and versatility of local innovation ecosystems when supported by structured collaboration, sustainability-focused strategies, and transnational cooperation.

Each practice highlighted here represents a practical response to real challenges faced by startups and SMEs in the partner territories. Whether it is the redesign of acceleration programs to include sustainability and quality management principles, the formation of Distributed Local Networks (DLNs), or the deployment of tailored training platforms, these initiatives provide valuable, field-tested insights for improving the innovation support infrastructure across the region.

More importantly, the guide illustrates that there is no single blueprint for success. Instead, effective innovation support emerges from locally rooted, yet globally informed, strategies that adapt to regional needs, capacities, and priorities. This diversity is not a limitation—it is a strategic advantage.

Through the A4SUSTINNO project, partners have proven that sharing knowledge across borders can unlock new possibilities at the local level. The transnational dimension of the project has ensured that lessons learned are not confined within borders but are transferable and scalable throughout the wider ADRION area.

We hope this guide will serve not only as a snapshot of what has been achieved, but as a springboard for continued learning, adaptation, and cooperation. By investing in innovation ecosystems that are sustainable, inclusive, and interconnected, we are not only supporting today's entrepreneurs—we are building the foundations for a more resilient and forward-looking regional economy.





Interreg
IPA ADRION



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A4SUSTINNO

