

Private and public sector cooperation bolsters innovative ecosystem in Košice

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DEUTSCHE TELEKOM IT SOLUTIONS

Innovlab startup center of Deutsche Telekom IT Solutions Slovakia started its cooperation with the Technical University in Košice to support young and talented students and enhance their innovative potential. Thanks to this prosperous cooperation, the young generation can work on their ideas in the Startup center and Incubator of the University Science Park TECHNICOM (USP TECHNICOM).

A student with an innovative idea can join the Startup center through competitions that are organized on a regular basis. Once admitted, students are offered a six-month acceleration program. Both Innovlab and USP TECHNICOM offer professional consulting services, expert support and assistance in obtaining partners and investors, mentoring and coach assistance. We approached Ing. Milan Varga, Manager of Innovlab startup center, and Assoc. prof. Dr. František Jakab, Director of the USP TECHNICOM, to tell us more about their work with students, programs they offer, and about the vision for next year.



MILAN VARGA
Manager of Innovlab
Startup Center,
EIT Health RIS HUB
Manager Slovakia

"Leading Innovlab is a materialization of my passion for the latest technologies and trends especially in the Telco and Health areas, and capitalization of my 12+ years of managerial experience in the IT industry and in the field of projects and software engineering services for UK and US clients."

What was the impulse for Innovlab to start cooperation with TUKE?

Košice is well-known as a city of universities and TUKE (Technical University of Košice) belongs to the top universities in the region. Therefore, we are thrilled that our cooperation started. In my opinion, results of joined initiatives are beneficial for the region's

ecosystem development and also for students. They have new opportunities to show their talents and potential to establish new startups.

How do you contribute to building an ecosystem in the region?

We support young and talented students to develop their potential and offer them opportunities and events such as Innovation Days, Hackathons, Meet-ups, where they can come up with new ideas or products. We also contribute to the Košice region innovation strategies and support the region or city government in various topics.

What programs/competitions do you offer for students?

Together with TUKE, we have created a Local Development Program that contains a series of 20 Interactive lectures (six in English) from the area of business, marketing, startup creation, or financial planning. Last year, we had 630 participants online. Innovation Days 2020 brought us 80 participants and a great lady winner who prepared a solution for the Mass Causality Incidents in the Healthcare sector. Absolutely valuable ideas were delivered on TUKE Hackathon that we organize every year. Year by year, young students show their willingness and potential to create innovative solutions and help in many categories such as Smart City, Health, Industry.

Is a good idea all that's needed?

It all starts with a good idea. Moving it forward, it is necessary to create a team and work on product development,

prototyping, and further business planning. Willingness and the right mindset are crucial on a startup journey. Nevertheless, it is important to let your mentor guide you in the right direction.

Based on the very beneficial cooperation, what have you achieved? Can you share some successes?

- Direct financial support for three startups
- 2nd place on the Innostars Awards - FaceRehab
- 10 events organized to support startups ecosystem in the East Slovakia region – Meetups, Workshops, Hackathon 2020
- +650 attendees on our online events
- 188 active new members in our online Innovation Platform - Innovlab community
- 630 attendees in the Local development program for start-ups and entrepreneurs
- Support of Košice ecosystem in form of events, networking and in creation of partnerships
- Installation of Thermal cameras in Poproc Elementary school with nursery



FRANTIŠEK JAKAB
Director of the USP
TECHNICOM at the
Technical University
of Košice. A chair of
Committee on Business-
Academic Cooperation
at AmCham Slovakia

What do you offer for students who have created their startup?

Students are offered support by the Startup Center (<https://www.startupcentrum.sk>) – an organizational structure created

within the USP TECHNICOM. The mission of the Startup Center is to "start" a process that will support students in the development of their innovative ideas and help them turn the idea into a commercially usable product or service.

What opportunities does TUKE provide to students in their further development?

After six months, students have the opportunity to get to the Incubator, they can enter it only as a legal entity - a company.

What are your plans for ecosystem development?

The TUKE, in a consortium with the UPJŠ and the Košice IT Valley cluster, succeeded with its project to establish and operate EDIH CASSOVIUM. The next step should be the development of the business acceleration ecosystem – establishment of a unique platform in the Košice region that will more extensively support not only the development of new companies but will also introduce and develop digital technologies aiming to increase the competitiveness of the regional economy.

What do you think is the greatest strength of the young generation?

Courage, enthusiasm, an effort to discover and constantly start new things. A curiosity that gives them energy, drives, and motivates them.

What was the impulse for TUKE to start cooperation with Innovlab?

The main reason why we decided to cooperate with Innovlab in finding and supporting the student startups was our attempt to combine efforts in these activities, and thus use the synergy effect of the intentions of two major players in the area of business acceleration in the region – the Startup Center TUKE and Innovlab.