



2024 EU|BIC IMPACT REPORT

‘Innovation for a Sustainable Future’

With contributions by:



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About the European Business and Innovation Centre Network

EBN (European Business and Innovation Centre Network) is a not-for-profit that serves a pan-European, global community of people that use innovative business as a driver for regional (economic) development. EBN's initiatives include EU|BIC certification, development and distribution of quality business support programmes, facilitation and initiation of project collaborations, global networking and advocacy for excellent business support actors like the EU|BICs.



EU|BICs, quality-certified European Business Innovation Centres, are on a mission to drive economic development and well-being in their regions. There are now more than 115 certified EU|BICs and 56 Associate Members shaping our global community. Becoming an EU|BIC means responding to our mission to use business and innovation as a force for regional development with the best possible actions to create thriving startups and SMEs. In other words, EU|BICs take real steps to ensure that their services are as best as possible to their clients and best advantageous to their regions.

Executive Summary

The 2024 EU|BIC Impact Report demonstrates how we have and continue to create EBN and the EU|BIC community's impact by applying innovation toward shaping a prosperous and sustainable future in Europe and beyond.

All results present in this report about the EU|BIC community were gathered and analysed by EBN, following specific methods to properly assess this data. Results were collected via the annual EU|BIC Self-Assessment Questionnaire, sent to all EU|BICs, as regards 2023 performance. For this report, answers were analysed coming from 89 EU|BICs total.

About the EU|BIC community

More than **118 Certified EU|BICs and over 54 Associate Members support almost 25,000 innovative companies in over 35 countries** with 1 unifying goal: to drive greater well-being via entrepreneurial innovation.

EU|BICs are quality-certified organisations that use business and innovation as a force for regional (economic, sustainable, and social) development. EU|BICs use the best possible actions to create thriving startups and SMEs, taking real steps to ensure that their services are best advantageous to their clients and best advantageous to their regions

The EU|BIC community unites a diverse pan-European and global network of innovation and entrepreneurial stakeholders. **Our trusted, locally rooted, and globally connected community aims to work towards a green, digital, and fair society while creating high-quality jobs.**

Members of the EU|BIC community rally around its **four mission commitments**:

- 1. Regional Sustainable Economic Development:** From its origins until today, we endeavour to build well-connected innovation ecosystems that support the economic development of European regions.
- 2. Quality Business Support:** We conduct our operations in a manner that delivers the most excellent innovation support services possible.
- 3. Access to Finance:** From its origins until today, we endeavour to provide a steady pipeline of innovative, investment-ready companies and foster supportive investment opportunities.
- 4. Scaling European Innovation:** Our pan-European nature is one of our greatest assets to bolster the internationalisation potential of European startups, scaleups and innovative SMEs.

Impact Highlights 2023–2024

Regional, Sustainable Economic Development

1. The **EU|BIC community includes diverse organisations, with over one-third being business incubators or accelerators**, 26% being entrepreneurship or innovation centres, 15% being science & technology parks, and 13% being development & innovation agencies. 47% of EU|BIC members are publicly owned, 22% are fully private, and the remainder have mixed ownership.
2. Since 2004, the **EU|BICs have created 338,748 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs**. This represents an average of 21,171 jobs created per year.
3. **EU|BICs are natural ecosystem partnership builders**. Local governments are associated with 98% of all EU|BICs. 85% of the community members maintain active partnerships with other entrepreneurship/innovation support organisations (ESO/ISOs) in Europe and beyond.

Quality Business Support

1. In 2023, **EU|BICs helped more than 24,800 companies and entrepreneurs** get a head start in delivering their innovation to the market. Of these, 10,424 potential Entrepreneurs, 6,224 startups, and 8,242 SMEs. **Since 2004, more than 400,000 companies (including startups and SMEs) have been supported** by the EU|BIC community.
2. EU|BICs achieve outstanding startup survival rates: **83% of supported companies continue to operate after three years**. This rate is well above the European average of 58% and marks a slight increase from the 82% survival rate in 2022.
3. **EU|BICs run an average of 20 support programmes per organisation**. A total of 1,715 support programmes were run in 2023. EU|BICs provide comprehensive services including proof of concept, market research, legal and accounting support, team development, access to markets, and funding.

Access to Finance

1. In 2023, **companies supported by EU|BICs secured over 870 million euros** from various sources.
2. **Venture capital investments constituted the largest share of funding**, contributing 45% of the total funds raised. Private institutions played a significant role, providing nearly 80% of the total funds raised during the year. Conversely, EU funds constituted a minor 4% of the total funding.
3. In total, **5,000+ companies gained access to finance via EU|BIC support**. Of the approximately 1,800 served idea phase entrepreneurs (seed capital), 1,800 reached startups (Series A-B), and 1,400 were SMEs with capital to scale (Series C and beyond).

Scaling European Innovation

1. In 2023, **EU|BICs supported 690 client companies in their efforts to scale and access foreign markets.**
2. **104 EU|BIC clients targeted the United States as their destination making it the most sought-after foreign market.** Other top foreign market destinations are Germany, France, Spain, and the United Arab Emirates.
3. **343 foreign companies were hosted by EU|BICs to access local markets.** In 2023, the top 5 countries of origin of companies accessing EU|BICs' local markets are Chile, Argentina, United States, Colombia, and Italy.

Value of EU|BIC Certification

"Obtaining EU|BIC Certification has been a transformative milestone for IncubAlliance Paris-Saclay, marking our commitment to continuous improvement and excellence. The networking opportunities have opened doors to invaluable insights and collaborations, enriching our support delivery and fostering strategic relationships.

Especially as we chart our international strategy, the guidance from EU|BIC's experts and members has been indispensable. The professionalism, dedication, and expertise encountered within the EBN staff and EU|BIC community have profoundly impacted us, reinforcing our gratitude and enthusiasm for this partnership. Thank you for empowering our journey".

Arielle Sante,

CEO of EU|BIC IncubAlliance Paris-Saclay – certified in March 2024

"Securing the EU|BIC certification resonates deeply with our ethos of marrying local expertise with a global perspective. The EU|BIC Certification it is a gateway to offering unmatched opportunities for growth and innovation to our clientele and the wider community. This recognition underscores our commitment and capacity to drive meaningful change and progress in the region."

Philipp Roden,

Director of EU|BIC Lipo.ink in Liberec – certified in January 2024

EU policy perspective

The EU is shifting to more inclusive regional innovation policies, crucial for digital and green transitions. Global trends like deglobalisation and rapid technological advancements, including AI, present challenges and opportunities for regional innovation. Local territories are well-positioned to drive industrial policy and regain strategic autonomy through innovative and transformative policies. The current call for action to drive towards systems change raises the need to develop new modes of thinking that lead to co-benefits by experimenting with place-based transformative innovation policies.

Its cornerstone is the independent and entrepreneurially-spirited innovation support intermediary organisation delivering place-based orchestration. EU|BICs boost regional innovation capacity by developing well-connected innovation ecosystems that generate jobs and drive sustainable economic development.

The Value of Innovation for Sustainability

“As we celebrate the 40th Anniversary of EBN, it is essential to reflect on the evolution and future direction of regional innovation policies in Europe. Over the decades, the approach to fostering innovation has significantly transformed from a top-down model to a more inclusive, partnership-driven strategy that actively involves the private sector. This shift is crucial in addressing the dual digital and green transitions and ensuring that regions do not fall into new layers of disparity.”

Mikel Landabaso

Director for Fair and Sustainable Economy at the EU Joint Research Centre

Our mission ahead

The EU|BICs have made and *will continue to make significant contributions* to regional sustainable economic development, deeptech innovations, and support for startups navigating market and regulatory challenges. The collective efforts of the EU|BIC community are instrumental in driving forward the EU's Regional, Innovation, SME, and Industrial policy agendas.

Their mission commitments to quality business support, regional development, and sustainable innovation not only enhance the competitiveness of European enterprises but also contribute to the overall cohesion of European regions and the well-being of their societies.

Foreword

As we bring you the 2024 EU|BIC Impact Report, we look back with pride on the successes of 2023, a year that proved the resilience and dynamism of the EU|BIC community. The EBN Secretariat has been going through a transformative period marked by strategic advancements, innovative service offerings, and reinforced member engagement.

In 2023, our aim was to further stabilise the critical role played by EBN and its community of 170+ EU|BICs in the European innovation landscape. To do so, we strived for greater proximity and connectivity between the EBN Secretariat and its members. We have launched a series of initiatives that target membership development with the introduction of a new, strong, and dynamic service offer that matches the changing needs of our diverse membership base.

Growth in Membership and Activation

Our continued focus on broadening and strengthening our community relationships came to fruition with an increase of 18 organisations joining the EU|BIC ranks. A more coordinated and inclusive approach to the implementation of our actions has resulted in the support that we offer our members becoming a lot more impactful.

New Strategic Services to Drive Regional Innovation Capacity

2023 also saw the official launch of the redefined service portfolio. Remarkably, we presented a strong process for quality assessment for EU|BICs as a guarantee of high-quality services and to stimulate a culture of continuous improvement. A highlight includes the publication of the EU|BIC Innovation Ecosystem Building Framework, which will provide crucial insights and strategic tools from and for our members.

Collaborative Projects and Strategic Partnerships

EBN's participation in 19 EU-funded projects, with the submission of 13 new proposals in 2023, shows how much our commitment is to ensuring secured opportunities beneficial to our members. We have worked with strategic partners such as the European Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) to bring new opportunities and areas of collaboration and growth to our membership.

Looking Ahead Towards the 40th Anniversary of EBN

As we approach the 40 years EBN, our engagement in driving the innovation ecosystem building and supporting the realisation of the green and digital twin transition in Europe stands stronger than ever. The way forward in achieving our sustainability goals and driving greater well-being for all is through entrepreneurial innovation. Indeed, innovation is the only path forward. The next steps for us are:





provide coherence for innovation. By merging public-private sectors, academia, and industry, we will create sufficient ecosystems that support sustainable economic growth.

- **Green and Digital Transitions:** We will support new initiatives that straighten and advance the green and digital transition towards keystones of Europe's future development. We will enable businesses to adopt greener technologies and digital tools that allow them to operate with sustainable principles and in very efficient ways.
- **Empower Entrepreneurship Support Organisations:** We will empower those who support innovative entrepreneurs to ensure that startups and small and medium-sized enterprises have what they need to thrive in a very competitive market across Europe and beyond. That will comprise finance, training, and strategic partnerships that may help accelerate growth and impact.
- **Advancing Europe's sustainability goals:** Our key focus on sustainability will act as a guiding principle toward all acts and projects—meaning that every project and programme that we launch sets the goal of making our future greener and more just. We prioritise projects concerning the EU's sustainability targets, developing practices that support the economy and sustain the environment.

Zooming in on the EU policy level, we witness the development of regional innovation policies within Europe which suggest a shift from top-down directive strategy to an all-inclusive partnership-driven one. This will be important for both the digital and green dual transitions so as to avoid adding new layers of disparity. In the face of broad trends of deglobalisation, increasing geopolitical uncertainty, and rapid technological change, which includes AI – both a challenge and opportunity – for regional innovation, territories are well-placed to be the vehicle to reactivate industrial policy and regain strategic autonomy via system-level innovation and transformative policies.

The current call for action to drive towards systems change raises the need to develop new modes of thinking that lead to co-benefits by experimenting with place-based transformative innovation policies. It's cornerstone is the entrepreneurially-spirited innovation support intermediary organisation delivering place-based orchestration. **EU|BICs are central to driving regional innovation capacity through the development of well-connected innovation ecosystems that create jobs and sustainable economic development.**

It fills us with inspiration as we look at the long path that is still ahead, judging from the distance covered and the bright potential it unlocks. We believe the journey toward creating a vibrant and inclusive innovation community is a promising path forward, and we hope to keep enabling effective change through collaborative efforts.

Together, we will continue to create EBN's and the EU|BIC community's impact by applying innovation toward shaping a prosperous and sustainable future in Europe and beyond.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Laura Lecci'.

Laura Lecci,
CEO of EBN

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Innovation for a Sustainable Future

We believe in the power of
breakthrough innovation in
driving sustainable, regional
economic development.



TESTIMONIAL

The Value of Innovation for Sustainability



As we celebrate the 40th Anniversary of EBN, it is essential to reflect on the evolution and future direction of regional innovation policies in Europe. Over the decades, the approach to fostering innovation has significantly transformed from a top-down model to a more inclusive, partnership-driven strategy that actively involves the private sector. This shift is crucial in addressing the dual digital and green transitions and ensuring that regions do not fall into new layers of disparity.

By: Mikel Landabaso,

Director for Fair and Sustainable Economy at the EU Joint Research Centre

The Imperative for Systems Change

Looking forward, the necessity for systems change becomes apparent. We must adopt a new way of thinking that leads to co-benefits through experimentation and place-based transformative innovation policies. The recent [Partnerships for Regional Innovation \(PRI\) pilot](#) is an exemplary initiative that showcases the potential of such approaches. The lessons learned from it can guide us in better coordinating massive investments to steer development towards long-term societal well-being.

Addressing Global Trends with Territorial Innovation

Global trends such as deglobalisation, geopolitical uncertainty, and rapid technological advancements, including AI, present both challenges and opportunities for regional innovation. Territories play a pivotal role in reactivating industrial policy and promoting strategic autonomy. This involves integrating system-level innovation and transformative policies that encompass multiple levels of governance, as outlined by scholars such as Geels and the OECD. The JRC is currently launching an exploratory project to develop a new quantitative model based on system dynamics principles that could quantify the economic benefits of transformative innovation policies.

Enhancing Coordination and Mobilisation for the Green Transition

The call for system-wide change includes mobilising and coordinating policy areas and funds beyond mere innovation. It requires a whole-of-government approach, integrating supply and demand-side policies, and addressing the role of places in implementing EU policies. The goal is to enhance the directionality of regional R&I investment and policies, as seen in initiatives like the [Regional Innovation Valleys framework](#), which aims to foster connected regional innovation ecosystems across the EU. Special emphasis is placed on the EU's green transition, aiming to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, increase global food security, master the digital transformation, improve healthcare, and achieve circularity. These objectives align with the broader European Green Deal, which seeks to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

Regional Innovation Valleys: A Network of Excellence

The [Regional Innovation Valleys](#) initiative is a flagship effort under the New European Innovation Agenda aimed at bridging the innovation divide and fostering connected regional innovation ecosystems. Over 55 regions with an EU|BIC presence are part of this ambitious framework, leveraging the strengths of their local ecosystems to enhance innovation capacity and competitiveness. These valleys serve as hubs of excellence, where collaboration between public and private sectors, academia, and civil society drives transformative innovation. The EU|BICs play a critical role in these regions, acting as catalysts for growth by providing essential support services to startups and SMEs, facilitating access to funding, and promoting international collaboration. The focus on green transition is particularly significant, as these valleys are expected to spearhead initiatives that align with the EU's sustainability goals.

The Story of Partnerships for Regional Innovation

The journey of [Partnerships for Regional Innovation \(PRI\)](#) began with the launch of the Playbook in May 2022, followed by the start of the PRI Pilot Action with 74 participants. This initiative emphasizes the importance of place-based innovation policies, sharing best practices, and building a toolbox of strategies to support regional innovation. The updated [ACTIONBook](#), released in December 2023, further enriches this initiative with refined processes and activities, with a strong focus on sustainable development and green and digital innovation. We plan to continue the journey with an upcoming EU preparatory action, supported by the European Parliament to be launched in fall. There, we will work together with territories in increasing awareness, build capacity for the development of place-based transformative innovation policies and experiment in practice such approaches with selected territories.

As we look ahead to 2024 and beyond, it is crucial to continue fostering a systems change mindset within our regional innovation ecosystems. By leveraging the insights gained from initiatives like the PRI pilot, we can better address global challenges and enhance the resilience and competitiveness of our regions.



TESTIMONIAL

EU|BIC Royal Docks Centre for Sustainability's Vision for East London



In the heart of East London, the Royal Docks Centre for Sustainability (RDCS) stands as a beacon of innovation, enterprise, and sustainability. Launched by the University of East London (UEL), the RDCS emerges as a critical response to the burgeoning demands of the next industrial revolution. This pioneering initiative marks a significant stride toward fostering a sustainable future for the Royal Docks and the wider East London area.

By: **Robert de Jong**,
Director at Royal Docks Centre for Sustainability (University East London)

A Hatchery for Sustainable Innovation

Spread across three expansive floors on the Docklands Campus, the RDCS is ingeniously designed to catalyse sustainable business, skills development, and community growth. By providing access to affordable workspace, specialist facilities, academic expertise, and a diverse talent pipeline, the Centre is poised to nurture startups and SMEs while promoting professional development.

Commitment to Sustainability and Inclusion

At its core, the RDCS is committed to embedding a culture of sustainability in all its undertakings. This commitment extends to supporting underrepresented groups, thereby enhancing the Centre's role in driving meaningful engagement between the University and East London. The Director's decision to allocate grant funding of up to £1.6m from the Royal Docks Good Growth Fund underscores the Centre's potential to support 410 new jobs, 400 businesses, and 100 global business users over five years. This investment not only benefits UEL's student population, many of whom are East London residents but also underscores the Centre's role in shaping a sustainable and inclusive future.

An Ecosystem for Sustainable Growth

The Royal Docks area, renowned for its historic vibrancy and dynamic community, is undergoing a transformative journey into a sustainable and inclusive future. With plans to deliver at least 12,000 new homes alongside major development schemes, the Royal Docks is setting

a new standard for urban living that prioritises environmental sustainability, equality, and community wealth building. The RDCS plays a pivotal role in this transformation by providing a platform for nurturing urban tech businesses and fostering a culture of innovation and sustainability.

A Catalyst for Sustainable Urban Development

The RDCS's establishment comes at a critical time as London and Newham seek to drive forward recovery post-pandemic. As the capital's only Enterprise Zone, the Royal Docks is uniquely positioned to marshal investment toward rebuilding a fairer, more sustainable city. The Centre's focus on fairness, inclusivity, and sustainability aligns with the Royal Docks' ambition to redefine its identity as a mixed-use destination renowned for equality, diversity, and sustainability.

Conclusion: A Sustainable Future for East London

The launch of the Royal Docks Centre for Sustainability heralds a new era of sustainable innovation and enterprise in East London. By fostering a strong ecosystem for skills development and supporting progressive businesses, the RDCS is not only contributing to the economic growth of the region but also championing the principles of sustainability, inclusivity, and community engagement. As the Royal Docks continue to evolve into a dynamic destination for London, the RDCS stands as a testament to the collective ambition to create a future that is sustainable, vibrant, and inclusive for all.



The EU|BIC Community – Creating impact through shared commitments

EU|BICs are quality-certified organisations that use business and innovation as a force for regional (economic, sustainable, and social) development. EU|BICs use the best possible actions to create thriving startups and SMEs, taking real steps to ensure that their services are best advantageous to their clients and best advantageous to their regions

EU|BICs bring together a diverse pan-European and global community of people that use innovative business as a driver for regional economic, social and sustainable development – the **EU|BIC Community**. The EU|BIC community works toward a green, digital and fair society and creating high-quality jobs. The community rallies around its **four mission commitments**:

1. Regional Sustainable Economic Development

From its origins until today, we endeavour to build well-connected innovation ecosystems that support the economic development of European regions.

3. Access to Finance

From its origins until today, we endeavour to provide a steady pipeline of innovative, investment-ready companies and foster supportive investment opportunities.

2. Quality Business Support

We conduct our operations in a manner that delivers the most excellent innovation support services possible.

4. Scaling European Innovation

Our pan-European nature is one of our greatest assets to bolster the internationalisation potential of European startups, scaleups and innovative SMEs.

“As local professionals with a global outlook, our drive to join the EU|BIC community stems from its potential to significantly enhance our access to an international network, knowledge, and resources. This move is about much more than just expanding our reach; it’s about intensifying growth of our team and clients. We’re excited about the opportunity to enrich the EU|BIC community with our extensive regional network and the specialised expertise of our clients. Achieving the EU|BIC certification is not only a testament to our relentless efforts but also a key element in attracting more support from regional governmental and public entities.”

Petr Dobrovský,

Managing Director of Liberec Regional Development Agency (ARR) / Lipo.ink – certified in January 2024

Why we got Certified

“Securing the EU|BIC certification resonates deeply with our ethos of marrying local expertise with a global perspective. The EU|BIC Certification it’s a gateway to offering unmatched opportunities for growth and innovation to our clientele and the wider community. This recognition underscores our commitment and capacity to drive meaningful change and progress in the region.”

Philipp Roden,

Director of EU|BIC Lipo.ink in Liberec – certified in January 2024

“Obtaining EU|BIC Certification has been a transformative milestone for IncubAlliance Paris-Saclay, marking our commitment to continuous improvement and excellence. The networking opportunities have opened doors to invaluable insights and collaborations, enriching our support delivery and fostering strategic relationships. Especially as we chart our international strategy, the guidance from EU|BIC’s experts and members has been indispensable. The professionalism, dedication, and expertise encountered within the EBN staff and EU|BIC community have profoundly impacted us, reinforcing our gratitude and enthusiasm for this partnership. Thank you for empowering our journey”.

Arielle Sante,

CEO of EU|BIC IncubAlliance Paris-Saclay – certified in March 2024

Being awarded full certification and the EU|BIC Trademark is a recognition of our talented and dedicated team, their commitment, and hard work. It testifies the care we put into our organisation, ecosystem, and clients. This certification also brings a responsibility to maintain a high quality of our services as we continue our journey of learning and growth, now supported by the EU|BIC Community. Full certification and membership mean a significant future development for S-IC, opening a wide range of new possibilities for our clients and ecosystem partners. We will transform this opportunity into successful new collaborations on a European level and beyond. We are ready to serve as a gateway to the vibrant innovation ecosystem in the Prague metropolitan area for other EU|BIC Community members.

Pavel Jovanovič,

CEO of EU|BIC Central Bohemian Innovation Centre (S-IC) – certified in June 2024

“EU|BIC certification brings us a highly respected confirmation of our positioning in our regional innovation ecosystem. It helps us gain more international experience and establish new international partnerships. Last but not least, it provides us with very useful feedback on our work.”

Tomáš Dostál,

CEO of EU|BIC ICUK – certified in June 2024



EU|BIC Community's Impact 2023 – 2024

A growing innovation
community that puts people,
regions, and the planet at the
heart its actions

About the EU|BIC community

EU|BICs are an important component of regional innovation ecosystems in all regions where they exist. Their position is leveraged most when EU|BICs play an active role in orchestrating the innovation ecosystem or act as developers of the region's innovation strategy. Those who do this successfully assert the creative power of local entrepreneurs, steer different support mechanisms, and co-design instruments to accelerate the transformation of regional economies.

Although diverse, most EU|BIC community organisations operate primarily as startup incubators and accelerators.

EU|BICs use the best possible actions to create thriving startups and SMEs – working in industries ranging from Space, Health, Food, Energy, Smart Materials, and Digital. A key feature of EU|BICs as innovation ecosystem builders and business intermediaries: they are taking real steps to ensure that their services are best advantageous to their clients – and best advantageous to their regions.

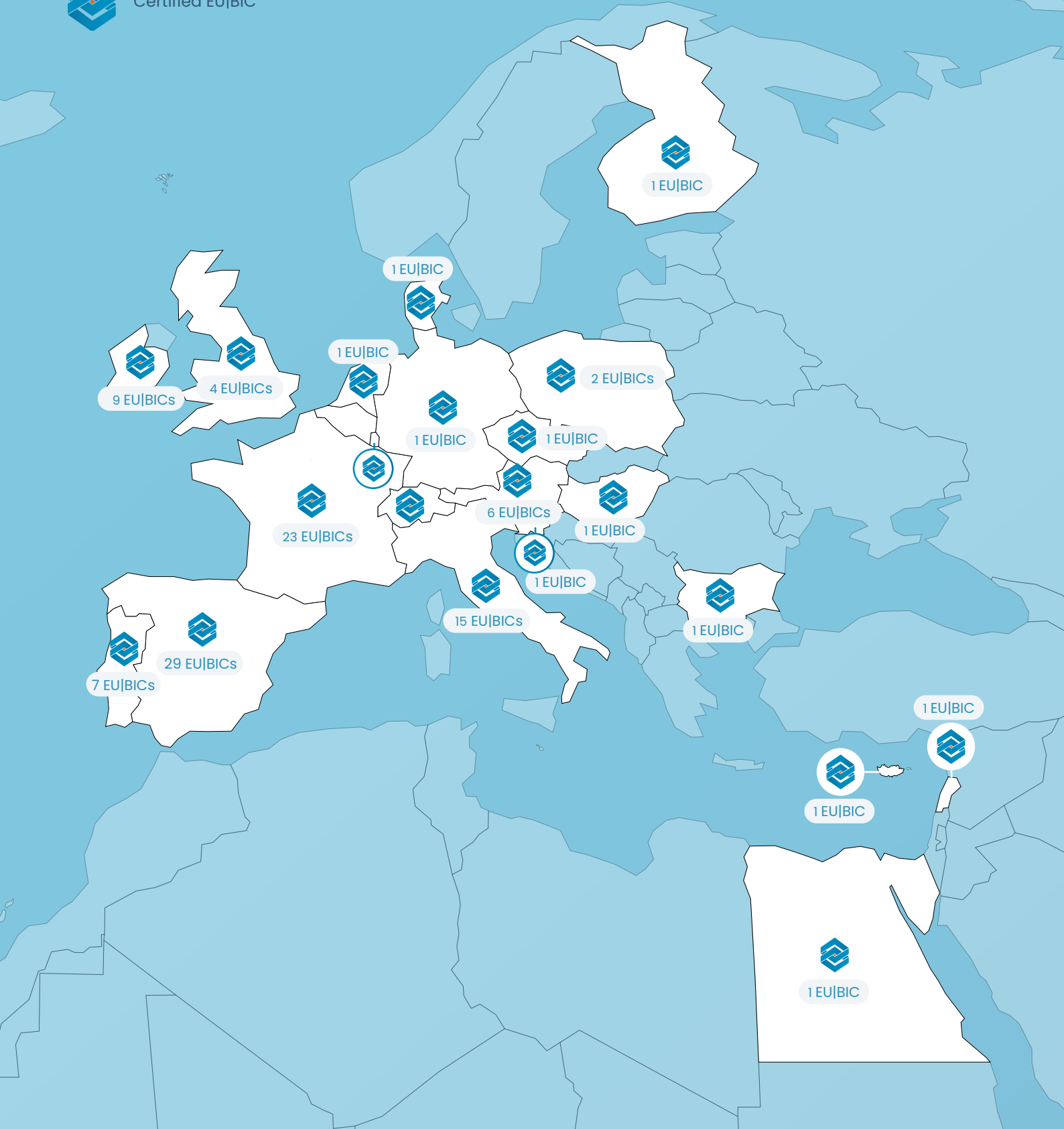
As a pan-European community, we concentrate our efforts around four mission commitments: regional economic development, quality business support, access to finance, and scaling European innovation. We believe these four-mission elements form the core building blocks of a well-performing innovation ecosystem.

The impact of the EU|BIC community has been assessed with data collected from 89 organisations from 22 countries, covering a wide range of regions, from large metropolitan areas to mid-size cities and rural areas – from innovation leader regions to emerging innovation regions, EU|BICs are key to the success of wide innovation policies.

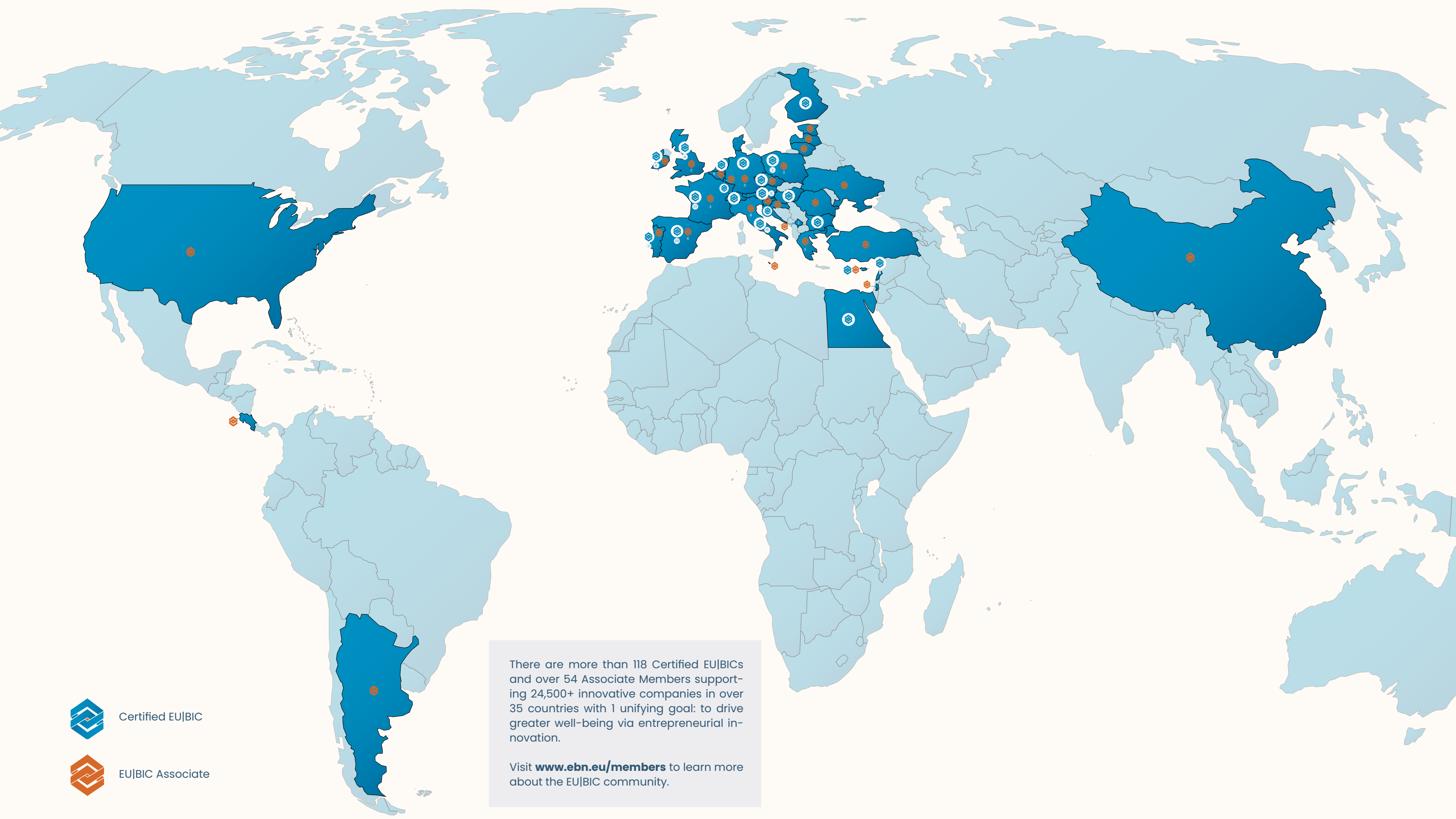
In the maps below, we showcase the geographical locations of the EU|BIC community with a focus on different categories of EU|BIC members:

- Certified EU|BICs: These organisations benefit from the EU|BIC label and trademark, having undergone rigorous certification processes to ensure high-quality service delivery.
- EU|BIC Associates: These are member organisations of EBN, associated with the missions of EU|BIC community but have not undergone the certification process.

Map of Certified EU|BICs



Map of all EU|BIC Community Members



 Certified EU|BIC

 EU|BIC Associate

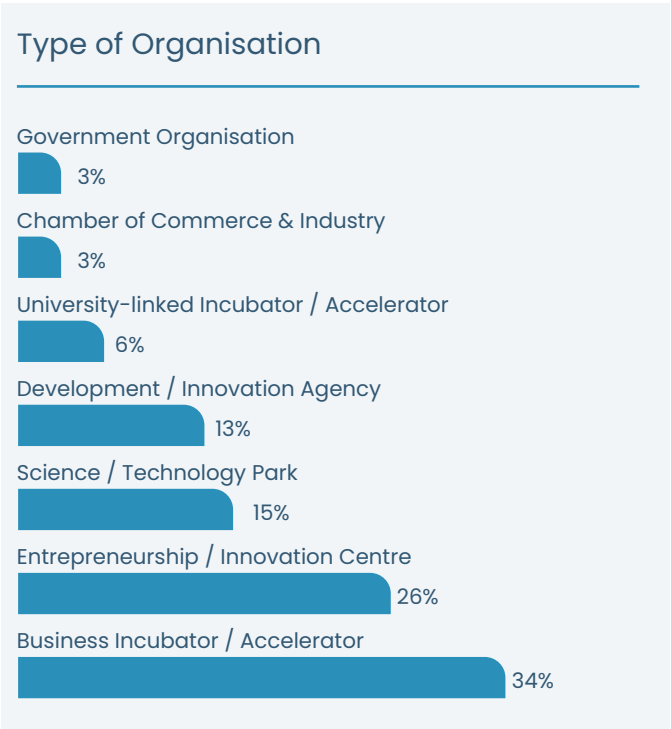
Regional sustainable economic development

From its origins until today, we endeavour to build well-connected innovation ecosystems that support the economic development of European regions.

As innovation ecosystem orchestrators EU|BICs partner with multiple relevant ecosystem actors.

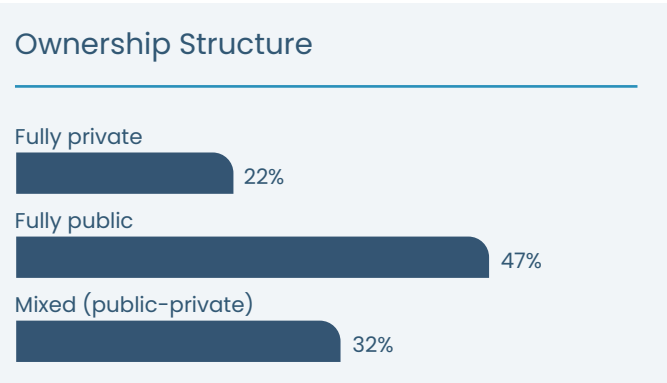
Type of Organisation

The EU|BIC community includes diverse organisations, with over one-third being business incubators or accelerators, 26% being entrepreneurship or innovation centres, 15% being science & technology parks, and 13% being development & innovation agencies. 78% are non-profit organisations, and the remaining 22% are for-profit. The average staff size within the community is 19.9 people. They all aim to support innovative ideas for the development of their cities and regions.



Ownership Structure

Almost half of EU|BIC members are owned by the public sector while only 22% of the EU|BICs are fully private.



Partnership with public sector institutions

EU|BICs all over Europe and beyond are the privileged actors in their regional and local entrepreneurship arena, federating wide ecosystems and innovation specialists to the benefit of regions and communities' development.

Local governments are associated with 98% of the EU|BICs. In addition, 85% of the community has partnerships with other business/entrepreneurship support organisations (BSO/ESO).

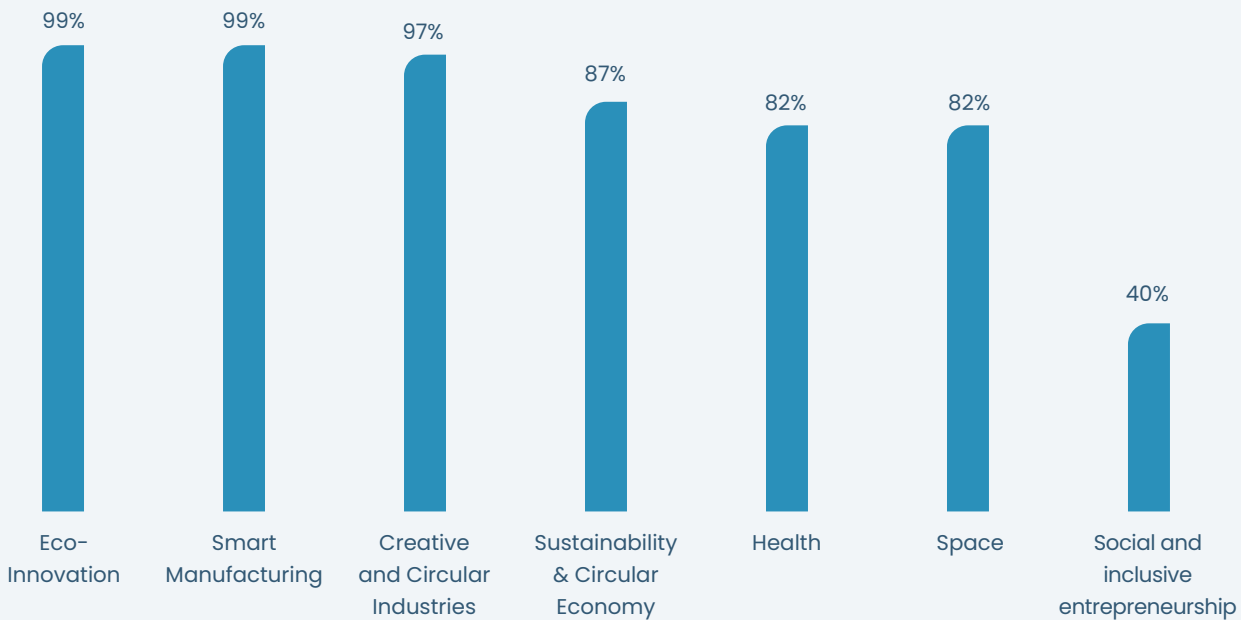


Areas of expertise and sectors represented

EBN and EU|BICs share the mission and responsibility to build a community of connected business innovation leaders committed to addressing our world’s most pressing issues with innovative solutions. Centring sustainability, inclusion and social transformation around innovation is a display of responsibility, agility, forward-thinking, and resilience, as demonstrated by the EU|BIC community.

More than 90% of EU|BICs operate as generic or mixed-sector experts. **Sustainability (green and eco innovation) Smart Manufacturing, as well as Creative and Cultural Industries areas are the best represented** – with almost all EU|BICs being experts in these areas. **Additionally, 87% EU|BICs declare that have expertise in “Sustainability and Circular Economy”**. EU|BICs cover vast sectors and expertise, representing diversified communities and ecosystems. Approximately 40% of EU|BICs also specialise on social and inclusive entrepreneurship.

Sectors supported by EU|BICs



Quality Business Support

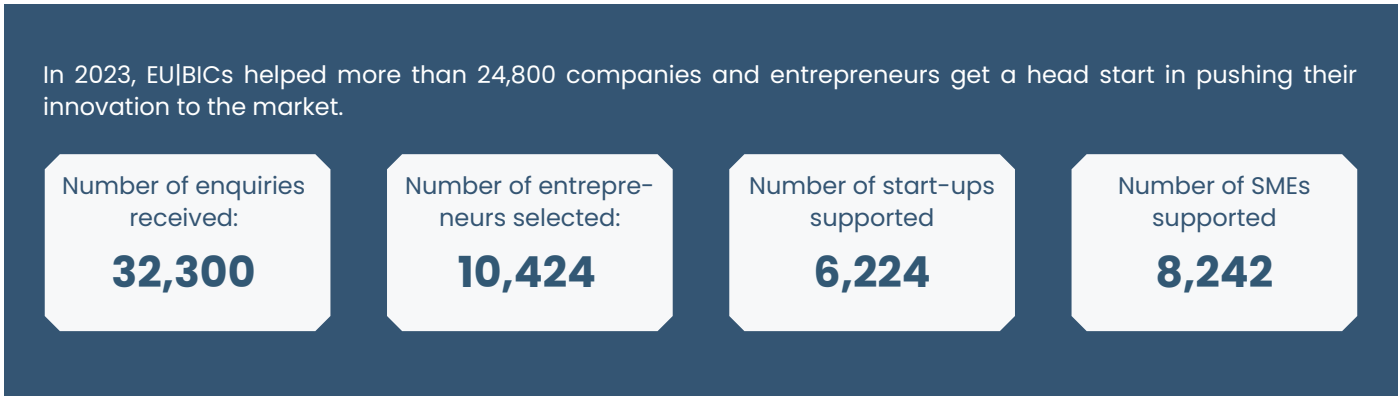
EU|BICs conduct their operations in a manner that delivers the most excellent innovation support services possible. Our quality-certified, entrepreneurial selection, ideation, acceleration, and incubation programmes are designed to support startups, scale-ups, SMEs, and innovators of all kinds to keep succeeding in achieving their mission.

EU|BICs Supported 24,800 Clients Across Europe in 2023



Since 2004, more than 400,000 companies – between startups and SMEs – have been supported by the EU|BIC community, creating quality jobs for their region.

Companies supported



In terms of client support, EU|BICs are dedicated to nurturing a wide pool of potential entrepreneurs, comprising 42% of clients supported. SMEs, representing 33% of clients, and startups, comprising 25%, constitute smaller, yet crucial, populations. The emphasis lies in EU|BICs supporting entrepreneurs from the earliest stages of their journey, while also providing essential incubation and growth support to existing companies. Overall, the EU|BIC network provided support to nearly 25,000 clients in 2023, averaging 280 clients per entity.

Type of companies supported

Potential entrepreneurs	Startups	SMEs
10,424	6,224	8,242
Average per EU BIC : 117	Average per EU BIC : 70	Average per EU BIC : 280
TOTAL 24,890		
Average per EU BIC : 280		

EU|BICS ACHIEVE OUTSTANDING SURVIVAL RATES:
83% OF SUPPORTED COMPANIES THRIVE BEYOND THREE YEARS

SURVIVAL RATES: The EU|BICs can be proud of the high success rate of the companies they support. In fact, **83%** of companies are still in business three years after having benefited from the support of an EU|BIC. **This rate is well above the European average of 58% and marks a slight increase from the 82% survival rate in 2022.**

Startups and scale-ups supported by EU|BICs outperform other European startups in the first 3-year’s survival rates with 83% vs 58% EU average (source: Eurostat). This measure showcases the sustainability of businesses supported and quality support of EU|BICs.

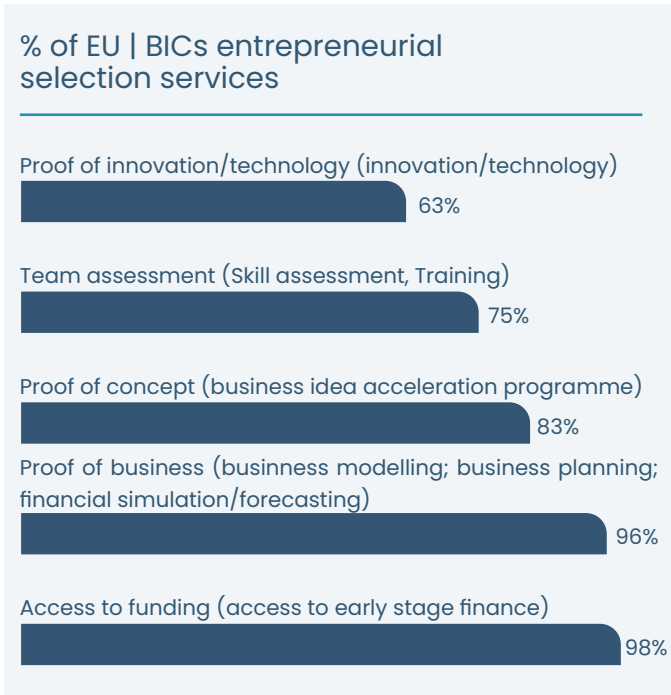
The **remarkable survival rates of EU|BIC-supported companies underscore the effectiveness and quality of the support provided**, highlighting the EU|BICs’ crucial role in fostering resilient and sustainable businesses that significantly outperform their European counterpart hub initiatives.

Business Support Services Offered

The EU|BIC offer is extensive as it demonstrates the average number of programmes run per organisation (20).



Selection services provided

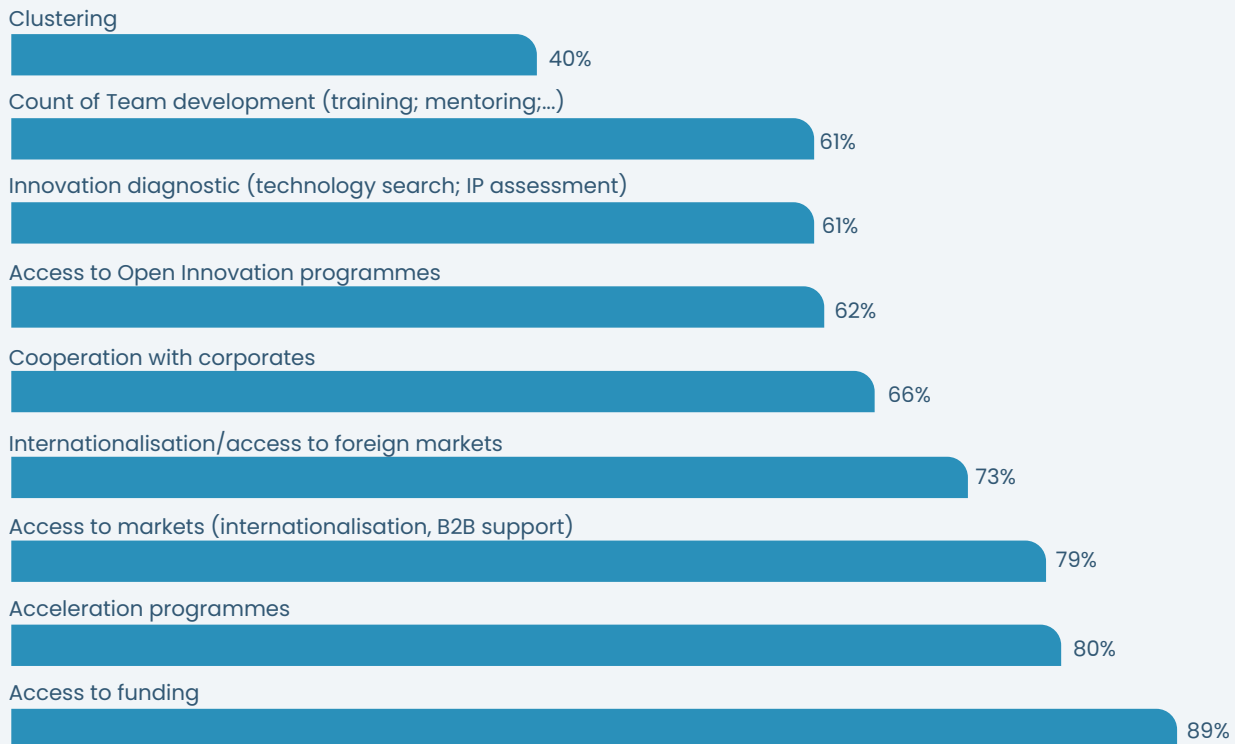


Provision of start-up services



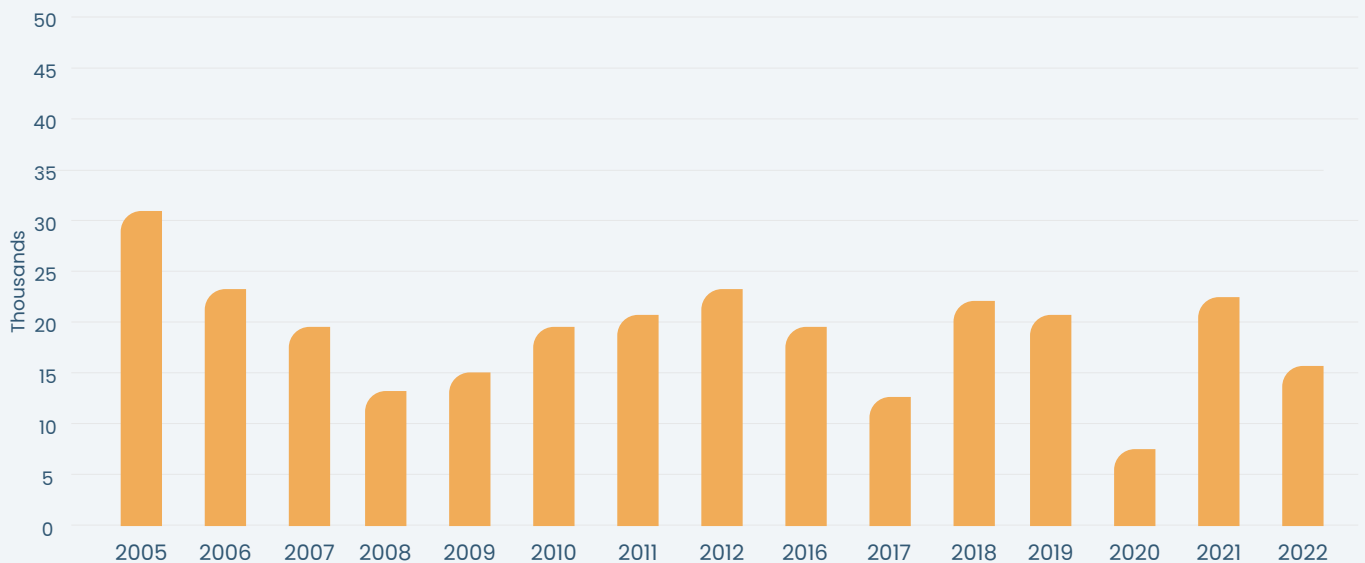
Growth services provided

% of EU | BICs providing startup services



FTE (full time equivalent) jobs created is one of the most important indicators we are assessing year by year. Creating jobs in innovative companies means regional development and economic sustainability. **Since year 2004 until today, the EU|BICs have created 338,748 jobs. This is a yearly creation of 21,171 jobs per year.** The graph below shows the FTE jobs created year by year.

FTE Jobs Created

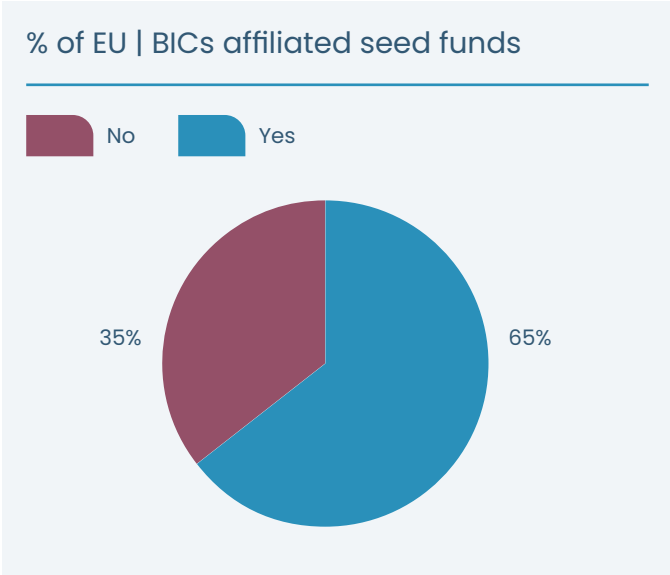


Access to finance

From its origins until today, we endeavour to provide a steady pipeline of innovative, investment-ready companies and foster supportive investment opportunities, including, but not limited to, access to private investments, EU and non-EU grants, loans and equity funds, ensuring the continuity of the businesses and innovations that a competitive European economy needs.

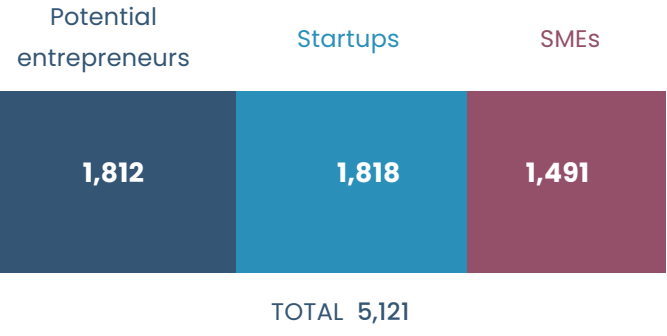
With a network of networks also including hundreds of investors, we rely on various tools and programmes to embed innovation to finance, and finance to innovation and share best practices on investment processes.

EU|BICs with Affiliated Seed Funds Investing in Client Startups



Clients supported with accessing funds

Clients supported in obtaining funds



The average of clients supported accessing funds would be 58 per EU|BIC.

Amount of funding raised by companies supported by EU|BICs, per investor type

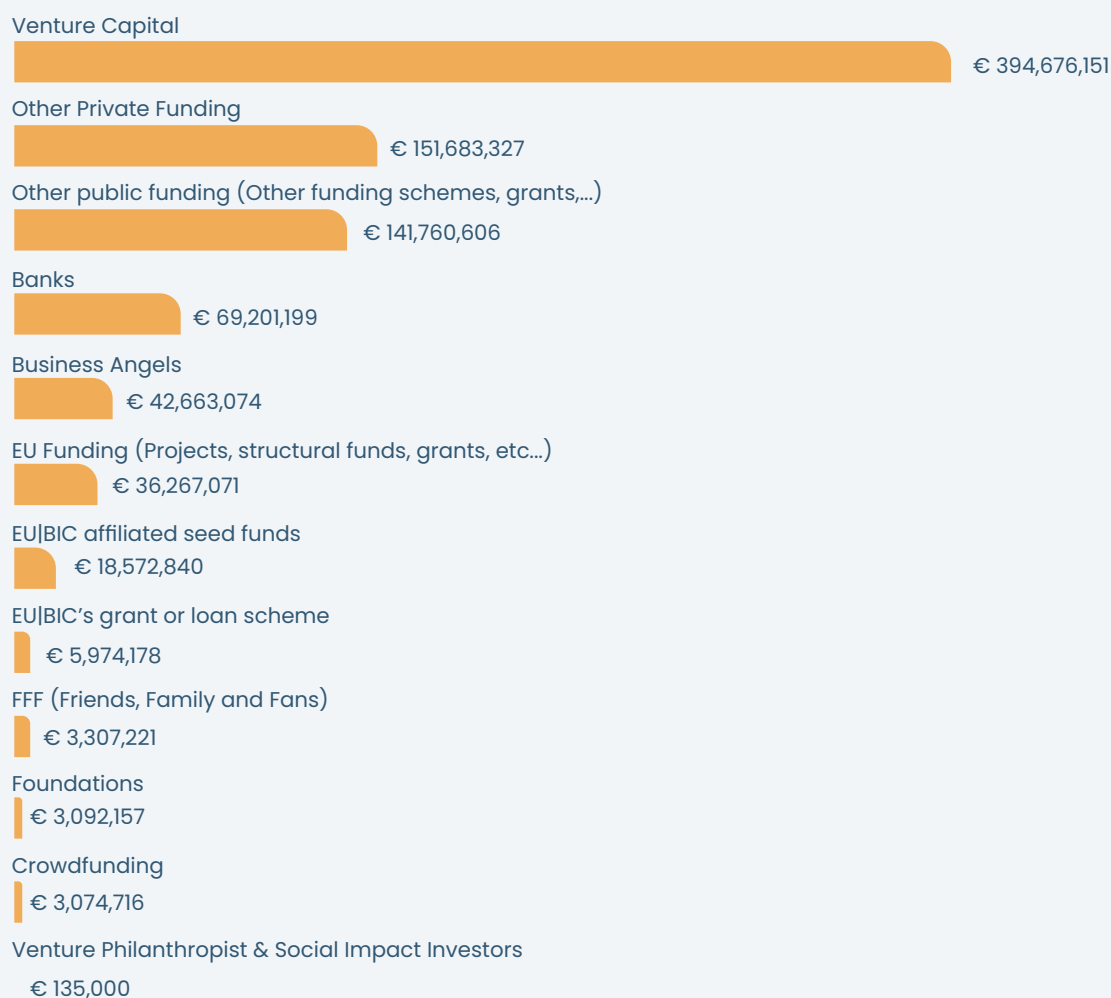
In 2023, companies supported by EU|BICs secured over 870 million euros from various sources.

Venture capital investments constituted the largest share of funding, contributing 45% of the total funds raised.

Notably, private institutions played a significant role, providing nearly 80% of the total funds raised during the year. Conversely, EU funds constituted a minor 4% of the total funding.

Total amount of funding raised

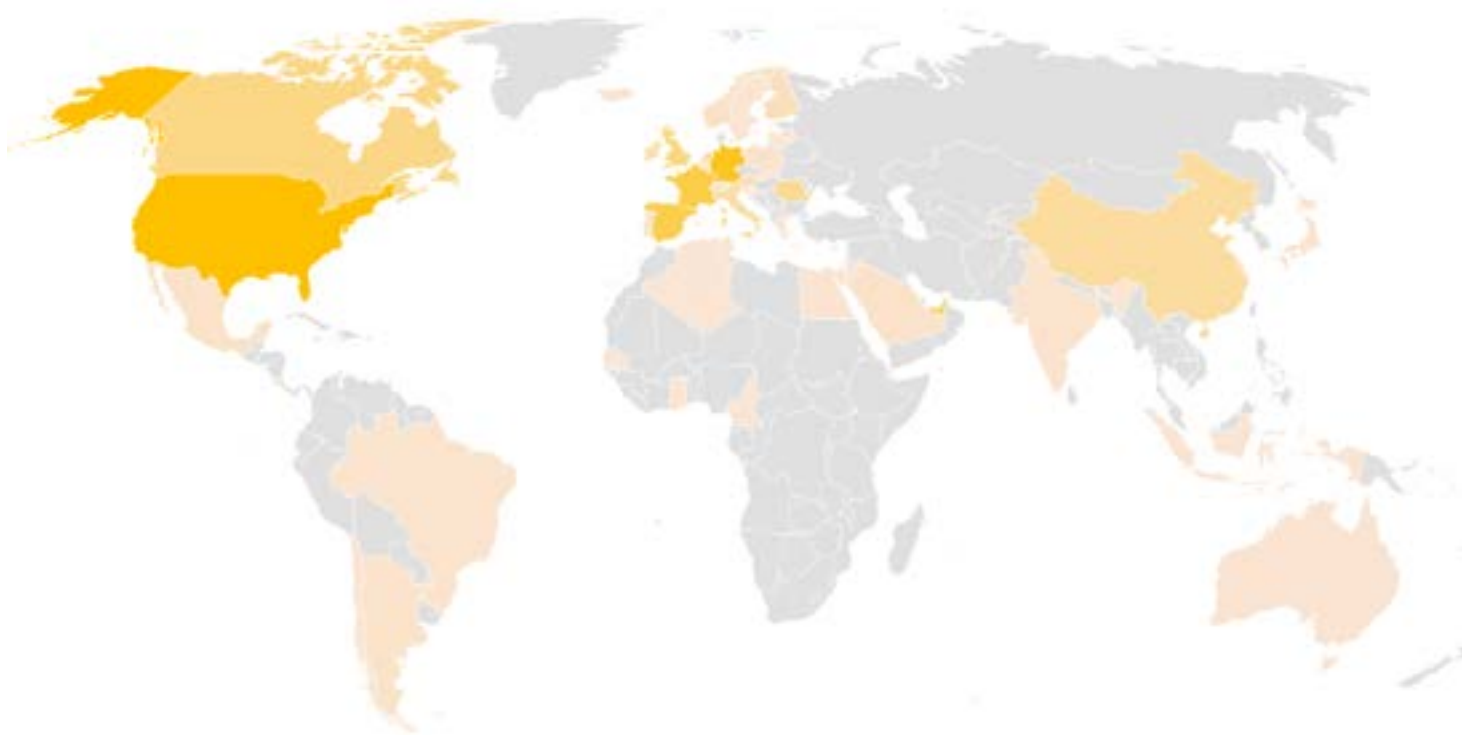
Funds raised



Scaling European Innovation

EU|BICs supported local companies to access foreign markets

In total, EU|BICs supported 690 client companies in their efforts to internationalise and access foreign markets. During 2023, 104 EU|BIC clients targeted the United States as their destination.

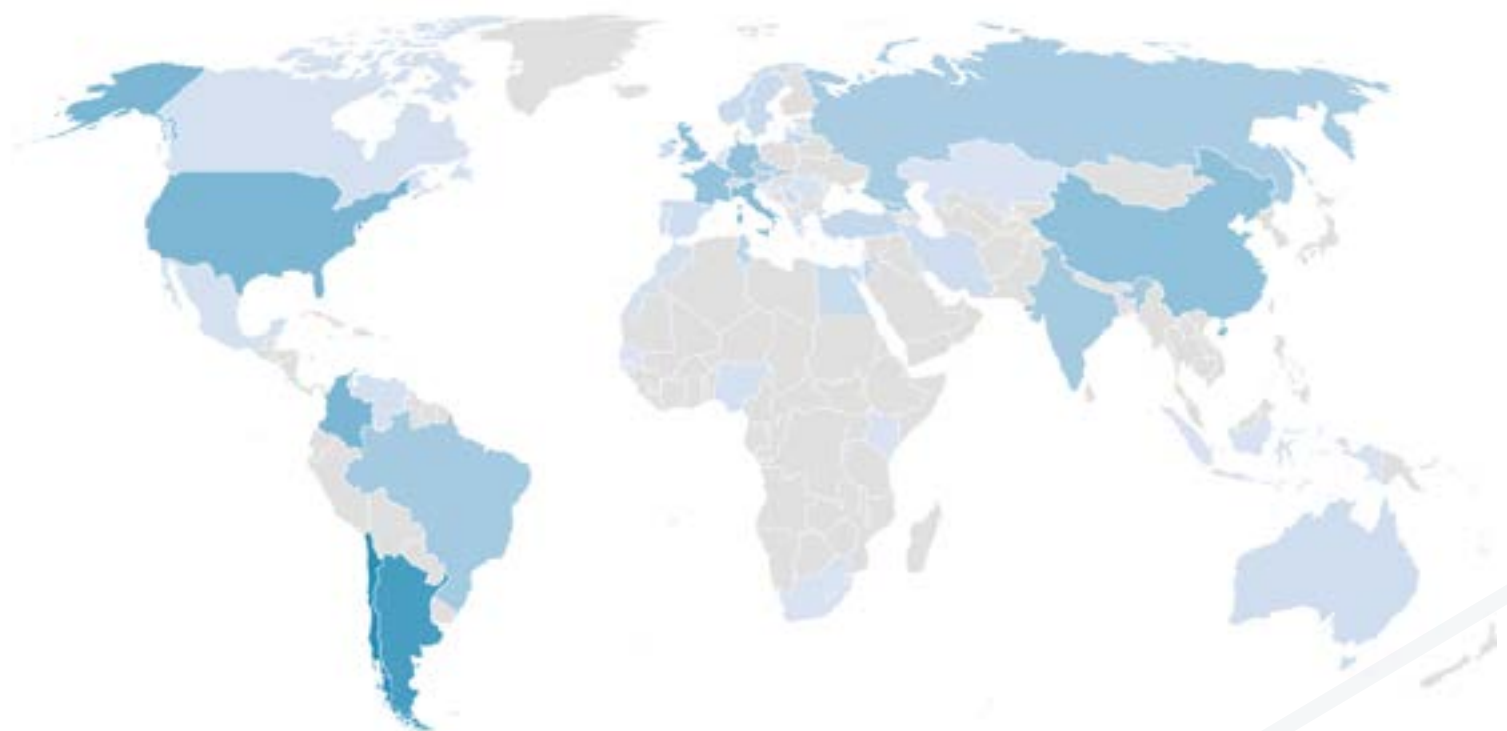


Top 5 Foreign Market Destinations

1. United States
2. Germany
3. France
4. Spain
5. United Arab Emirates

EU|BICs supported companies from these foreign countries to access the local (European) market:

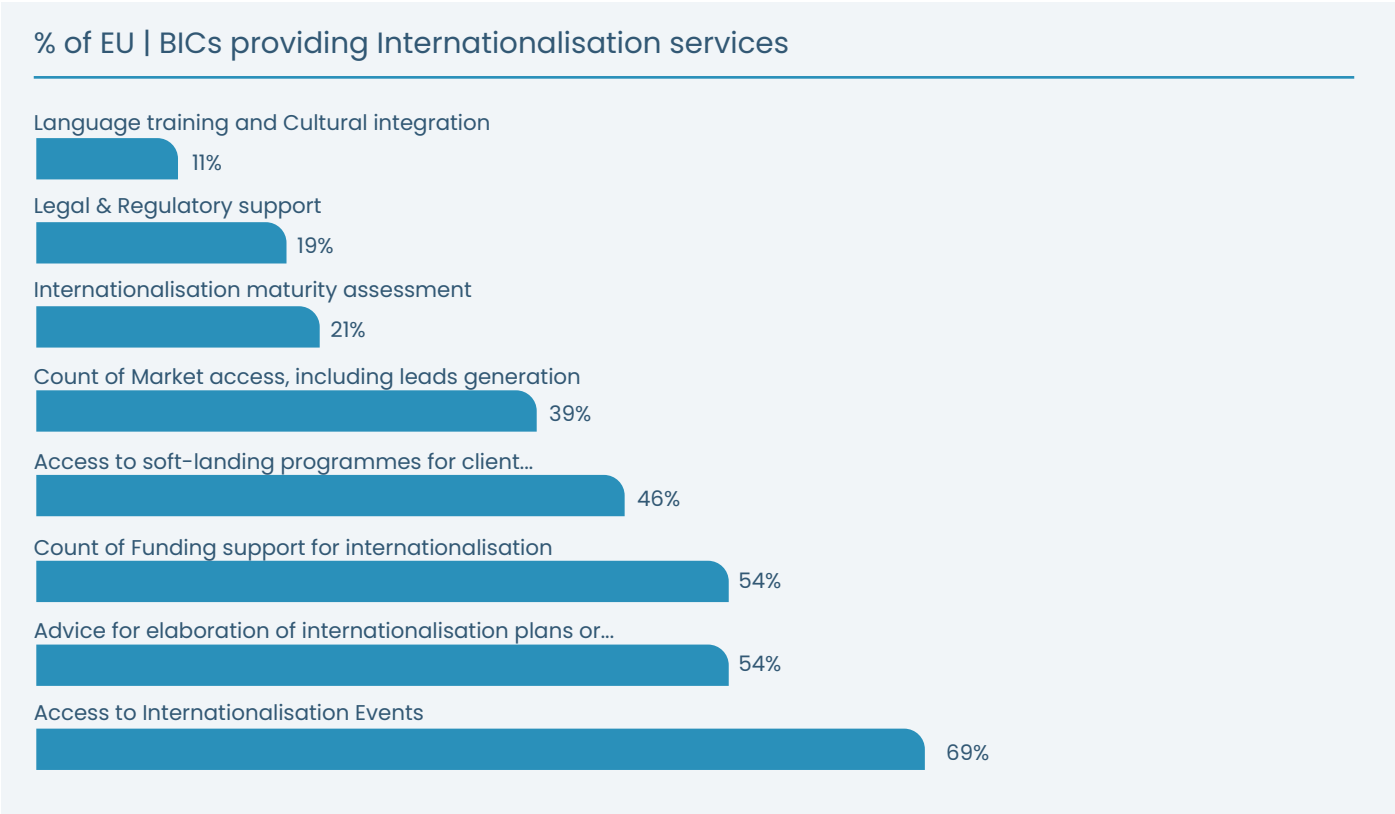
In total, EU|BICs facilitated the entry of 343 foreign companies into their local markets.



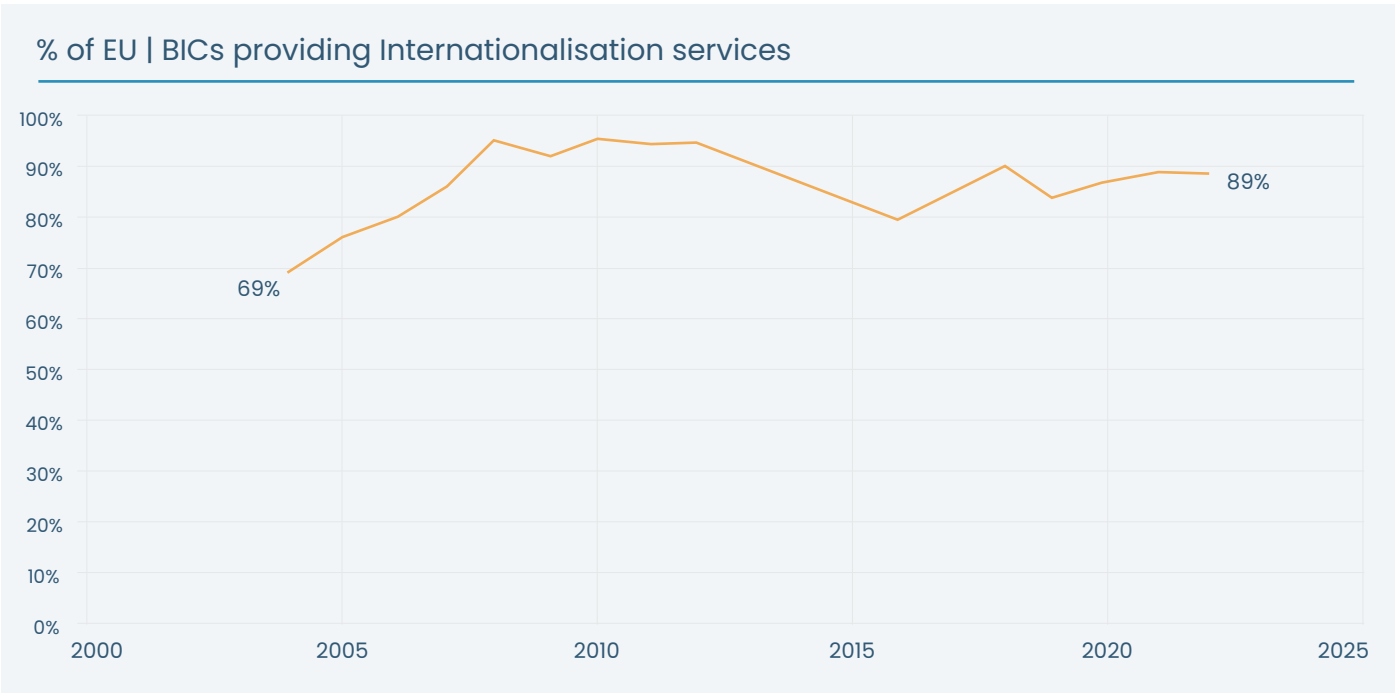
Top 5 Origin Countries Scaling to EU|BIC Local Markets

1. Chile
2. Argentina
3. United States
4. Colombia
5. Italy

Internationalisation services provided



Internationalisation is key for the EU|BIC community. From 2004 to 2023, the proportion of EU|BICs offering internationalisation support services increased from 69% to 90%.





Regional, Sustainable Economic Development

EU|BIC certification and community deliver sustainable growth to entrepreneurship support activities and the regional innovation ecosystem.

Regional, Sustainable Economic Development – Best Practices

EBN and EU|BICs share the mission and responsibility to build a community of connected business innovation leaders committed to addressing our world's most pressing issues with innovative solutions.

Prioritising **sustainability**, **inclusion**, and **social transformation** in innovation underscores the EU|BIC community's commitment to responsibility, agility, forward-thinking, and resilience.

TESTIMONIAL

EU|BICs in Financial Times – Sifted – Statista's Europe's Leading Startup Hubs Ranking



[Europe's Leading Start-Up Hubs](#) highlight the emergence of a diverse and widespread ecosystem for entrepreneurial people across Europe, driven by networks of incubators and accelerators. Identifying 125 incubators and accelerators across 21 European countries, this study underscored the transformation of Europe's landscape for early-stage founders. It illustrates a burgeoning and varied European ecosystem, from tech and renewables to green tech and more general business ideas, supported by localised initiatives, university partnerships, and a need for enhanced growth capital to sustain and scale innovative start-ups across the continent.

Many of Europe's most promising start-up hubs have one ability which stands out: they master networking. While the genesis of Europe's best incubators and accelerators is hugely diverse, their success is heavily reliant on the integration and support of academic institutions, seasoned entrepreneurs and business angels, companies and corporations as well as regional, national or cross-border initiatives.

In that sense, many of Europe's start-up hubs are essentially hybrid. They might have been born out of top universities or financed by ambitious regions. Yet they managed to convince other stakeholders to come on board. Some of these hubs are located where you expect them – in the big cities which attract founders: London, Paris, Berlin, and Barcelona.

Yet when you look at the first EU|BIC community members who made it into the inaugural ranking, you know that the exceptions are more the rule here. To name a few: Accent is based in Wiener Neustadt and not in Vienna, IPN is based in Coimbra, not Lisboa, CEEI sits in Valencia not Madrid, JIC is in Brno-Medlány, not Prague, and the University of Warwick Science Park is based in Coventry, not Cambridge. Champs-sur-Mars or Palaiseau are also not Paris, at least administratively speaking.

The ranking shows that it helps to be experienced, which applies to almost all EU|BIC members, but in some cases, we also found EU|BICs who are merely several years old.

In a nutshell; the first edition of this FT-Statista-Sifted initiative shows that almost any EU|BIC has an opportunity here to stand out – and that should be leveraged for the second edition which currently is in the registration phase.

How EU|BICs Foster Regional Sustainable Economic Development and Wellbeing

EU|BICs represent a key component in Europe's strategy to foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development. These centres, certified for their quality support services to startups and SMEs, are instrumental in driving economic, social, and sustainable development across regions. This appraisal explores the importance of EU|BICs and similar entrepreneurship and innovation support organisations in assuring sustainable industries, sustainable regions, and overall well-being, leveraging insights from various sources including those provided.

1. Role in Promoting Sustainable Industries

EU|BICs play a valuable role in transforming industries towards sustainability. By supporting startups and SMEs that focus on green technologies, circular economy models, and sustainable practices, these centres directly contribute to the development of sustainable industries. The EU's emphasis on the circular economy and sustainability underscores the importance of innovation in achieving these goals. EU|BICs, by nurturing innovations that facilitate the efficient use of resources and reduce environmental impacts, align with the EU's sustainability objectives and contribute to the broader agenda of transitioning to a climate-neutral economy.

2. Regional solutions for global challenges

EU|BICs are strategically positioned to ensure regional sustainability. Through their support for local startups and SMEs, they stimulate regional economic development while advocating for and implementing sustainable business practices. This dual focus on economic growth and sustainability is crucial for achieving sustainable regions. At EBN we highlight the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing regional sustainability challenges. EU|BICs foster these collaborations by connecting various stakeholders, including government bodies, academic institutions, and private sector entities, thereby creating ecosystems that are conducive to sustainable regional development.

3. Wellbeing through Entrepreneurship and Innovation

The wellbeing of communities is intricately linked to economic opportunities and environmental sustainability. EU|BICs contribute to well-being by creating jobs, fostering economic diversity, and promoting innovations that address societal challenges, including health, education, and environmental protection. The support for entrepreneurship and innovation not only drives economic prosperity but also leads to the development of solutions that enhance quality of life. Our community demonstrates the broad impacts of innovation on societal well-being, including improved health outcomes, enhanced educational opportunities, and increased environmental awareness and action.

4. Sustainable and competitive innovation

EU|BICs and similar organisations are crucial in the global effort to address pressing challenges such as climate change, resource depletion, and social inequality. By supporting the development and scaling of innovations that offer sustainable solutions, these centres contribute to global efforts such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The "Union Bioenergy Sustainability Report" and "Trade Effects of Sustainability Standards" provide evidence of the global impact of sustainable innovation, showing how EU|BIC-supported companies can contribute to a more sustainable and equitable global economy.

5. Future Directions and Challenges

While EU|BICs have made significant strides in promoting sustainable industries, sustainable regions, and overall wellbeing, challenges remain. These include the need for increased funding and resources, broader geographical coverage to ensure all regions benefit from innovation support, and enhanced mechanisms for measuring and reporting on the sustainability impacts of supported startups and SMEs. The future success of EU|BICs will depend on their ability to adapt to emerging trends, leverage new technologies, and foster an inclusive and diverse entrepreneurial ecosystem that prioritises sustainability alongside economic growth.

40+ EU|BIC contribute to European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH)

The EU|BIC community actively contributes to reinforcing the digitalisation of companies across Europe. EU|BICs, as certified organisations, leverage business and innovation as forces for regional development, focusing on economic, sustainable, and social advancements. These centres provide essential support to startups and SMEs aiming to thrive in the digital economy, ensuring that their services significantly benefit their clients and regions (European Business and Innovation Centre Network [EBN], 2022a).

Digitalisation is recognised as a key driver for economic growth, competitiveness, and environmental sustainability in the EU. In this context, EU|BICs act as catalysts by offering high-quality support services that meet verified standards, fostering innovative entrepreneurs to navigate and succeed in digital transformation. More than 40 members of the EU|BIC community are directly engaged in facilitating digitalisation initiatives, indicating a substantial commitment across the network to advancing digital capabilities among European businesses.

EU|BICs contribute to the digitalisation of companies through various mechanisms, including access to finance, support services, ecosystem building, and startup performance enhancement. They play a crucial role in connecting companies with digital innovation hubs, facilitating access to cutting-edge technologies, and offering guidance on digital transformation strategies. By doing so, EU|BICs help businesses harness the potential of digital technologies to innovate, scale up, and compete on a global stage.

Moreover, the certification and self-assessment frameworks utilised by EU|BICs stimulate continuous improvement in the quality of their service delivery. This ensures that business support organisations remain at the forefront of facilitating digitalisation efforts, enabling them to effectively respond to the evolving needs of startups and SMEs in a rapidly digitalising economy (EBN, 2022b).

In conclusion, EU|BICs play their part in reinforcing the digitalisation of companies within the EU. Their efforts not only support the development of digital skills and capacities among businesses but also contribute to the broader objectives of the EU's digital agenda, aiming for a digitally competent, competitive, and sustainable economy.

Krakow Technology Park's (KTP) Hub4Industry and Living Lab initiatives support businesses in evolving into future-ready factories by implementing Industry 4.0 solutions and testing products in real-life conditions. Hub4Industry, a comprehensive support centre, helps industrial companies enhance their market competitiveness through digital innovations. The Krakow Living Lab provides a platform for startups and companies to test their products and services within the city environment, addressing challenges and refining concepts before implementation. Established in 1997, KTP plays a critical role in the Regional Innovation Strategy, promoting smart specialisation and user-driven innovation, supported by city authorities, regional bodies, and major universities.

Atlantpole's Digital Innovation Value Accelerator (DIVA) EDIH

As the Innovation Hub for the Greater Nantes area, Atlantpole fosters innovation in Western France, particularly through its DIVA - Digital Innovation Value Accelerator (European Digital Innovation Hub - EDIH). Atlantpole supports over 460 companies and various innovation clusters, including Digital, Advanced Manufacturing, Biotech, Agrofood, and Clean Tech. With a strong track record of incubating more than 300 companies in the past 20 years, Atlantpole ensures a 90% survival rate for startups beyond five years. DIVA aims to democratise artificial intelligence (AI) by providing tailored support to businesses of all sizes and sectors, helping them leverage AI for tasks ranging from automating invoicing to optimising patient care pathways and enhancing production efficiency. By promoting the widespread adoption of AI, DIVA facilitates significant advancements in science, ecology, and societal well-being.

Tech4Efficiency EDIH, led by FUNDECYT-PCTEX, is a comprehensive digitalisation hub specialising in efficiency, ecology, sustainability, and equality. This one-stop shop is a joint competence centre comprising 11 entities, including business support organisations and innovation facilitators, all connected at the EU level. Aligned with Europe's green and digital transformation goals, Tech4Efficiency employs Cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence, and High-Performance Computing to support SMEs. It offers services such as testing and experimentation, training, financing support, and fostering innovation ecosystems and networks, promoting the digitalisation journey of companies and societal services.



TESTIMONIAL

EU|BIC Berytech – The Circular Transition: EMBRACE toolkit



By: Joelle El Hajjar,
Programmes Manager, Berytech Foundation

Embracing the Circular Economy: Decoupling Growth from Resource Consumption

In a circular economy, growth is decoupled from the consumption of scarce resources, and products are kept in productive use for as long as possible. Joelle El Hajjar programme manager from Berytech Foundation an organisation that actively supports entrepreneurs by providing a dynamic environment and ecosystem fostering innovation, technology and entrepreneurship in the region across the green, knowledge, social and blue economies, emphasises that this approach is consistent with the objectives of a green economy, which focuses on creating an innovation-driven national economy, promoting closed-loop systems, and reducing the consumption of non-renewable resources. Efficient use of energy, materials, and natural capital, coupled with replacing non-renewable with renewable resources, forms the backbone of this strategy, ultimately leading to an energy supply based on renewable energies.

Joelle invites us to think differently by asking, “How can our waste build capital rather than reduce it? What if products of today (or parts in them) become the resources of tomorrow? What if we never owned our technologies?”

The impact and benefits of this shift are profound, including the reduction of virgin resource consumption and end-of-life waste volumes, intelligent use of human resources leading to job creation in regional economies, conservation of embodied energy, CO₂ emissions, and water, creation of new opportunities for manufacturers, and increased benefits for consumers.

Four Types of Circular Value Creation

Building on her experience in managing programmes around the green economy and circular economy, Joelle illustrates the concept of circular value creation through four distinct approaches.

1. Firstly, she describes the “Inner Circle” strategy, where instead of discarding entire products, we replace worn parts. Imagine a shoe with a worn-out sole; rather than throwing away the entire shoe, we simply replace the sole, thus extending its life and reducing waste.
2. Secondly, the “Circling Longer” approach involves designing products with easily removable and repairable parts to maintain their performance over time. This method ensures that products are not only durable but also easy to fix, keeping them in use for longer periods.

3. The third approach, “Cascade Use,” highlights the potential of repurposing products through multiple lifecycles. For instance, a piece of clothing can transition from being worn first-hand, to being used as second-hand clothing, then repurposed as cleaning cloth, and finally used as insulation material. Each stage maximises the utility of the product, thereby conserving resources.
4. Lastly, Joelle explains the concept of “Pure Circles,” where materials, such as aluminium cans, are fully and infinitely recyclable. This ensures that these materials remain in use without degrading in quality, thus supporting a continuous cycle of reuse.

The EMBRACE TOOLKIT: A Pathway for Start-ups and SMEs

Start-ups and SMEs are increasingly exploring the potential of circularity by designing new products or services, validating circular business ideas, and transitioning from conventional to circular models. The EMBRACE TOOLKIT presented by Joelle and developed by the EU-funded Cluster4Green a programme focusing on promoting the circular transition among businesses, provides a structured approach to facilitate this transition, consisting of four distinct phases.

In the first phase, “Define Current and Future Challenges,” the focus is on understanding customer needs and identifying challenges. Joelle emphasises the importance of anticipating future trends and their potential effects on businesses. Tools like the ECOCanvas and P.E.S.T.E.L Analysis help in mapping out these needs and challenges.

The second phase, “Analyse the Value Chain,” involves a detailed examination of the system steps and resource flows. By mapping what comes in and goes out at each stage, businesses can spot inefficiencies and identify opportunities for improvement. This phase uses tools such as the lifecycle flows and Ins & Outs canvases to facilitate the analysis.

In the third phase, “From Vulnerability to Opportunities,” businesses are inspired by circularity strategies to develop viable proposals. Through the different stages of the toolkit, Joelle encourages companies to think creatively about how they can incorporate circular principles into their operations. The Circularity Strategies canvas, along with tools for defining and evaluating circularity proposals, support this process.

The final phase, “Prototyping the Circular Business Model,” focuses on defining and evaluating new business ideas and planning the necessary transformation steps. The Ecocanvas and Circular Transformation Roadmap are essential tools in this phase, guiding businesses through the prototyping and implementation process.

Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)

Joelle highlights the importance of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) in understanding the environmental impacts associated with all stages of a product's life cycle. This methodology helps in making informed decisions that promote sustainability. For instance, in dairy production, from field management to end-user distribution, each step must be analysed for its environmental impact and improved for circularity.

Final Recommendations

Joelle offers several recommendations: Study the current system comprehensively. Use prioritisation tools to focus on one system at a time. Consider the service aspect alongside the product. Pay special attention to the value proposition. Combine new technologies with innovative business models and social needs. Involve the supply chain to succeed in circularisation. Set up and measure indicators and objectives to track progress. Collaborate with other institutions. Learn from best practices and continuously improve.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHT – WINNER EU|BIC EXCELLENCE AWARD 2024

EU|BIC Laval Mayenne Technopole – Challenge Compétences

Beneficiaries: SME's, higher education schools, and students (graduate level)

Tools and Methodologies: Creativity, open innovation, fast prototyping

Goal: Mobilise local higher education students and enable companies to incorporate innovation into their practices. To discover local training courses, to empower their students, and to discover companies of interest – where students can seek future positions.



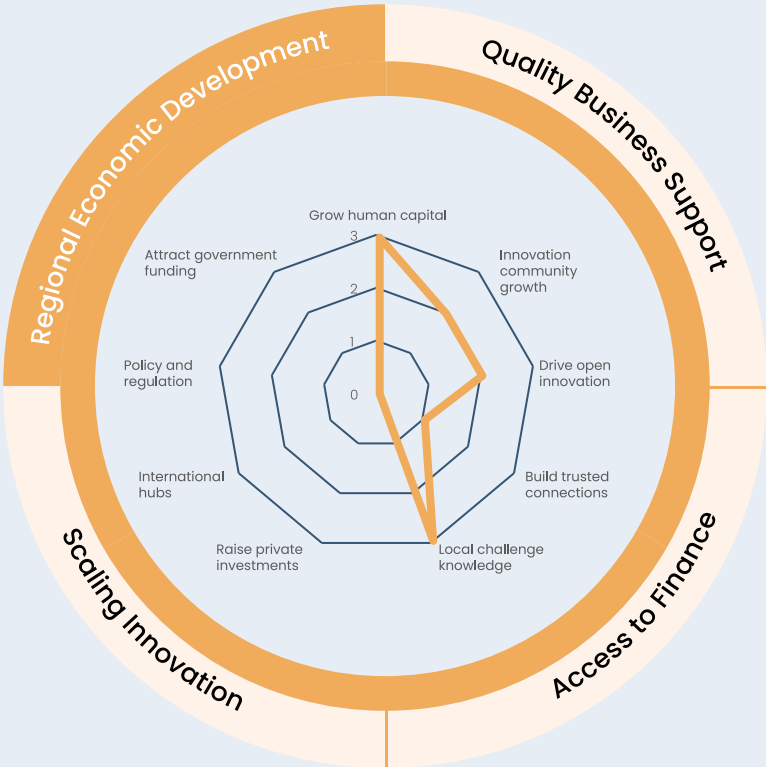
In collaboration with Ecole des Arts et Métiers, Laval Mayenne Technopole created this programme in 2011 to connect regional companies with students from higher education institutions to generate innovation projects.

In Challenge Compétences, teams of 4–5 students visit a company for a week to learn about it, brainstorm innovative solutions, and develop the best ideas into a proof of concept. This allows companies to benefit from fresh perspectives, while students gain valuable experience and professional networks.

Companies are instructed not to give students a specific work topic, allowing students to rely on their skills and knowledge. Participating companies have received ideas for new processes, markets, and value propositions.

The programme brings together students and companies from the region. It promotes development and innovation, the skills available in the region, raises students' awareness of creativity and innovation and connects us and the students with several regional companies while allowing them to innovate. It bridges the gap between traditional SMEs, which often believe they cannot innovate, and students, who may otherwise leave the area for internships or careers. Challenge Compétences enhances the value of regional schools and companies.

IMPACT



After the end of the Challenge, SMEs tend to employ student in internships which often allow them to further develop their projects into a 'real' product/service.

13
editions

39
sessions with 9 different
schools

954
students within 206
teams

165
companies

90%
of companies are
satisfied

92%
of companies are ready
to recommend the
Challenge

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHT – SEMI-FINALIST EU|BIC EXCELLENCE AWARD 2024

EU|BIC Lappeenranta & KEHY – South Karelia Growth Builders

Beneficiaries: Family-owned SMEs employing 10–50 individuals who have growth ambitions.

Tools and Methodologies: : Extremely tailored coaching services for 8 months, including thematic workshops, advisory board work, customer validation, follow-up up to 3 years after the programme

Goal: To fill in an ecosystemic gap, annually offering goal-driven growth and internationalisation support to small-size enterprises (<50 employees), allowing them to reach a medium-size (>50 employees) which has been shown to have positive rippling effects in the whole ecosystem (growth of other companies through their subcontracting leverage, student development and employment, investment availability, regional employment). To build networks to support growth companies, bringing expertise to the region for the benefit of businesses



Growth Builders is a carefully designed innovation support programme. It was created by the innovation agencies of the two largest cities in South Karelia (Finland) – EU|BIC Lappeenranta and Imatra. Its goal is to tackle an ecosystemic gap found in the region which affected its employment potential. “South Karelia lacked a systematic coaching program for the growth of SMEs employing 10–49 individuals. Statistically, these are the most powerful catalysts for job growth in any given region. Growth Builders creates a unique programme tailored to South Karelia, leveraging our previous experience and feedback. It supports companies to growth above 50 employees and to reach international markets. But more than that, it is fostering ambition and growth-orienting family-owned SMEs in the region to act as an engine for regional employment for other companies to grow – creating a ripple effect for the region.”

Southern Karelia’s Growth Builders is a free eight-month-long programme providing tailored support and accelerating tools for SMEs. In collaboration with experts, the programme designs clear growth roadmaps for companies and offers constant and tailored support in achieving this growth.

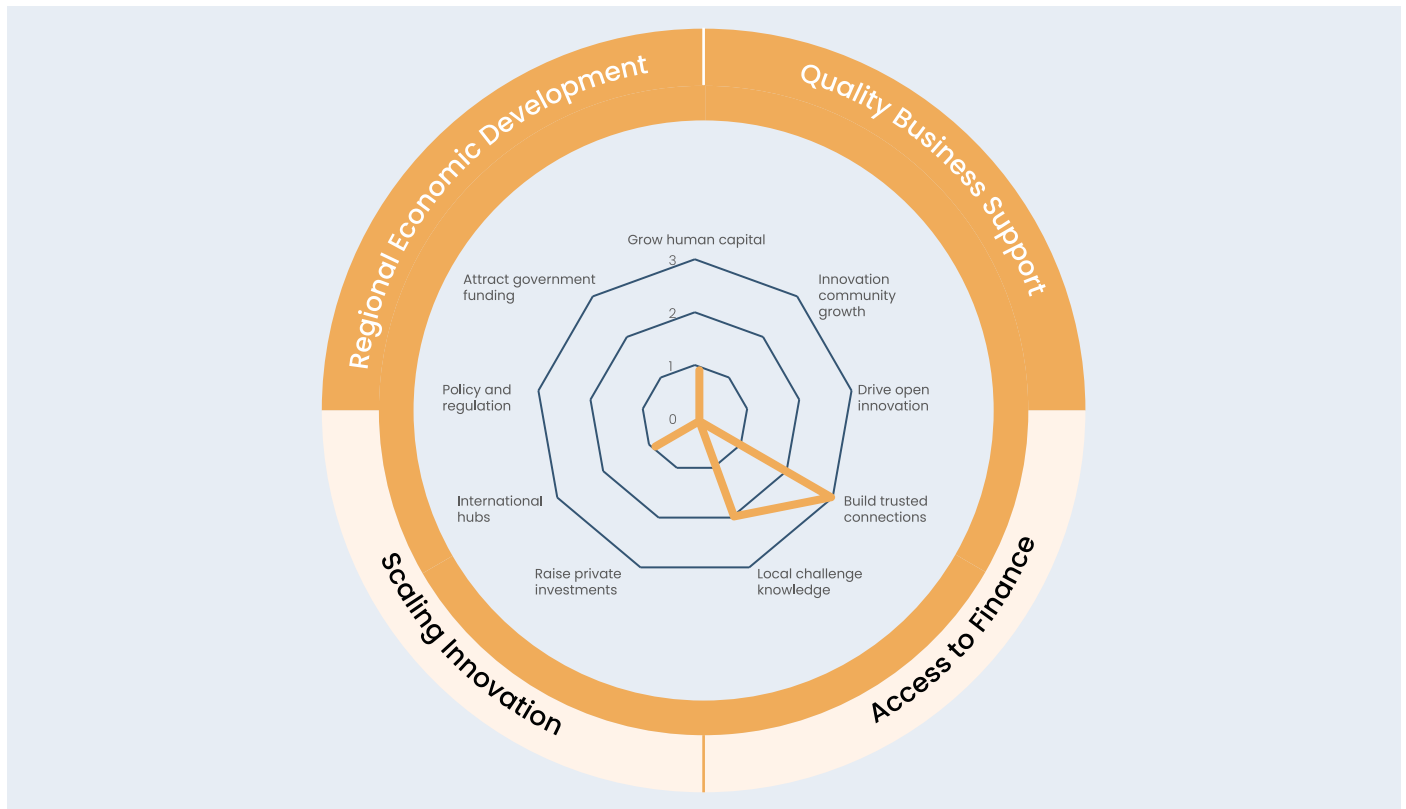
“We select 10 family-owned SMEs from Southern Karelia who aspire to grow and develop their businesses. The companies in the project’s target group are often growth-oriented, but they lack the expertise and/or capabilities for growth and internationalisation”. The programme’s successful implementation required collaboration with business network actors, which strengthened and further developed regional cooperation, increasing the benefits for entrepreneurs and businesses (and the growth of the innovation ecosystem).

The programme foresees support through coaching, advisory board work, workshops, lectures, and network-enhancing activities. In its “2.0 version”, being implemented in 2024, these are some of the coaching elements offered:

- Modular growth coaching – leveraging domestic and international networks and bringing them together to create new opportunities for growth and collaboration
- Tailored a dedicated expert group (a Growth Board = advisory board) involving thematic experts, venture capital, business coaches and experts
- Learning Cells – ensuring growth continuity after the program ends, with follow-ups every 6 months for three years
- Customer Validation – Each participating company meets during the program with 2–3 representatives of their chosen key customer groups to gather feedback to make solutions more attractive.

Another important addition is the inclusion of ESG in their growth strategy. Companies are supported in building and updating their own ESG strategies, which will be addressed together in one of the growth program's modules and supported during Growth Board sessions. Additionally, separate sustainability workshops with universities will be organised for companies.

IMPACT



The programme was first implemented in 2023. In its first version, one of the most significant impacts was the total growth target of the pilot program's companies, exceeding 70 million euros, which is a considerable achievement considering the size for the small region.

Another significant impact was the growth and development of the region's ecosystem and its collaboration. Due to the small size of the region, "it is essential for us to operate in an ecosystem-based manner and in symbiosis with various networks, programmes and stakeholders." Growth builders enhanced ecosystemic cross-sectorial networking and collaboration. "We ran simultaneous coaching paths - startup coaching,

Growth Builders coaching for SMEs and for micro-enterprises. With this simultaneous support, we sought to create a platform for cross-pollination of business ideas and growth-oriented strategies in the region. We created encounters between companies, allowing them to spread a growth mindset. If a company grows into a medium-size enterprise, its subcontractors and other leading small businesses also benefit from this growth, allowing for a domino effect of growth and internationalisation."

EU|BIC certification and community deliver sustainable growth to your entrepreneurship support activities and the regional innovation ecosystem.

“Every EU|BIC acts, on almost a daily basis, as an innovation intermediary between startup companies and corporates. The ultimate goal today is to reduce at a minimum the frictions within their own local/regional or national innovation ecosystem. Make sure that corporates understand what to expect from startups and vice-versa. Set the right expectations and foster the right mindset in each organisation, us included.

One of our learnings at Technoport over the last decades is that the main ingredient to make it work is to onboard the right people. Once you have them you can work much more easily on improving the framework and reducing the friction.

The best models/theories do not work without the right people!”

Diego De Biasio,
CEO at EU|BIC Technoport and President of EBN



Quality Business Support

EU|BICs shape a well-performing innovation communities. In 2023, the EU|BIC community helped almost 25,000 companies to get a head start getting their innovation on the market.

EU|BICs shape a well-performing innovation communities. In 2023, the EU|BIC community helped almost 25,000 companies to get a head start getting their innovation on the market. Entrepreneurs, startups and scale-ups supported by EU|BICs outperform other European startups in the first 3-year survival rates with 83% vs 58% EU average (source: Eurostat).

Strategic Contributions in Facilitating Partnerships and Open Innovation Paths

In today's rapidly evolving world, innovation has emerged as the crucial driver of economic growth, social progress, and environmental sustainability. Creating robust and dynamic innovation ecosystems is vital to meet this potential. Where present, EU|BICs play a pivotal role in the orchestration and connectivity of their ecosystem. As Business/Entrepreneurship support organisations (BSO/ESOs) with a clear mission, EU|BICs are vital actors within locally operating, interconnected innovation ecosystems. Their mandate encompasses not just nurturing startups and SMEs but also ensuring these entities contribute positively to their regions. This dual focus on individual enterprise success and regional development places EU|BICs at a unique intersection, enabling them to act as facilitators of strategic partnerships across various stakeholders in the innovation ecosystem.

They are critical connectivity nodes by nature. By brokering connections between varied actors – across societal and business sectors – and creating lasting partnerships, EU|BICs orchestrate their ecosystem by filling in gaps with new services, bridging connections, and creating an (inter)regional network of collaborators, experts, and strategic partners – all to valorise innovative ideas in their region.

This role allows regions to have a better chance to create successful ventures that grow economies and address societal and environmental challenges. This assessment delves into the multifaceted contributions of EU|BICs towards developing strategic partnerships and carving open innovation pathways, underpinned by the broader objectives of fostering economic growth, societal well-being, and sustainable development within the European Union.

Strategic partnerships formed by EU|BICs often encompass collaborations with higher education institutions, research organisations, government bodies, and private sector entities. These partnerships are not just multidimensional but also multifunctional, serving purposes from co-creation and knowledge transfer to commercialisation and market expansion. For instance, the collaboration between EU|BICs and academic institutions

facilitates a direct link between cutting-edge research and its practical application, thereby enhancing the innovation pipeline. Similarly, partnerships with local governments and European institutions ensure alignment with broader policy objectives, including sustainability goals and digital transformation agendas.

Open innovation is another domain where EU|BICs have demonstrated significant impact. By embracing open innovation, EU|BICs facilitate a collaborative innovation model that leverages external ideas, technologies, and expertise to drive innovation within their client companies. This approach not only accelerates the innovation process but also broadens the innovation ecosystem, incorporating a wider array of participants and knowledge sources. The EU|BIC certification and self-assessment frameworks, for instance, encourage continuous improvement in service delivery, fostering an environment conducive to open innovation.

The strategic role of EU|BICs in developing open innovation paths is further exemplified in their efforts to bridge the gap between innovative startups and established corporations. Through initiatives like innovation challenges and co-creation workshops, EU|BICs enable startups to access critical resources, mentorship, and market opportunities, while allowing larger corporations to tap into novel ideas and agility offered by startups. This symbiotic relationship not only enhances competitiveness but also drives economic value creation across the European Union.

Furthermore, EU|BICs play a critical role in facilitating access to finance, which is a crucial element in the innovation ecosystem. By providing a steady pipeline of investment-ready companies and fostering supportive investment opportunities, EU|BICs ensure the continuity of businesses and innovations essential for a competitive European economy. The strategic partnerships that EU|BICs develop with investors, venture capitalists, and public funding bodies are instrumental in achieving this objective, underlining their pivotal role in the financial sustainability of the innovation ecosystem.

In conclusion, EU|BICs are central to developing strategic partnerships and fostering open innovation within the EU. Their contributions extend beyond incubation services, positioning them as key facilitators of regional development, knowledge transfer, and economic growth. By leveraging strategic partnerships and embracing open innovation, EU|BICs not only enhance the competitiveness of European enterprises but also contribute to the broader objectives of sustainable development and societal wellbeing within the EU. The multifaceted role of EU|BICs underscores the importance of continuous support and recognition from European institutions, ensuring their capabilities are fully harnessed for the future of Europe's innovation landscape.



TESTIMONIAL

Fostering Deep-Tech Pioneers: EU|BIC IncubAlliance's Approach to Innovation and Entrepreneurship



EU|BIC IncubAlliance exemplifies the transformative power of strategic support and targeted programmes in the realm of deep-tech startup creation. Its commitment to nurturing innovative projects positions IncubAlliance as a key player in the Paris-Saclay cluster's ongoing success and a vital contributor to the global innovation landscape.

IncubAlliance stands as the Paris-Saclay cluster's leading technology incubator. It was established through the collaboration of the foremost higher education, research institutions, and businesses in the region. This incubator is distinguished by its core focus on fostering innovative entrepreneurial technology projects, including lab and business spin-offs. IncubAlliance is renowned for attracting entrepreneurs keen on immersing themselves in a celebrated ecosystem and benefiting from a proven incubation process. The incubator's efforts are bolstered by support from the French Ministry of Research, the European Union, and regional authorities.

Deep-Tech Startup Creation Focus

At the heart of IncubAlliance's mission is the creation of deep-tech startups, propelled by specialised programmes. These initiatives are designed with a rigorous internal selection process to identify and nurture the most promising projects. Offering an initial 18-month engagement that can extend up to 5 years, IncubAlliance's programmes are meticulously crafted to guide participants from research to entrepreneurship. This journey encompasses a comprehensive 360-degree roadmap for developing deep-tech companies, emphasising the transition to entrepreneurial roles, technological startup structuring, acceleration of market entry, funding, and team expansion.

Programme Impact and Success

Through its dedicated programmes, IncubAlliance has become a magnet for high-calibre deep-tech projects, providing unparalleled support to ensure their success. The incubator plays a crucial role in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among startups in the Paris-Saclay ecosystem. Moreover, IncubAlliance is instrumental in championing deep-tech entrepreneurship, both within its member community and the broader Paris-Saclay area, significantly contributing to the region's innovative capacity and economic growth.

EU|BIC programme highlights: Inkubator Sežana – Kreativni Startup Program

Beneficiaries: Individuals with hearing loss

Tools and Methodologies: Creative thinking training, tailored entrepreneurial curriculum, mentorship (individual and in group), hearing and interpretation tools, lean entrepreneurship tools

Goal: to enhance social inclusion and economic empowerment of individuals with hearing loss by equipping them with practical entrepreneurial skills and facilitating their integration into the labour market.



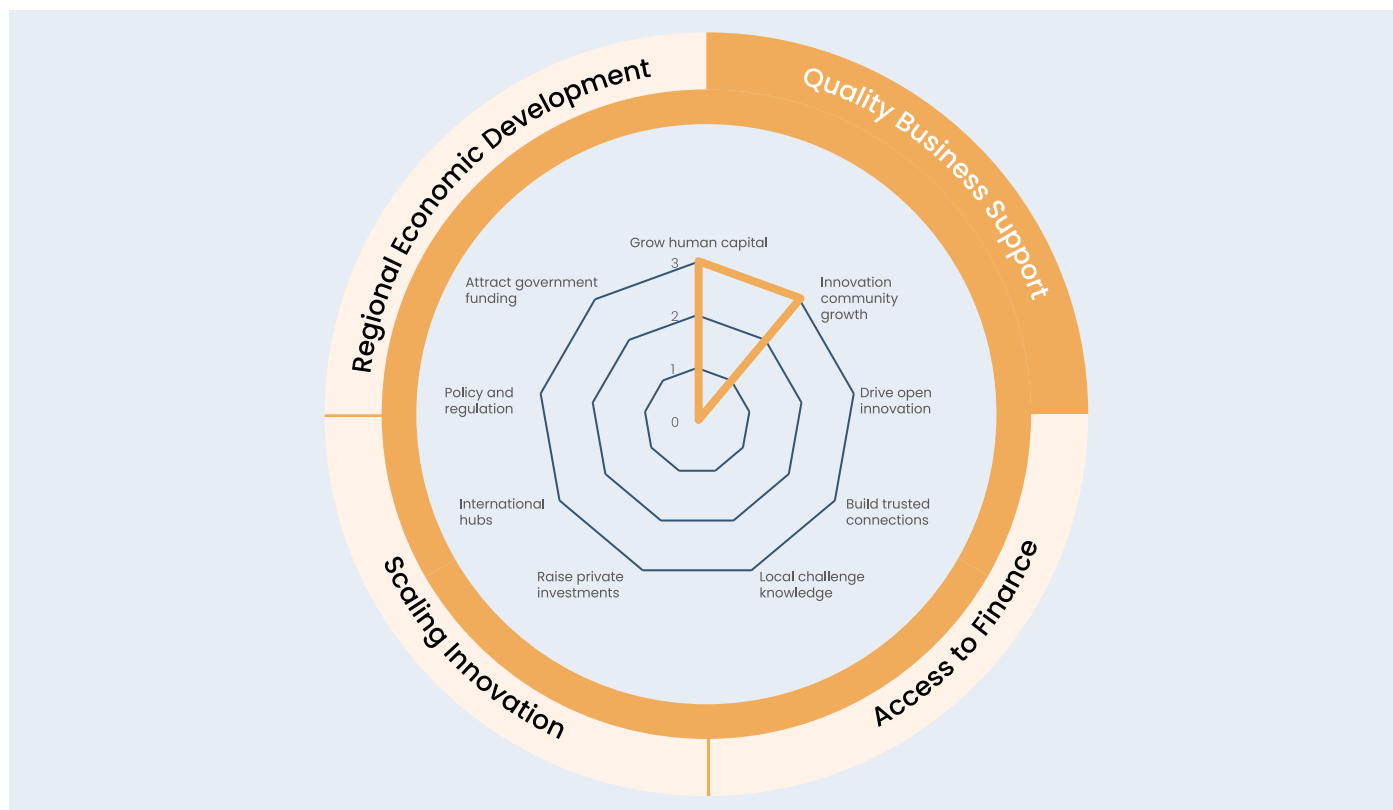
The Creative Start-up Program: Entrepreneurial School for People with Hearing Loss, implemented by Inkubator Sežana in 2022 and 2023, is a pioneering initiative in Slovenia and Europe. It was established to address the social and economic challenges faced by individuals with hearing loss. Recognising the communication barriers and limited opportunities that this group encounters, the program aims to provide specialised support and practical entrepreneurial training.

The programme aimed to train 10 participants and integrate them into the labour market. Additionally, it sought to implement a train-the-trainer programme for members of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Clubs Association of Slovenia. By increasing social inclusion, encouraging self-employment, raising employer awareness, and reducing prejudice against individuals with hearing loss, the programme strived to create a supportive and inclusive environment.

Participants, who are pre-lingually deaf, post-lingually deaf, or hard of hearing individuals, engage in a curriculum designed to foster creative thinking and entrepreneurial skills. The program includes three training modules: idea generation and quick prototyping, business model development using the lean approach, and market analysis to identify ideal customers. Participants also benefit from 1:1 mentoring sessions to support their entrepreneurial journeys. The programme included 12 hours of structured sessions and 10 hours of one-on-one mentoring. The training covered various essential topics, such as creative thinking, business models, market analysis, and lean approaches.

The multidisciplinary team behind the project includes experts from Inkubator Sežana, the Association of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Associations of Slovenia, and the Sežana Vocational School. They utilised communication aids like interpreters, induction loops, and specialised applications to ensure effective delivery of the educational content.

IMPACT



The programme successfully promoted lifelong learning, facilitated integration into the labour market, and fostered the development of entrepreneurial ideas. Participants were equipped with the skills necessary for personal and professional growth, overcoming social integration challenges and stigmatisation. The Creative Start-up Programme's success extends beyond Sežana, having won the gold medal at the 2023 Constantinus International Award. This recognition highlights the programme's impact and innovative approach.

In 2022 and 2023, it successfully trained 21 participants, equipping them with entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. Graduates of the program received certificates of recognition and gained access to valuable resources and networks. The integration of digital tools, such as the Meet-me-on Tru-Bar application, enhanced access to information and facilitated collaboration, contributing to the broader goals of innovation and sustainability in the community.

Collaborations with key stakeholders, such as the Association of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Associations of Slovenia and the Colleague Vocational School, enriched the program and maximised its impact. These partnerships ensured effective recruitment for participants, provided additional resources, and supported a holistic approach to entrepreneurship training.

The program's success demonstrates the potential for similar initiatives in other regions, emphasising the importance of tailored support, stakeholder collaboration, and the use of digital tools to empower marginalised groups and foster social and economic inclusion.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHT – SEMI-FINALIST EU|BIC EXCELLENCE AWARD 2024
EU|BIC programme highlights: Bilişim Vadisi– DIGIAGE

Beneficiaries: Young talents aspiring to enter the digital gaming industry, entrepreneurs seeking to establish game startups

Tools and Methodologies: Workshops, camps, training, multidisciplinary mentorship, LMS (Learning Management System)

Goals: To nurture young talent in digital game development, support entrepreneurship in the gaming sector, and foster innovation within Turkey's game development ecosystem.

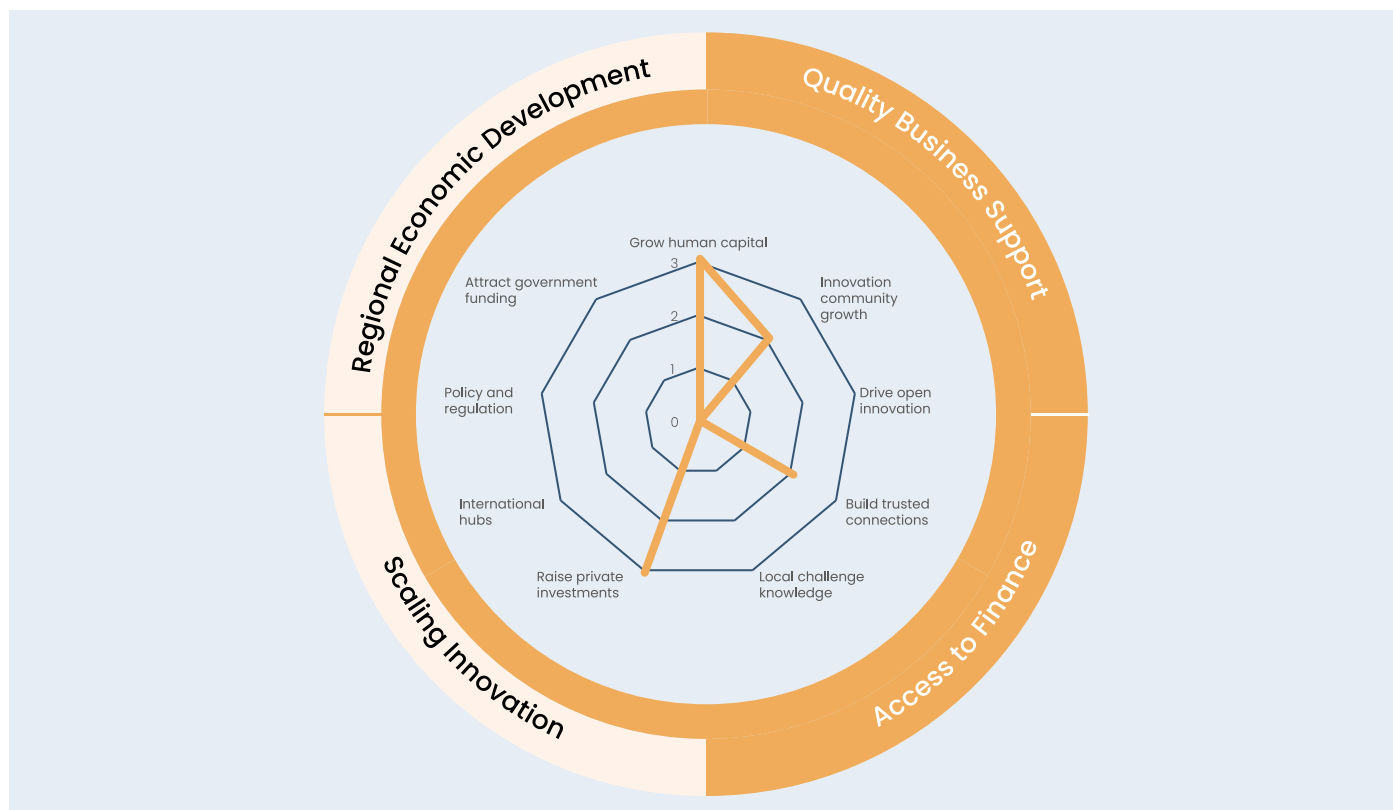


Bilişim Vadisi's DIGIAGE (Digital Game and Animation Centre), initiated in 2019, serves as a game cluster centre dedicated to cultivating talent and fostering innovation in the digital gaming industry. The program addresses the dynamic needs of the gaming sector by offering comprehensive workshops, camps, and sector-based training pieces. DIGIAGE is designed to benefit a wide range of participants in the gaming and animation industry. It targets young talent in the digital gaming sector, enabling them to benefit from the global digital economy. The primary goal of the DIGIAGE programme is to address inequality of opportunity in technology, identify young talent in the digital gaming industry, and transform this talent into successful business ventures.

Recognising the fragmented nature of the current educational offerings in the sector, DIGIAGE offers structured education in game development and game art. As a programme, DIGIAGE integrates a comprehensive array of tools and methodologies to support its participants. It organises game development camps every summer and winter, offering workshops, training, and mentoring. Successful teams receive a seed investment of \$10,000 to \$50,000, providing crucial financial support. Additionally, it offers extensive support in legal, accounting, team management, training, and investor negotiations from company formation to the Series A investment stage. The availability of physical resources, such as office space, further supports entrepreneurs.

Its success and evolution are noteworthy! DIGIAGE evolved to become a spin-off company in January 2023, receiving support from various stakeholders, including the Ministry of Industry and Technology of Turkey. Key to DIGIAGE's success is its multidisciplinary approach, involving 80 mentors and 50 trainers who specialise in game coding, scenario design, and sound engineering. This holistic training equips participants with a comprehensive understanding of the game development lifecycle, fostering teamwork and innovation. Additionally, international participation in camps and partnerships with industry leaders enriches the learning experience by exposing participants to global perspectives and networking opportunities.

IMPACT



The impact of the DIGIAGE programme has been significant. In a snapshot:

Total Number of
Camps:
8 Camps

Total Number of
Applications:
18,000+

Number of teams:
200+

Educational Impact:

Trained over **5,000** students annually through LMS, fostering digital skills and entrepreneurial acumen.

Number of games
developed:
250+

Economic Impact: Facilitated the establishment of 14 companies and attracted \$300,000 in investment, catalysing economic growth within the gaming sector.

Transferability: Expanded operations internationally, starting with camps in Baku and planned launches in North Macedonia, enhancing regional digital economies.

With an investment of \$500,000 from APY Ventures Bilişim Vadisi GSYF, DIGIAGE will continue to make early-stage investments in teams participating in its camps and programmes. The programme's success in Turkey demonstrates its potential for transferability to other regions, fostering global collaboration and information sharing.

EU|BIC programme highlights: IPN – INEO START

Beneficiaries: Entrepreneurs, researchers, and startups in the region's R&I System.

Tools and Methodologies: Structured workshops, mentorship sessions, networking opportunities.

Goals: Validate early-stage technology-based business ideas, expand networks, identify funding sources.

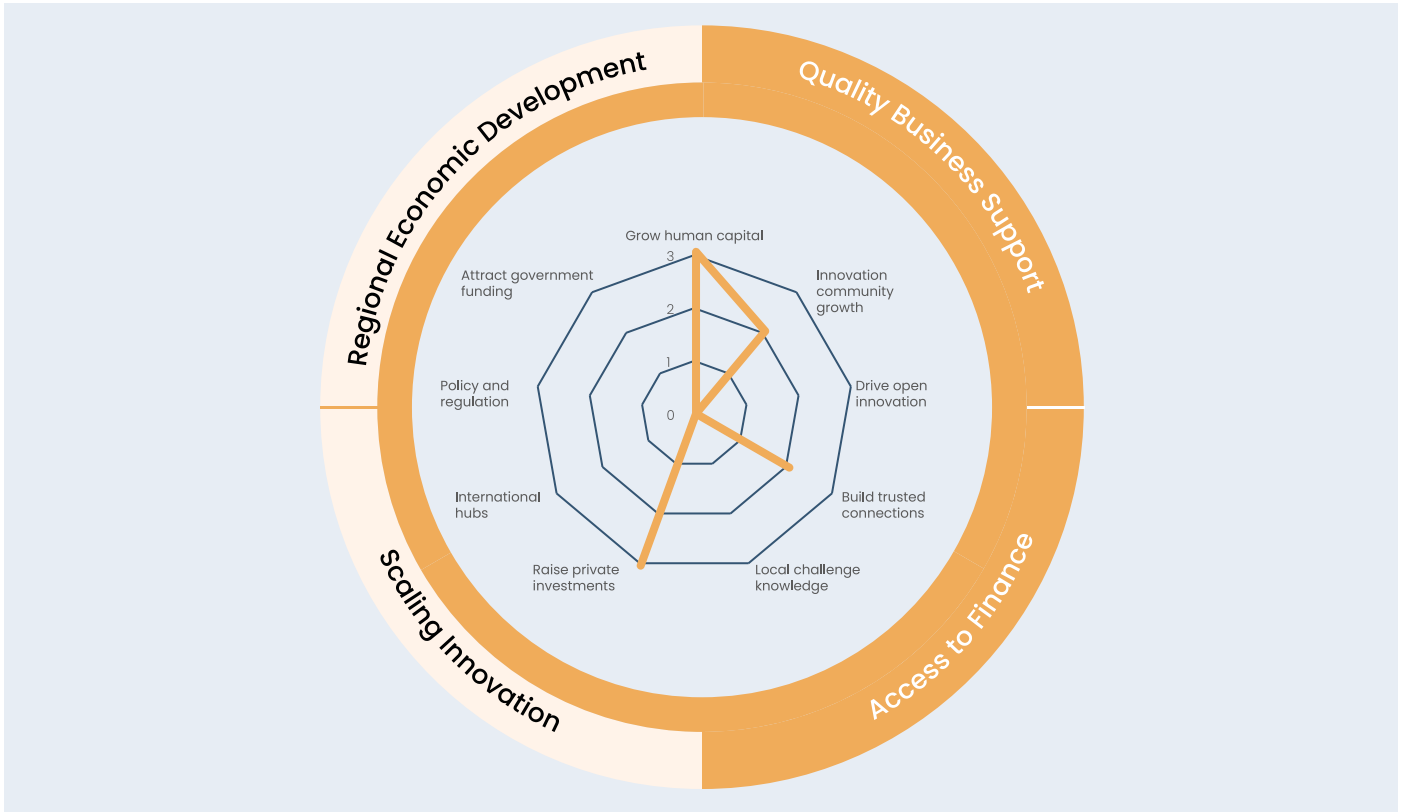


INEO START is a 4-week programme organised by Instituto Pedro Nunes (IPN) in Coimbra, Portugal, aimed at empowering early-stage entrepreneurs, researchers, and startups to develop technology-based business ideas. Since its inception in 2010, it has become one of Portugal's most impactful acceleration programmes. The programme addresses critical challenges faced by participants, particularly researchers transitioning to the business world. It includes four core modules: Innovation and Business Models, Marketing for Startups, Business Planning and Funding, and Pitching Skills. Participants gain skills in IP rights management, business modelling, market analysis, and fundraising strategies.

INEO START hosts 8 to 12 selected teams per edition, chosen for their business ideas, technological relevance, and potential impact. Weekly full-day sessions feature thematic workshops, founder talks, investor insights, and interactive activities. Mornings focus on workshops and talks, while afternoons are for refining deliverables with guidance from over 30 expert mentors.

The programme culminates in a Demo Day, where teams present their business models to investors, corporate partners, and public stakeholders, creating networking and funding opportunities. INEO START helps participants validate their ideas and access essential tools and networks to advance their ventures.

IMPACT



In 2023, we helped more than 24,800 companies and entrepreneurs to get a head start getting their innovation on the market.

13 yearly editions, and counting	142 teams took part in the programme	30 spin-off/startup companies created	360 external experts involved
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Social Impact: Enhances entrepreneurial skills, fosters knowledge transfer, and strengthens the regional innovation ecosystem by linking academia, entrepreneurs, companies, and investors.

Economic Impact: Stimulates job creation, supports the commercialisation of R&DT outputs, and introduces innovative solutions to the market.

Environmental Impact: Encourages eco-friendly solutions among startups, promoting sustainability in product development and operational practices.

A photograph of two business professionals in a modern office setting. A man in a grey suit and dark tie is seated at a wooden table, looking towards the left. Another person is partially visible on the left side of the frame. The background features a large window with a view of greenery and a living wall. The text 'Access to Finance' is overlaid in white on a semi-transparent blue background.

Access to Finance

A community to deliver
sustainable growth to your
organisation and your regional
innovation ecosystem

DEEP-TECH: EUROPE'S NEW WAVE OF INNOVATION

EU|BICs are a cornerstone of the New European Innovation Agenda, providing critical support to startups and SMEs, fostering regional development, and contributing to the transition to a green, digital, and fair society. By addressing existing challenges and leveraging the full potential of EU|BICs, Europe can enhance its global competitiveness and lead the new wave of deep-tech innovation.

Advancing the New European Innovation Agenda

The European Innovation Agenda aims to position Europe as a leader in the next wave of deep-tech innovation, addressing societal challenges and enhancing competitiveness. EU|BICs play a pivotal role in this agenda by providing quality-certified support services to startups and SMEs, thus driving regional economic, sustainable, and social development. The certification process and support framework of EU|BICs ensure that these organisations adhere to the highest standards of business support, which is vital for nurturing an innovation-friendly environment.

Supporting Deep-Tech Startups

Deep-tech startups are at the forefront of innovation, developing technologies that have the potential to transform industries and address pressing global challenges. EU|BICs specialise in supporting these startups by offering a range of services, including access to finance, business support, networking opportunities, and mentoring. This comprehensive support is crucial for deep-tech startups that often face unique challenges, such as long development cycles, high capital requirements, and complex regulatory environments.

Deep Tech and Sustainable Solutions: Accelerating Investment Across Europe

The Innovation Wave currently taking place is reshaping the technological landscape in Europe today. Prominent to this change is the so-called Deep Tech start-ups, leading technological development in breakthrough technologies and scientific advances capable of solving global challenges—from sustainable energy and healthcare to climate change. However, these startups face unique challenges in terms of their funding because they are normally highly capital-intensive and have long development cycles.

Deep Tech and Impact

Breakthroughs in deep tech are going to play a critical role in solving the world's most important problems. All deep tech cannot, however, be directly tied to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but a good share of it can—especially when climate tech. Examples include Newcleo: next-generation nuclear fission, H2 Green Steel: fossil-free steel production, Climeworks: direct-air carbon removal, Northvolt: next-generation EV batteries, Mosa Meat: cell-based meat.

Why Deep Tech Startups Matter

Deep tech startups are the future of technology, yet only 20% of the VC funds have gone into hardware since 2016. With 60% of the next five years' revenues coming from the technology sector, this is a large discrepancy to account for. Although not all deep tech is related to hardware, there is a significant amount of innovation within it. Almost 60% of the whole deep-tech funding since 2016 is related to hardware start-ups, confirming how essential they are in the tech ecosystem (source: Dealroom.co).

A notable example is that of EU|BIC IncubAlliance, one of the key technology incubators located within the Paris-Saclay cluster. The IncubAlliance rigorously selects teams internally and develops focused programs to help deep-tech startups transition from research to market and scale their teams. The latter is supported by collaborations with higher education institutions, research entities, and industries, notably the French Ministry of Research and the EU. All these are major contributors to innovation and entrepreneurial success in the region.

Why Investors Find Deep Tech So Exciting

There are several reasons investors are excited about deep tech startups. These startups can target multiple markets and typically have an even bigger competitive edge because of the advantage of their technological advances and intellectual property portfolios. The latter can yield high ROI on promises because of low initial valuation and high attractiveness as targets for acquisition. In addition, deep tech plays a pivotal role in addressing major global challenges, such as climate change, food security, and intractable diseases, creating new markets and driving societal growth.

The importance of investing in deep tech can be best described as investors looking for the next Marie Curie or Max Planck, scientists and entrepreneurs taking disruptive technologies out of the lab and turning them into commercial products. Distributed at a global scale, these technologies eventually make their way into everyone's life, and have the potential to solve some of the many challenges humanity is facing.

European Commission Deep-Tech Innovation VC Investor Initiative

To increase funding, the European Commission has released a series of initiatives aimed at building an ecosystem of venture capital investors operating in deep technologies. This comes in an attempt to address the gap, concerning funding, especially at later stages of development. Most recently, Commissioner Iliana Ivanova convened a group of visionary investors in this new kind of collaboration, which is going to make the capital structure of the deep tech companies within the EIC Fund portfolio stronger and unlock growth and acceleration across Europe.

A key role in this will be played by the European Investment Fund through its investment in venture funds that are committed to deep tech and helping them grow even further. Public support in the form of grants and early-stage funding through the likes of Horizon Europe, the

European Innovation Council, EIC, and national agencies is important. The EIC Fund has thus far become the most active deep tech investor in Europe with a catalytic role: indeed every euro invested triggers an additional €3.8 from other investors.

At the same time, though, the strong early support from deep tech investors needs to be followed up by generalist VC funds, with whom this form of large-scale deep tech collaboration could serve to provide at every further stage of development with the appropriate funding. During this triennium, more than ten thousand startups and SMEs applied to the EIC, showing the enormous potential of Europe's innovation scene.

In doing this, Europe can spur the innovation of sustainable technologies that materialise by increased funding and support to deep tech start-ups, thus ensuring that these pioneering solutions fully support the realisation of a more sustainable future.



TESTIMONIAL

OECD: Navigating the Circular Transition: A Business Perspective



By: Ander Eizaguirre, Policy Analyst at Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD

The transition to a circular economy is pivotal for sustainable development, requiring businesses to adopt innovative models that redefine traditional resource usage. At the forefront of this transformation are several key approaches that businesses can integrate into their operations.

For me, Circular Supply Models aim to replace conventional material inputs derived from virgin resources with bio-based, renewable, or recovered materials. By doing so, businesses can reduce dependency on finite resources and promote environmental sustainability.

Resource Recovery Models focus on transforming waste into secondary raw materials. This approach diverts waste from disposal and decreases the need for virgin resource extraction, fostering a more sustainable resource loop.

Product Life Extension Models seek to prolong the useful life of products, thereby slowing the flow of materials through the economy and mitigating resource extraction and waste generation.

Sharing Models encourage the use of under-utilised products, reducing the demand for new products and the raw materials required to produce them. This model supports efficient utilisation of resources and minimises waste.

In my view, Product Service System Models (PSS) involve marketing services rather than products. This shift enhances incentives for green product design and promotes the efficient use of products, aligning business practices with sustainability goals.

However, implementing circular business models is not without challenges. Businesses face both external and internal obstacles.

Externally, inconsistent policies and messages can create confusion and hinder progress. There is often a lack of clear pricing signals, which may discourage investments in circular practices. Consumer demand for circular products is often insufficient, and supply chain constraints, as well as technology limitations, can impede the adoption of circular models. Additionally, infrastructure capacity may not be adequate to support circular processes, and physical limitations can restrict the feasibility of certain circular practices.

Internally, businesses may lack incentives to invest in circular models due to high costs and low ROI. Access to capital is a significant barrier, and there may be a lack of targets and benchmarks to guide circular initiatives. Knowledge and expertise in circular practices are often limited. Competing priorities can divert attention and resources from circular efforts, and internal capacity and resources may be insufficient to support circular transitions. Habitual behaviour within organisations can resist change.

The OECD framework indicates that the broader transition to a circular economy faces additional obstacles, such as insufficient financial resources, inadequate regulatory frameworks, cultural barriers, and a lack of holistic vision. There is limited awareness and human resources dedicated to these efforts, issues with achieving critical scale, and accessing necessary information. Incoherent regulation across government levels and a lack of political will and technical solutions further complicate the transition.



TESTIMONIAL

Deep Tech Support Best Practice – EU|BIC Atlanpole and EU|BIC Equium, and Armour Group: a Venture Growth Support, Investment, and Industry Partnership



It takes a village to raise a revolutionary sustainable industrial deep-tech solution

EQUIUM is a deep-tech venture based in Pays de La Loire and supported by EU|BIC Atlanpole.

EQUIUM offers a heat pump solution that manipulates acoustic resonance and its thermoacoustic effect to affect temperatures in any given space. It promises to produce cold or heat without greenhouse gas emissions, with a low carbon footprint and is designed with 100% recyclable materials. It also boasts a prospective longevity of more than 30 years.

It's a high-potential solution, but like most deep-tech solutions, especially industrial ones, it requires a lot of time, work, care, patience, dedication, and investment. Industrial start-ups,

especially deep-tech ones which strive to put advanced and complex mechanisms in the market are subject to higher costs and time to reach the market than other types of start-ups.

Commercialisation requires sourcing materials, setting up supply chains, prototyping, scaling manufacturing processes and complying with stricter regulatory requirements. All challenges can only be tackled with robust capitalisation and a support system that allows it time to develop.

Atlanpole and Nantes provided this support system: "After years in Paris, EQUIUM decided to move to Nantes to work with EU|BIC Atlanpole. We were struggling to survive, however here we were able to find the right support system and to pour solutions with a large-scale application on ships – using our heat pump system to manipulate the heat of motors. It was essential for our survival. We were greatly welcomed by EU|BIC Atlanpole, who were very keen to support us, and found a very flexible innovation ecosystem in Pays de La Loire", affirms Cedric François, Founder of EQUIUM.

Supporting deep-tech solutions is in Atlanpole's DNA. "EQUIUM is an industrial deep-tech start-up which meets a lot of ambitions for our mandate. It is a highly promising technology that can play a major role in sustainable transition. It can be a disruptive technology in a sector dominated by players outside Europe, creating quality jobs in our region and further developing French (sustainable) industrial capacity", Samuel Bachelot, Managing Director Incubation and EU|BIC at Atlanpole.

EU|BIC Atlanpole has supported the deep tech company EQUIUM from incubation to acceleration since 2018. EQUIUM benefited from our unique Deeptech Matching service for recruitment sourcing. We also assist them in connecting to the research and innovation ecosystem, particularly with the competitiveness cluster Pôle Mer Atlantique Bretagne, to support the continuation of their research efforts.

EQUIUM expects to reach its commercialisation date around the end of 2025 – a date that will only be achieved due to the efforts of a whole ecosystem. Currently 8 years old, but with more than 20 years' worth of R&D, which spans 2 generations, EQUIUM recently completed a financing round in the best way possible, with investment from another Nantes-based industrial powerhouse. The ARMOR group, a world leader in thermal transfer ribbons and print cartridges manufacturing, has societal innovation at the core of its strategy, by producing only "remanufactured" print cartridges, promoting a circular economy, and developing eco-friendly industrial inks and materials for 3D printing. With Atlanpole's support and mediation, EQUIUM and the ARMOR group found each other in a perfect symbiosis of investment, industrial know-how, and a mission to advance industry and sustainability in Europe. "The ARMOR GROUP's experience will be an undeniable asset to enable us to enter a new phase of our project by allowing us to industrialise our system at optimal costs and guarantee the quality of our products."

EU|BIC programme highlights: CEIN HEALTH

Beneficiaries: Entrepreneurs, startups/scaleups, health professionals, and researchers.

Tools and Methodologies: Integrated itinerary including project acceleration, startup scaling, masterclasses, health innovation academy, international development, access to Navarra Health Ecosystem, and business incubation centre services.

Goals: Enrich the health sector business fabric in Navarra through knowledge generation and innovative projects. Foster the growth of health startups and connect the healthcare ecosystems regionally, nationally, and internationally.



CEIN HEALTH is a comprehensive annual programme designed to support, promote, and accelerate innovative ventures in the health sector within Navarra, Spain. Its primary goal is to energise the health sector in Navarra by supporting and scaling innovative health-related projects. Launched in 2021, it integrates various services tailored to different stages of business development, from initial idea generation to market scaling. The programme targets entrepreneurs, startups, scaleups, health professionals, and researchers with innovative projects in medical devices (MedTech), digital health (e-Health), and biotech.

CEIN HEALTH aligns closely with Navarra's regional strategy for smart specialisation (S4) towards 2030, focusing on personalised medicine and bolstering the competitiveness of the health sector. It seamlessly integrates into its regional health cluster, collaborating extensively with academic institutions, research centres, and industry. Designed to foster innovation and growth, the programme employs a suite of tools and methodologies. These include:

Business Incubation Centre Services: Providing startups with tailored support services including mentorship, specialist training, and networking events, aiming to nurture their growth within a conducive environment.

Project Acceleration: Providing structured support for early-stage health startups, including business model design and professional mentorship. Its goal is to help ventures effectively establish themselves.

Startup Scaling: Focusing on startups with a high technological readiness level (TRL 5–8), the programme offers strategic development and access to specialised infrastructure like the CEIN Health Biotechlab and Innovation Incubator.

Masterclass and Trends: Conducting sessions on contemporary topics crucial to health entrepreneurship, trends, IP protection, and business models. The masterclasses also facilitate networking and knowledge exchange among industry experts and participants.

Health Innovation Academy: Offering online training to health professionals and management, empowering them to actively engage in health innovation initiatives and bridge clinical practice with entrepreneurial activities.

International Development: Facilitating participation in high-impact events and networking opportunities, enhancing startups' visibility and access to international markets and funding.

Health Ecosystem Orchestration: Connecting startups with stakeholders of health ecosystems, fostering collaborations and creating synergies to for long-term growth and sustainability.

IMPACT



Over three editions, from 2021 to 2023, the CEIN Health programme has made a substantial impact.

- It has supported 186 entrepreneurs, with a substantial participation of women-led ventures
- Facilitated growth in 70 projects
- Assisted 41 startups
- Led to the creation of 277 jobs, nearly 50% filled by women.
- Participating startups have invoiced over €5 million, secured €20 million in public funding, and €10 million in private investments.
- The programme addresses critical health challenges such as cancer treatments, food allergies, and active ageing, demonstrating tangible societal benefits and technological advancements.

Navarra's health industry, already robust with 85 companies, 5 research centres, 3 universities, and 2 leading hospitals, has seen remarkable progress, with the sector's turnover reaching €791 million in 2020, marking a 20% increase from 2016.

The structured methodology of the CEIN Health programme is designed for adaptability to other regional ecosystems, addressing global health challenges. Key lessons include the importance of initial sector analysis, stakeholder involvement, long-term sustainability, and measurable outcomes. CEIN offers mentorship and support for organisations interested in replicating the programme, facilitating global collaboration and knowledge exchange.

EU|BIC programme highlights: Valmiera Development Agency – ZILE Programme

Beneficiaries: Existing companies, start-ups, freelancers in Valmiera County

Tools and Methodologies: Funding, advice, information, education, consultancy, expertise

Goals: Promote innovation, economic development, export growth, job creation, public-private partnerships, and social entrepreneurship



ZILE Programme: Fostering Regional Innovation and Economic Growth in Valmiera

The ZILE programme, launched by Valmiera Development Agency, in cooperation with the local municipality and other stakeholders, is a testament to the commitment of the newest EU|BIC community members to introducing fresh ideas. Designed to bridge gaps in the local innovation support ecosystem, ZILE offers comprehensive assistance to companies, start-ups, and freelancers. This assistance includes funding, consultancy, educational resources, and strategic advice aimed at fostering innovation, enhancing business competitiveness, and encouraging economic growth. In a country where economic development is often concentrated in large urban centres, the ZILE programme stands out by addressing the unique needs of Valmiera County, aiming to decentralise innovation support and boost the local economy.

ZILE's primary objectives are to support the development of technology-oriented companies and start-ups, bolster the local business ecosystem, and promote both public-private partnerships and export activities. The programme enhances regional competitiveness and creates new job opportunities, ultimately contributing to the economic vitality of the region.

To foster innovation and growth, the ZILE programme offers comprehensive support through various tools and methodologies. This includes funding, advice, information, education, consultancy, and expertise. The programme utilises the Deloitte Development Ten Types of Innovation model, which encourages ambitious thinking and innovation among entrepreneurs. Additionally, the DARE maker space for prototyping adds significant value to the programme, providing a space for practical experimentation and development.

ZILE operates two main sub-programmes: ZILE Development and ZILE Start-ups. The development sub-programme focuses on promoting innovation within existing businesses, while the start-up sub-programme supports new business ideas and young companies. Funding for the programme, amounting to €60,000 annually, is distributed between these sub-programmes, providing grants that cover 60% to 80% of eligible project costs.

The programme is structured to foster innovation, development, export growth, job creation, public-private partnerships, and social entrepreneurship. This comprehensive approach ensures that the programme addresses various facets of regional economic growth and innovation.

IMPACT



Since its inception in 2018, the ZILE programme has significantly contributed to regional development. Operating annually from February to December, the programme begins with a call for applications during Vidzeme Region Innovation Week. Key activities include application reviews, consultancy, seminars, project implementation, and evaluation. Over six years, ZILE has supported 61 projects with a total funding of €272,729.00, leading to the development of 37 innovative products, services, or prototypes.

The impact of the ZILE programme on Valmiera County has been profound. Valmiera, already known for its high GDP per capita and industrial significance, has seen fur-

ther enhancement in its economic landscape thanks to ZILE's initiatives. The programme's emphasis on green practices and digital transformation has promoted sustainability and a circular economy among SMEs, fostering an environment of environmental consciousness and digital advancement.

The success of the ZILE programme in Valmiera highlights its potential for adaptation in other regions, promoting global collaboration and knowledge exchange within the broader EU|BIC community. With a proven track record over the past seven years, ZILE continues to drive innovation and excellence for regional innovators and SME



Scaling European Innovation

Together, we are shaping
a global community about
better business – and scaling
innovative solutions

Scaling European Innovation: Growing Startups and Internationalising Operations

Our pan-European nature is one of our greatest assets to bolster the expansion potential of European startups, scaleups and innovative SMEs.

The EU|BICs community's pan-European nature stands as one of its most formidable assets, bolstering the expansion potential of startups, scaleups, and innovative SMEs. This intrinsic diversity fosters a unique environment where innovation can thrive, creating a robust ecosystem for entrepreneurial growth. EU|BICs are pivotal in this landscape, embodying the larger narrative of economic, social, and innovation systems change across Europe. They facilitate access to both domestic and international markets through strategic partnerships and extensive networks, helping startups overcome market entry barriers and navigate complex regulatory landscapes.

Every year EU|BICs support thousands of companies to scale their operations, among others by supporting them to access international markets and new local markets.

The Scale-up ('Unicorn') Challenge

Europe's challenge in nurturing unicorns—startups valued at over €1 billion—stems from multiple factors. Various reports underscore the necessity for a supportive regulatory environment, access to funding, and a thriving innovation culture to cultivate these high-growth companies. Despite Europe's potential, there is a notable discrepancy in the number of unicorns compared to other regions like the United States and China.

While Europe is home to numerous innovative startups, there is a gap in the availability of late-stage funding. This funding gap often compels promising companies to seek investment abroad or relocate entirely to markets with more mature financial ecosystems. Addressing this issue is crucial for retaining talent and innovation within Europe.

Bridging the Growth Funding Gap

Contrary to some beliefs, the gap in growth funding is not as pronounced as it seems. Research reveals that Europe has seen substantial investment in its tech ecosystem, with several funding rounds exceeding €100 million. However, the perception of a funding gap persists, influenced by the high-profile successes of American and Chinese startups.

EU|BICs are instrumental in changing this narrative by facilitating access to both domestic and international markets. Their strategic partnerships and extensive networks provide startups with the resources needed to scale effectively. By supporting thousands of companies annually, EU|BICs enable these enterprises to overcome market entry barriers and navigate complex regulatory landscapes.

Internationalisation: The Key to Scaling

Internationalisation is a critical strategy for European startups aiming to scale. Expanding into new markets allows these companies to tap into larger customer bases, diversify revenue streams, and mitigate risks associated with local market saturation. EU|BICs play a crucial role in this process by offering tailored support to companies seeking to internationalise their operations.

Through network-building and strategic alliances, EU|BICs create a "network of networks" that fosters entrepreneurial innovation. This interconnected ecosystem not only supports companies in scaling their operations but also strengthens regional economies. By helping startups access new local and international markets, EU|BICs contribute significantly to the broader economic and social transformation in Europe.

Learning from successful models like Instituto Pedro Nunes (IPN) in Coimbra, Portugal, and JIC in Brno, Czechia highlights the importance of strong academic-industry linkages, comprehensive support infrastructures, collaborative ecosystems, and effective funding mechanisms. IPN and JIC have fostered notable unicorns such as Feedzai and Critical Software from Coimbra, and Vrgineers and Smartlook from Brno, demonstrating how robust support structures and conducive entrepreneurial environments can lead to significant startup growth and international success.



TESTIMONIAL

EU|BIC Instituto Pedro Nunes – The Coimbra Region’s Scale-Up Creation Success



The Coimbra region in Portugal, home to EU|BIC Instituto Pedro Nunes (IPN) – UBI’s Top 10 Best Incubators in the World, home to ESA-BIC Portugal and ATTRACT European Digital Innovation Hub for Artificial Intelligence and High-Performance Computing, has become a notable success story in scaling startups with a valuation of more than 1 billion euros, also referred to as unicorn-status companies due to several key factors:

1. Strong Academic-Industry Linkages

- University of Coimbra: One of Europe’s oldest and most prestigious universities, providing a rich talent pool and a strong research base. Its close collaboration with IPN fosters a robust environment for innovation and technology transfer.
- Knowledge Transfer: IPN acts as a bridge between academic research and industry, facilitating the commercialisation of research outcomes and the development of new technologies.

2. Comprehensive Support Infrastructure and Staff

- Incubation and Acceleration: IPN offers extensive programmes supporting startups from ideation to growth stages, including mentoring, funding, and access to networks.
- Facilities and Resources: State-of-the-art laboratories, office spaces, and other resources are available to startups, helping them to develop and scale their innovations effectively. IPN offers a unique Space Solutions Centre of Incubation with dedicated facilities for startups in the new space economy
- Technical co-development: IPN hosts 6 applied R&D labs (own staff and researchers) with the main focus on conducting RTD activities jointly with companies. Covering TRL stages 5 to 8, in diversified technological areas: Automation, Materials, Informatics, Phytopathology, Electroanalysis and Geotechnics.

3. Strong Entrepreneurial Innovation Ecosystem

- Networking Opportunities: Regular events, workshops, and conferences organised by IPN and other local entities provide valuable networking opportunities for entrepreneurs, investors, and industry leaders.
- Collaborative Culture: A culture that encourages knowledge sharing and partnerships among startups, established companies, and research institutions.

4. Strategic Location and Connectivity

- Geographic Advantage: Coimbra's central location in Portugal makes it an accessible hub for business and innovation, linking major cities like Lisbon and Porto.
- Global Connections: IPN's international collaborations, soft-landing programs and partnerships provide startups with access to global markets and investors.

5. Effective Funding Mechanisms

- Access to Capital: Availability of venture capital, angel investors, and public funding through programmes such as Portugal 2030, EIC or Horizon Europe.
- Incentives and Grants: Availability of tax incentives, grants, and other financial support mechanisms for startups and R&D activities.
- Financial Support: IPN helps startups navigate and secure various funding opportunities, crucial for scaling operations and reaching unicorn status.

6. Clusters

- Existing cluster in IT and Healthcare: stakeholders are supportive of cooperation and testing with startups
- IPN provides MVP/PoC programs and regulatory pathways for Medical Devices, in vitro Diagnostics and Software as Medical Devices. Specialists for different global regulatory frameworks such as FDA, CE Marking, ANVISA and UKCA.

7. Success Stories and Role Models

- Existing Unicorns: Successful unicorns serve as inspiration and provide a roadmap for new startups. Success stories attract talent and investment to the region.
- Role Models: Successful entrepreneurs, mentors and business leaders often give back to the community by mentoring new startups and investing in local businesses.

Summary

The Coimbra region's success in creating unicorn companies can be attributed to its strong academic-industry linkages, bottom-up approach, comprehensive support infrastructure, trusted entrepreneurial innovation ecosystem, strategic location, effective funding mechanisms, government and policy support, and existing success stories. Due to its continuous orchestration, these independent factors collectively create an environment conducive to innovation, growth, and the scaling of startups into unicorns.

IMPACT

Notable Success Stories Supported by IPN

1. **Feedzai:** A global leader in AI-powered risk management and fraud detection solutions for the banking and financial sectors. at IPN, and still maintaining its HQ in Coimbra, Feedzai has grown into a major fintech player, securing substantial funding and expanding internationally.
2. **Critical Software:** A highly successful company specialising in reliable and high-integrity software solutions for various critical industries, including aerospace, defence, and finance. Initially supported by IPN, Critical Software has grown significantly to over 1.300 and now operates globally across 10 industries.
3. **Sword Health:** A physical therapy startup, that provides virtual and digital physical therapy AI-powered. Founded by Virgílio Bento and technically supported by IPN during its early development stages, Sword has attracted significant investment and expanded globally.

Other Emerging Companies

IPN has supported numerous other startups that are on their way to achieving significant market impact. These companies benefit from IPN's comprehensive incubation and acceleration programmes, which provide critical resources, mentorship, and access to essential networks for growth. Since 1996 the incubator has supported the creation of over 450 companies, that have generated over 7.000 qualified jobs and generated in 2022 a combined revenue of €520 Million.

IPN's role in fostering these companies highlights the importance of robust support structures and a conducive entrepreneurial innovation ecosystem in nurturing startups, enabling them to scale successfully, and honouring their European founding roots. The combination of strong academic ties, access to funding, and a collaborative environment has proven to be a fertile ground for high-growth companies in the Coimbra region.

Contact Jorge Pimenta (Innovation Director) via jpimenta@ipn.pt for further information and to replicate the programme in your region.



TESTIMONIAL

EU|BIC JIC Innovation Agency: The Brno Region in Czechia – From Industrial Area to Innovation Hotspot



The CZ Brno region, supported by the EU|BIC JIC Innovation Agency– the local Enterprise Europe Network node (EEN), home to ESA-BIC Czechia and the European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) DIGIMAT for digital innovation for manufacturing SMEs, has successfully transitioned from an industrial area to a thriving innovation hub and startup factory.

1. Strategic Vision and Leadership

- Long-Term Vision: Early on, leaders and stakeholders in Brno adopted a strategic vision focused on innovation and high-tech industries, supported by consistent policies and investments.
- Leadership and Governance: Strong leadership from local government and JIC has been crucial in driving this transformation. The collaborative governance model ensures that various stakeholders, including government, academia, and industry, work towards common goals.

2. Strong Academic and Research Institutions

- Masaryk University and Brno University of Technology: These institutions provide a robust talent pool and research capabilities. They collaborate closely with JIC to commercialise research and support the startup ecosystem.
- Technology Transfer: Effective technology transfer offices and partnerships with industry facilitate the commercialisation of research and development activities.

3. Comprehensive Support Infrastructure

- Incubation and Acceleration Programmes: JIC offers extensive programs that support startups from ideation through scaling, including mentorship, access to funding, and business development services.
- Facilities and Resources: JIC provides state-of-the-art facilities, including co-working spaces, laboratories, and offices, which are essential for startups to develop and grow.

4. Favourable Business Environment

- Access to Funding: The region has developed a favourable environment for venture capital and other funding sources. JIC helps startups navigate and secure funding from both public and private sources.
- Regulatory Support: Local policies and regulations are designed to support innovation and entrepreneurship, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and providing incentives for startups and investors.

5. Collaborative Entrepreneurial Innovation Ecosystem

- Networking and Collaboration: JIC fosters a collaborative ecosystem where startups, established companies, investors, and academia can interact and collaborate. Regular events, workshops, and networking opportunities enhance this collaborative spirit.
- Public-Private Partnerships: Strong partnerships between public institutions and private companies help drive innovation and economic growth.

6. Strategic Location and Connectivity

- Geographic Advantage: Brno's strategic location, with proximity to major cities like Prague, Vienna, and Bratislava, provides excellent connectivity and access to broader markets.
- Infrastructure: High-quality infrastructure, including transport and digital connectivity, supports business operations and growth.

7. Culture of Innovation and Entrepreneurship

- Entrepreneurial Culture: There is a growing culture of entrepreneurship in Brno, supported by educational initiatives and community engagement. This culture encourages risk-taking and innovation.
- Success Stories and Role Models: Successful startups and entrepreneurs from Brno serve as role models and inspire new generations of innovators.

8. Focus on High-Tech and Knowledge-Intensive Industries

- Sector Focus: JIC and regional policies focus on high-tech and knowledge-intensive industries such as IT, biotechnology, and advanced manufacturing. This specialisation attracts high-quality talent and investment.
- Innovation Clusters: The development of innovation clusters around specific sectors creates synergies and enhances the competitiveness of the region.

Sectors of Excellence in the Brno Region

- **Information Technology (IT) and Software Development:** Brno is known for its strong IT sector, with numerous companies specializing in software development, cybersecurity, and enterprise solutions. The presence of major IT companies and research institutions fosters innovation in software and digital technologies.
- **Biotechnology and Life Sciences**
- **Advanced Manufacturing and Precision Engineering:** Brno's historical industrial base has evolved into a hub for advanced manufacturing and precision engineering.
- **Automotive and Aerospace:** The region supports significant activities in the automotive and aerospace sectors, including the development of high-tech components and systems.
- **Nanotechnology – Cutting-edge Research:** Brno is home to several research institutions and companies specialising in nanotechnology, contributing to advancements in materials science, electronics, and healthcare.
- **Renewable Energy:** The region is involved in developing renewable energy solutions, including solar and wind technologies.
- **Environmental Solutions:** Companies and research initiatives focus on sustainable technologies and environmental protection, addressing global challenges like climate change.
- **Photonics and Optical Technologies:** Brno has a growing sector dedicated to photonics, involving the study and application of light, which is crucial for innovations in telecommunications, medical devices, and manufacturing.
- **Mechanical Engineering:** The region's strong mechanical engineering sector supports a wide range of industries, from automotive to industrial machinery, leveraging advanced manufacturing techniques and technologies.
- **Medical Devices and Healthcare Equipment:** Brno excels in the development and production of medical devices, supported by a robust ecosystem of healthcare research and technology companies.

Notable Company Success Stories Supported by JIC

1. **Vrgineers** raised a \$6 million investment and investors put \$5 million into **ThreatMark** and were also selected for the EIC Scaling Club.
2. **IDEA StatiCa** has opened an office in Singapore.
3. **Smartlook** was bought for over a billion crowns by US Cisco, and **Runecast** was bought for almost a billion crowns by US Dynatrace.

Conclusion

The Brno region, The South Moravian Region (SMR) (Czech Republic, European Union) has emerged as one of the leading European innovation hubs, with its Regional Innovation Index (RII) jumping from 87.3 to 101 between 2016 and 2023, marking a 22.3% improvement over the EU. A global leader in electron microscopy, with one-third of the world's electron microscopes coming from Brno, the region excels also in the semiconductor, space, cybersecurity, and game development sectors.

Leading the Czech Republic in knowledge intensity and high-tech employment, Brno region matches Europe's top regions. Brno's high quality of life and ranking as a leading student city highlight its role as a centre of innovation and growth. It stems from the data report on research, innovation, and business in South Moravia, published by the innovation agency EU|BIC JIC.

For more information visit: www.jic.cz.



Conclusion

The 2024 EU|BIC Impact Report highlights the significant strides made by the EU|BIC community in fostering regional development, supporting innovative startups, and advancing sustainability goals across Europe. Through rigorous data collection and analysis, this report underscores the critical role EU|BICs play in nurturing entrepreneurial ecosystems, facilitating access to finance, and driving digital and green transitions.

Key achievements of the EU|BICs include substantial contributions to regional economic development, the promotion of deep-tech innovations, and the support of startups in overcoming market and regulatory challenges. The initiatives and programmes detailed in this report, demonstrate the tangible impact of EU|BICs on both local and broader European scales.

As we look to the future, the continued success of the EU|BIC community will hinge on their ability to adapt to emerging trends, leverage new technologies, and address the dynamic needs of the entrepreneurial innovation ecosystem. By doing so, they will continue to drive forward the European Innovation Agenda and support Europe's ambition to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. The decades-long commitment of EU|BICs to innovation and sustainability makes us look with confidence to their ability to drive impact in fostering a resilient, competitive, and sustainable Europe.

In conclusion, the collective efforts of the EU|BIC community are instrumental in driving forward the EU's Regional, Innovation, SME, and Industrial policy agendas. Their mission commitments to quality business support, regional development, and sustainable innovation are not only enhancing the competitiveness of European enterprises but also contributing to the overall cohesion of European regions and the well-being of their societies.



2024 Impact Analysis – Methodology

All results present in this report about the EU|BIC community were gathered and analysed by EBN, following specific methods to properly assess this data.

Results were collected via the annual EU|BIC Self-Assessment Questionnaire, sent to all EU|BICs, as regards 2023 performance. For this report, answers were analysed coming from 89 EU|BICs total.

A first data-cleaning exercise was made. Answers from members were double-checked both horizontally and vertically based on thoughtfully pre-defined criteria. Odd numbers were analysed separately. Members were contacted based on this scanning exercise, and answers were adjusted accordingly – thus concluding the data preparation stage.

Data was then aggregated and analysed making use of appropriate data analysis and visualisation tools – transforming data into information in context, according to EU|BIC community needs and EBN mission commitments.

The 2024 EU|BIC Impact Report serves as a way to present the most relevant impact analysis to the community. We thank all EU|BICs who participated in this exercise, allowing us to study the community's joint impact.