V4 STARTUP FORCE
building bridges in the Visegrad region

SUMMARY (2018-2021)

The V4 Startup Force program, the first startup scholarship program in the region, was launched in 2018 with the support of the International Visegrad Fund. The goal of the program is to help startups establish business relationships in V4 countries and to strengthen the startup ecosystem in the region.

The program is co-hosted by Design Terminal and our program partners in the V4 region: all of us play an active role in the program, from scouting to organizing valuable business meetings, workshops and networking events to selected startups.

V4 STARTUP FORCE IN NUMBERS

Our accumulated results since 2018:

- 400+ applications

- 300+ business meetings

- 57 participants

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Over the past four years, from 2018 to 2021, due to our efforts, **400 startups submitted applications to the program** altogether. In the beginning, 4 teams were selected for each semester of the program, but in 2020 we added a Bootcamp to the agenda, partially to increase the reach of the program and to help us get to know startups better before making the final selection. **Up until the end of 2021, 57 startups participated in the program.**

While the Bootcamp serves the aforementioned purpose of better selection, **we planned the agenda in a way to ensure that both the Bootcamp and the V4 Startup Force program prove to be great and whole experiences on their own**.

Beyond the mentoring and the workshops, however, the unique value of the program is the **tailor-made business meetings** we organize for startups with our program partners in the V4 region. We assess the needs of startups and then contact our corporate as well as small and medium business partners to find the best matches. So far, we have made **301 business meetings** happen altogether in the four countries.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

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- Visegrad Fund
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International Visegrad Fund

is an international donor organization established in 2000 by the governments of the Visegrad Group (V4) countries—Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia—to promote regional cooperation in the V4 region as well as between the region and other countries, especially the ones in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership. The Fund supports endeavors by awarding grants, scholarships, and artist residencies. The Fund's annual budget is 8 million EUR which is compiled from the contributions of the V4 governments.

Campus is an international co-working space for early-stage startups, aspiring entrepreneurs, and students based in Bratislava. Since opening its doors, they have welcomed members from 14 different countries, making its environment truly international and diverse.

DEX Innovation Centre (DEX-IC) is an innovation centre, established in 2012 in the Czech Republic. They run their own Accelerator program, operate a Virtual Incubator and other startup activities with a proven track record. They have scaled up 73 startups within their BUILD activities, assisting them to get 3.6 million EUR of investment. Their Build ecosystem consists of a nationwide network of Scouts, Ambassadors, and Ecosystem enablers with 70+ mentors globally. DEXIC is also part of the biggest European public-private partnerships – EIT Health and acts as the EIT Health Hub for the Czech Republic with access to top-niche partners from EIT Health Network.

Startup Hub Poland, the Warsaw-based non-profit foundation is a startup ecosystem builder with Poland at the center. Their vision is to create a hub where international and Polish startups work with corporates and experiment on pilots that can be scaled globally.

SELECTION PROCESS FOR STARTUPS

We have a thorough selection process based on which we select the startups for the V4 Startup Force program. After the scouting is done, we organize a Bootcamp for a maximum of 20 teams (5 startups per each V4 country). During the Bootcamp, we organize mentoring and workshops for startups and track their performance. Based on our impressions, we select one team per country and the final four participate in the three-week-long Startup Force program. Startups receive further mentoring and we also organize business meetings for them in each country.

Criteria for teams

- the startup should be based in the V4 region and at least one founder should have Czech, Hungarian, Polish, or Slovak nationality.

- business-to-business (B2B) solution (a criteria from 2022)

- traction with users, well-defined business model, ready for potential market expansion

- selected teams should allocate time to participate in the program (scholarship provided upon attendance)

- scalable business

METHODS WE USE

Bootcamp

The intense, 5-day-long training filled with workshops and mentoring enables us to include more teams in the program. In addition, we get to know them better, hence can make a better decision about the final teams for the V4 Startup Force program.

Business meetings

The business meetings aim at providing real market feedback for the startups and in the event of mutual interest potential partnerships can also arise. Each project partner of us involves relevant large corporations or small/medium-sized enterprises in the program who are available to meet the startups and provide them relevant feedback during the time of the program. We also provide personalized coaching sessions for the startups before the business meetings in order to prepare them.

Mentoring and workshops

Mentoring and workshops take place in Budapest and at the organizing partners' premises helping startups gain a better view of local market factors.

MEET STARTUPS IN V4 STARTUP FORCE

We worked with many teams in the last couple of years. Here are a few startups to showcase our alumni power.

Péntech

The Hungarian startup was established in order to ease the credit process of SMEs. With this smart factoring process, they can provide financial assistance to clients rapidly, conveniently, and without paperwork. The team offers a white-label solution to financial institutions and large corporations in order to utilize the product under their own brand name.

Behavera

The idea developed by the Czech team utilizes simulations to help large corporations in their selection process; it is possible to measure personal, non-professional capabilities of applicants. The solution also supports career-starters and undergraduates in career planning; they complete the questionnaire and in return receive a list of areas that suit them best.

AI_Factory

The company is able to identify the products on the shelves with image analytics.

HandCubeKey

Their development is a special keyboard for the disabled, which provides a solution to the lack of motoric skills.

Airlogy Labs

The Bratislava-based startup developed a kit that helps you identify mold and bacteria of any kind in the air and on surfaces alike so that you can eliminate them from your home and/or work environment. The collected samples are analyzed in university labs.

Munch

The Munch solution aspires to eliminate food waste by providing a platform for restaurants, cafés, and groceries to sell their surplus products at a discount (40-70%) price. The service is available via browser and an app as well.