

Yearly competitions for BSR consumer cleantech startups and SMEs

A REPORT DESCRIBING HOW THE COMPETITIONS WERE
CARRIED OUT AND LESSONS LEARNT

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SmartUp Accelerator is a collaboration project between seven countries around the Baltic Sea with the focus on building consumer cleantech ecosystems, activating its innovation actors and improving their skills to identify brilliant ideas and foster teams committed to creating new businesses. These startups and SMEs are aiming to reduce the environmental burden of consumption.

<https://www.smartupaccelerator.eu/>



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Contents

Contents.....	2
Yearly competitions for BSR consumer cleantech startups and SMEs	3
Themes of consumer cleantech	4
Internal communication	5
External communication	5
Application process	9
Eligibility criteria and value proposition	10
Application form	11
Evaluation criteria and process	11
Overview of the competitions	12
Winners of 2018: Smart Homes	14
Winners of 2019: Smart Mobility	14
Winners of 2020: Smart Consumption	15
Pre-bootcamp phase	16
Lessons learned	17
Appendix	19

Yearly competitions for BSR consumer cleantech startups and SMEs

This report describes how the yearly competitions for BSR consumer cleantech have been carried out and the lessons and experiences learned.

SmartUp Accelerator is a collaboration project between seven countries around the Baltic Sea with the focus on building consumer cleantech (henceforth CC) ecosystems, activating its innovation actors and improving their skills to identify brilliant ideas and foster teams committed to creating new businesses.

Cleantech is traditionally based in industrial solutions and innovations in process industry sector. Now cleantech startups emerge in consumer markets. The growth logic is changing, as companies face challenges and opportunities presented by resource scarcity, rising energy and fuel costs, digitalisation, automatization and user-centered design. CC reduces dependency on natural resources. Consumer cleantech companies (henceforth *smartups*) do more with less. They create new resources (proliferation) via smarter use or re-allocation of available resources.

Smartups make business out of smarter resource use, often by using digital services. The products and services developed by smartups aim to free their users from inefficient use of resources by providing smarter ways of living, moving about, eating and consumption of energy, thus reforming the very core of our everyday life.

Arranging international competitions around the themes of CC have created new opportunities on national and international markets for promising smartups. By initiating a competition and related communication activities, the awareness and knowledge about the CC area and solutions have been addressed. It has enhanced the smartups to get more attention from innovation ecosystem actors such as intermediaries as a whole.

Competitions, which took place once a year during 2018 – 2020, gathered in the first phase together all the best CC smartups from Baltic Sea Region (henceforth *BSR*) project partner countries. Each partner country selected one winner among the candidates in their own country, altogether 7 teams were chosen for the accelerator per year. The competitions served as procurement processes for the selection phase of pilot smartups who were later contracted for bootcamps and acceleration phase according to their needs and CC prospects. During those two

PARTNER COUNTRIES

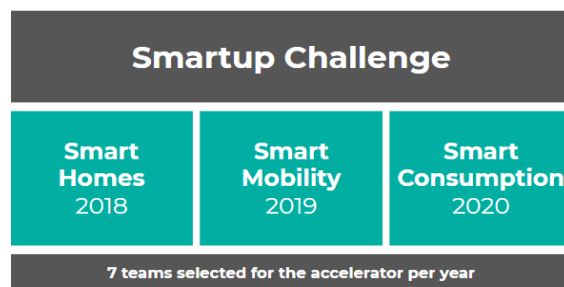
Sweden, Finland, Russia,
Estonia, Latvia, Poland,
Germany

"Smartups are startup companies operating in the field of consumer cleantech."

days a roadmap for new market entry was developed together with experts on internationalization that constituted the coming activities during the 4-5 months acceleration phase.

Themes of consumer cleantech

In terms of resources and energy, the most important decisions people make in their lives relate to mobility, housing and eating. This is where most of our money is spent and also where the majority of the emissions come from. That is why the focus topics of the competitions related to these areas were chosen. The themes on which the competition focused in the three-year period were as follows:



Smart homes was the focus theme for 2018. Smart homes means a wide variety of products and services in the fields of housing, energy, shared space, construction materials and home automation – concepts and technologies making housing and buildings smarter and more efficient. Examples of business opportunities included smart energy, energy storage, passive energy houses, distributed renewable energy production etc.

The focus area in 2019 was smart mobility. This included business models based on sharing of rides, cars, shipping, deliveries, bikes, and other vehicles combined with digital service platforms. From the user's perspective not owning a vehicle often liberates resources to other uses and offers flexibility not achieved otherwise. Examples of business opportunities covered electric vehicles, car sharing, ridesharing, city bikes, self-driving buses and other autonomous transportation etc.

For 2020, the focus topic was smart consumption. By that it was meant solutions which help to reduce environmental impact and resource consumption in the things we do in our daily lives. Solutions that are reducing/eliminating food waste, reducing climate impact from food consumption, awareness raising/nudging/circular economy solutions and so forth. Examples of business opportunities have been listed in the right-hand column of the page.

EXAMPLES OF SMART CONSUMPTION

1. Apps for trading used stuff
2. Household waste processing
3. CO2-trackers, diet trackers
4. "rescue" apps
5. Alternatives to meat and dairy products

Internal communication

Communication of the project was mainly divided into two parts - internal and external communication. The aim was to activate all the project partners and enhance the transnational cooperation. Internal communication objectives were as follows:

- To ensure that all project partners speak one voice when communicating the project to the outside world.
- To make sure all parties understand their roles and responsibilities in the project and support them in achieving the objectives.
- To provide that all partners are working on the same goals in joint project activities.

Roles were defined as follows:

- Lead partner – key position in terms of internal coordination (both content and financial management).
- Communication manager – setting communication aims for the work packages (WPs) and ensuring consistency of the aims, target groups and approach, support in planning and implementation of the communication between project partners, coordination and support of persons responsible for communication in partner organisations.
- WP leaders – responsible for the internal communication regarding the implementation of each activity with its leader and the coordination between the activities as well as all other WP leaders and the lead partner.

For internal communication an account on Slack platform (www.slack.com) was created, where information exchange took place. Google Drive account was created to share materials and documents, where the information was structured according to the WPs.

External communication

For external communication, the objectives set were as follows:

- To increase knowledge among the CC innovation ecosystem actors about the BSR-wide ecosystem, the value of belonging there and collaboration opportunities it provides.
- To ensure that startups and SMEs are aware about intermediaries' support network available within the national and transnational ecosystem.
- To raise awareness and increase knowledge about CC and its logic, business opportunities and challenges in the BSR.
- To promote collaboration opportunities between BSR CC stakeholders and create opportunities for interaction and matchmaking.
- To disseminate methodologies and good practices identified to enhance the capacity of intermediaries in CC sector.

- To disseminate results about new solutions to European and global markets.
- To raise awareness about SmartUp Accelerator model and brand BSR wide.

To meet the project goals the communication plan was essential. It was the main tool for marketing and communications of the competition, followed by bootcamp and acceleration phase. This included a checklist for all the partners for confirming when tasks had been completed.

The plan was used for organizing marketing and communication activities and keeping everyone informed about where we were going and what was coming next. To fulfill the plan, the roles were divided. The plan was managed by the lead partner, Tehnopol as responsible for content production (texts, visuals, videos). There were (at least) one person from all organizations assigned for and involved in communication activities. These people were responsible of making sure that their organization's communication activities are following the overall goals and guidelines of the project communication. Assigned persons coordinated information flow in their own team.

It was very important to coordinate the visual identity of the project in advance before producing communication materials (colours, typography to be used etc). For that Project Design Guide and Logo were established and shared between partners through Google Drive.

In addition to the communication plan, direct appeals from partners to targeted companies were also significant part of the communication. Because direct communication strategies differed greatly from country to country, no separate document was provided for guidance. Those strategies were discussed and agreed on partner meetings.

The visibility rules were set to all information and communication activities in accordance with BSR programme and EU fund rules. EU fund and Interreg logos were visible on communication materials and paragraph about funding was added in all texts related to the project.

All relevant information about the competitions were gathered on the official landing page of the project (<https://www.smartupaccelerator.eu/>). Besides that, three official social media platforms were used for sharing the information – Twitter (<https://twitter.com/smartupacc>), LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/smartup-accelerator/>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/smartupacceleratorBSR/>). The biggest engagement and reach were achieved on Facebook. Still, it was very important to use several accounts because our target audience was divided between these platforms. In addition, Instagram, direct emails, newsletter, press releases, blog, partner's webpages and network channels were used for communication. Interested parties could reach out also via project email: smartup@smartupaccelerator.eu.

Approximately 10 posts were made in social media official channels per competition. Examples of bigger announcements and activities are listed in the right-hand column of the page.

For posts, different visual elements from project CVI and several custom photo platforms (e.g. unsplash.com) were used. Through Canva (canva.com) platform, the elements and picture were put together into a post.

EXAMPLES OF POSTS

1. Call for applications
2. Reminder of the deadline
3. About reaching the deadline
4. Winners of each country
5. Bootcamps
6. Success stories

It was important not to include too much text on the picture, only as much as needed to support brand awareness. Yet, text of the post was just as important as visuals. Writing a copy, it was vital to add as many relevant tags as possible (partner institutions, sponsors, speakers etc) while it helped to boost the reach. During the competitions, posts with video content got the widest reach. Some examples of different posts published in different channels are outlined below.

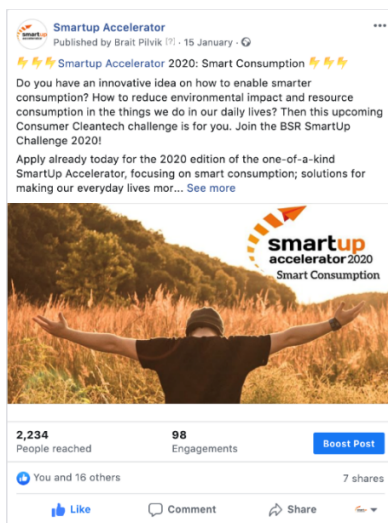


Figure 1. Facebook post about call for participants



Figure 2. Twitter post about chosen teams for the bootcamp



Figure 3. Interview with the Estonian winner at Tehnopol webpage



Figure 4. Blogpost about the winners at the project landing page

Communication team has prepared one pager for each year's competition aimed at potential applicants and partners for sharing this opportunity. One pager included all relevant information in terms of theme, timeline, value proposal, criteria etc.



Figure 5. Example of one pager for 2020 competition

In many cases, partners have arranged SmartUp Accelerator events such as matchmaking events and national seminars back-to-back with the competition which worked as the competition launch. From one side the aim of the event was to raise the awareness around CC and concrete focus theme in each year, and on the other hand it allowed to introduce the project and the possibilities it offers.

While the aim of the event was to bring together relevant and as wide audience as possible (e.g. experts, public authorities, intermediaries, students, startups, SMEs, big corporations, greentech enthusiasts) to provide a forum for discussion and find mutual cooperation possibilities, it was a good opportunity to make a call and invite all related companies to apply for the competition. The participants' questions were answered on the spot. In the picture below you can find Estonian matchmaking event & competition launch which was opened by Finnish project partner in 2018.

In the context of the competition the preceding event was very beneficial. Bringing together several stakeholders created a lot of synergies and value inside the ecosystem. For the partner countries it helped to gather useful contacts for the competition, to find partners who could share information about the competition in their channels.



Between the parties, the events created a favourable environment to share the knowledge and challenges they were facing, as well as feel as a unity to make an impact. These connecting events were stimulating ground for education and cooperation opportunities among CC innovation ecosystem actors. Transnational partner network created new possibilities for companies to expand their business.

Application process

The project's webpage gathered all the important information about the competition. Each year, the project consortium set the dates when the application process was opened and until what time the entries could submit their application for the competition. Usually the application period was open for one month which was enough time to market the competition and to find the potential companies. While visualization makes it more eye-catching, it was used to display the structure and timeline of the competition at the webpage and in different marketing materials.



Information about where and how to apply was provided. In SmartUp Accelerator project the applicants needed to submit an application via the online form found on the project webpage <https://www.smartupaccelerator.eu> during the application period. Information regarding how many companies will be selected to join the Accelerator and when they will be notified about the results (both selected and rejected applications) was provided.

In case the applicant had any questions, the contact information was published on the webpage, e.g. general project email smartup@smartupaccelerator.eu as well as other direct contacts (e.g. email and phone of the project lead).

Eligibility criteria and value proposition

Each competition had guidelines for which requirements had to be met for participating in the competition. For the SmartUp Accelerator competition, it was defined who can apply based on the location of the company, maturity, size of the team and the sphere where the company was active.

All startups and SMEs based in the BSR countries (Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Sweden, northern parts of Germany or St Petersburg region of Russia) were expected to apply for the competition. Eligible companies needed to have a dedicated and strong team in place (minimum 2 persons) who were looking for market validation and international growth. The third criteria determined the stage of the company where Proof-of-Concept and minimum viable product (MVP) was required and where preferably a prototype was available. The fourth criteria was related to the respective thematic area set up for each year in advance.

A separate section of benefits for why the companies should take part of the competition was presented. In different years the formulation and content varied a little. For example, in the first year the companies were supported up to €10 000 each. Awarded contract (appendix 3) was serving as a pilot startup and covered all their expenses for travel and time.

In the next year the project consortium decided to cover only the expenses related to travel and accommodation costs. The decision was made due to the fact that a considerable number of applications were received for the first competition and the project had gained visibility during the year. Project partners admitted that the content of the competition has offered added value to the companies so it was expected that finding participants in the coming years would be easier. In addition it was also good for learning and gaining valuable lessons what works and what doesn't. In the third year the consortium used the same approach at first, but due to Covid-19 pandemic, it was decided later to support the startups for their time spent as well.

The value proposition in addition to financial support were as follows:

- participation in a 2-3 day international bootcamp, with travel and accommodation costs covered,

- world-class support from international mentors, supporting the team in developing a tailored go-to-market strategy for a chosen market within the BSR,
- 1-on-1 support from local SmartUp Accelerator partner with expert knowledge about the selected market,
- access to valuable contacts, arranged meetings with clients or investors, scanning for potential testbeds for piloting.

Terms & Conditions related to the competition were developed. It was a place where to put all the fine details about provision of the goods and/or services, create a legally binding document in case of a complaint and answer all those questions that may not be clear in advertising. Terms & Conditions were uploaded on the project webpage and were available for everyone to read and familiarize themselves with before applying to the competition. It was obligatory for the applicant to tick the box when submitting an application to confirm that he or she has read and agreed to the Terms & Conditions.

Application form

In the application form it was important to ask as few questions as possible, but as much as necessary. In order to validate companies' stage and fit into the competition, various questions were drafted based on the criteria developed. When formulating the questions, it was also very important to find out the motivation and full commitment behind the startup.

On a technological level, the website had one central place to collect all the applications. The collected applications were GDPR compliant and used only for the purpose of the project activities. The application form used in the SmartUp Accelerator competition can be found in the appendix 1 in the end of this document. Each year the project consortium reviewed the formulated questions and assessed the need for changes. Minor changes were made either the wording or the questions.

Evaluation criteria and process

After application period was ended, each country evaluated the applications based on the evaluation template developed. The main objective of the evaluation template was to have a universal tool to select the most suitable startups to the bootcamp and acceleration phase. Both the information submitted with the application form as well as the evaluation template gave enough information to pinpoint out best teams. The evaluation template could also be used for a necessary follow-up call/meeting, when it was necessary. Evaluation template reflected the important criteria which was helpful for decision making.

The evaluators were the project partners from the local ecosystem. For transparent evaluation, at least 2 different experts evaluated each application to get a fair overview of the applicants. Scores were either summed up or divided for an average result. Evaluators comments were also taken into account. For evaluation and calculation (appendix 5) a separate excel table were constructed for each partner to use. In countries where there was more than one project partner, the decision was taken jointly. After each partner had chosen a potential winner in their own country, the startups were introduced and confirmed in the separate Steering Committee meeting. In total 7 pilot startups were accepted to take part of the bootcamp and acceleration phase every year.

The applications were screened according to the evaluation table (appendix 4), which consisted of 3 segments (market potential, environmental benefits and new market entry readiness). Each segment had its own weight, 35%, 25% and 40% accordingly. Under the segments several evaluation topics were outlined. Maximum total points per company were 60. If only one company applied in a certain country, it was decided whether the company met the criteria.

Overview of the competitions

Before each competition, the project partners agreed on the definition of the topic agreed upon. The companies needed to fit into the areas of solutions the project consortium was looking for.

The application period for the first competition in 2018 was open from August 15 until September 15. Evaluation was held during a week and entries notified just after (24th of September). The 2-day bootcamp was held in Gothenburg on the 7-8th of November. The acceleration period ended on the 1st of March 2019.

In 2019, startups were invited to apply from 15th of May and entries were accepted until 15th of June. Selection process was made and entries were notified at the end of June. The pre-bootcamp phase activities took place between July 1 until September 9. The bootcamp took place in Riga, 10-12 September, with the last day being "Startup Day Latvia", where participation was optional. The acceleration phase lasted until 31 January 2020.

For the third year (2020), the application process was open from the 13th of January and entries were accepted until 9th of February. Evaluation was held and startups notified in the end of February. A 2-3 day bootcamp should have taken place in Berlin, 24-25 March. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which imposed a travel ban, the bootcamp was transferred online. It took place at the same time and dates as originally planned. The acceleration phase was originally foreseen until in the end of June, but the consortium decided in the light of the pandemic to extend the acceleration period until 19th of August. Through this, the consortium could provide as much support as possible.

Table 1 shows the number of applications received each year. In the first two years the total number of the applications were similar, 25 and 27 respectively. In the last year, a significantly higher number of applicants applied.

Table 1. Applications received during 2018-2020

Number of applications	2018	2019	2020
Estonia	5	1	7
Sweden	3	3	7
Finland	4	5	6
Russia	6	9	13
Latvia	3	5	1
Poland	3	2	3
Germany	1	2	2
In total	25	27	39

However, if we look at the last year, Latvia and Germany had difficulties finding more than one participant. In previous years, Estonia had difficulties in finding participants in 2019 and Germany in 2018. The reasons were different, e.g. although the smart mobility theme in Estonia was very popular, it was hard to find the participants due to various competitions that took place at the same time as well as the stage and the focus of the companies. Some of them were in the phase of developing the products and services and not ready for the market expansion, others were dealing with raising money etc.

In Germany, the argument of not looking to go international with a company due to reasons linked to sustainability has come up. While this is a very important perspective, it can be argued that solutions can enter new markets by exporting concepts or methods without necessarily shipping goods. This by creation of various partnerships, for example. This is an important learning for the consumer cleantech field in general and thus for the SmartUp Accelerator methods for supporting startups in entering new markets – especially as stakeholders will most likely attribute importance to all three pillars of sustainability and look to both local and international impact.

Additionally, the timing of competition (just after the new year), and the abbreviated time slot made it more difficult to engage interested startups. Finally, it could be that "smart consumption" as a theme wasn't targeted enough – if the theme were a bit more focused (i.e. food/packaging), it could have targeted the startups better. Further on this note, some companies did not consider themselves to fall within the 'smart consumption' theme, and German project partner had to explain to the companies that they in fact did qualify for the round.

On the other hand, the wider topic for the Russian partner worked very well. Extensive informational utilization of the existing partners network, lot's of direct contacts, participation in various industry events, targeted promotion and market monitoring helped to create the biggest pool of candidates (13).

Winners of 2018: Smart Homes

The first focus theme during 2018 was smart homes which meant products and services in the fields of housing, energy, shared space, construction materials and home automation – technologies making buildings smarter and more efficient. The applications varied from digital community platforms to smart heating systems for homes. Below are the best teams chosen to for the first round of bootcamps and acceleration phase.



[rDot](#) from Sweden is developing and manufacturing an environmentally friendly, ultra-low power display technology. The applications include smart homes.

[Volts](#) from Russia offers Power Bank for the whole house. It will help to operate energy consumption and to create unique scenarios for future consumption.

[Homebeat.live](#) from Germany enables “smart building” for multi-family buildings. It can be used like a multi-thread WhatsApp channel. The freemium SaaS platform, brings all stakeholders together in a single platform.

[Fourdeg](#) from Finland offers a service that improves indoor comfort with stable heating and in the accuracy of individual rooms; and saves 15-35% in heating costs.

[Ecolife](#) from Poland provides a system to measure air quality indoors and outdoors, compares those two and send notification to the users to do an action to clean air quality indoors.

[Istabai](#) from Latvia offers smart heating control system. Istabai system is made to retrofit your home with smart home solutions and the whole system can be controlled through one app.

[AiRobot](#) from Estonia provides an innovational ventilation unit. Specially built software and hardware constantly monitor indoor climate and then smartly act or regulate indoor climate based on the results.

Winners of 2019: Smart Mobility

The aim for 2019 was to support solutions related to smart and sustainable future mobility. Applications ranged from innovative electric vehicles to on-demand transportation and route planning services. Below are the best teams chosen to for the second round of bootcamps and acceleration phase.



[ONO](#) from Germany is an e-mobility company that offers a whole new category of vehicle, a pedal assisted transporter, solving the courier, express, parcel and delivery markets' logistical and environmental problems within cities.

[Broomee](#) from Poland is an Intelligent Transportation System dedicated to local governments in the SaaS model, which solve problems of excluded areas, and inefficient routes of public transport as well as a price gap between different modes of transport.

[Choppelectric](#) from Estonia is highly passionate in developing and creating handcrafted electrical bikes with awesome design and an unforgettable driving experience.

[Clean Motion](#) from Sweden have created a small electric vehicle for urban transportation of people and goods.

[Parkdroid](#) from Latvia is most affordable, advanced and compact Smart Parking Sensor that communicates with LoRa or NB-IoT networks to provide real-time parking data.

[Perille mobility services Oy](#) from Finland is offering a marketplace for transportation services and a platform for various mobility solutions. They combine several transport operators in one digital search and offer users a smooth travelling experience regardless of the transport mode.

[Smart Transport](#) from Russia is developing an electric vehicle charging service. The company demonstrates benefits of electric vehicle usage.

Winners of 2020: Smart Consumption

In 2020, solutions related to smart consumption and increased consumer awareness were supported. Applications included ideas from waste management solutions to sharing services for clothing. Below are the best teams chosen to for the third round of bootcamps and acceleration phase.



[NyamCup](#) is a Russian company producing edible cups for various drinks which can contain any hot drink with a temperature of up to 100 degrees for up to 2 hours.

[Kamupak](#) offers a digital deposit service for reusable packaging. The Finnish company supports the full loop of packages, making it a circular solution.

[Suckörs](#) is an Estonian company that produces straws made of common reed which are fully biodegradable, reusable and dish washable.

[Planet Heroes](#) from Poland is the first crowdfunding platform focused on environmental initiatives and global promotion of them. The platform uses finance technology to enable peer-to-peer money transfers in the form of donations.

[Eco-Buddy](#) from Latvia has developed an educational board game to support sustainable lifestyles and behaviour. With the game, the team changes the mind-set of consumers.

[Habits](#) from Sweden helps people and companies reduce their climate impact through a service and web-app tool.

German company [INNER ELMT](#) uses the wisdom of Far Eastern medicine and combines the valuable ingredients of the vital mushrooms into a delicious taste experience in the form of a drink powder.

Pre-bootcamp phase

After selecting the winners, the next steps were negotiating and signing the contracts with the startups which determined the responsibilities and opportunities of both parties in the given timeframe. Every partner agreed to a preliminary introductory face-to-face meeting with their startup during which all practicalities regarding the international bootcamp and acceleration phase were discussed, and preparations introduced. The local host organization also made a preliminary screening about the company. In addition, the first meeting was important to get to know the startup and their challenges better.

Although the companies made their primary and secondary target market choice in the application, it was needed to prepare a target market assessment about both markets (appendix 2) to ensure that the final decision that was taken was an informed one. This in turn increased chances and likelihood of a successful market entry, as the product-market fit has been carefully scrutinized. The results and rationale of the assessment was reviewed together with the local organizations of the primary and secondary target market who also helped to support the final decision. Chosen target markets by the companies during 2018 – 2020 are outlined in table 2. The pre-bootcamp phase was followed by 2- or 3-day physical bootcamp and acceleration period during 4-5 months.

Table 2. Chosen target markets during 2018 – 2020

Home country	Target market		
	2018	2019	2020
Poland	Russia	Sweden	Sweden
Finland	Poland	Russia	Germany
Estonia	Germany	Germany	Germany
Sweden	Germany	Germany	Germany
Russia	Sweden	Poland	Finland
Latvia	Poland	Sweden	Finland
Germany	Finland	Sweden	Germany

Lessons learned

The main aim was to increase the visibility of the competition as well as the project and reach the key target audience. Lessons learned for organizing the competition within three years are set out below.

The most efficient method how to get people to apply was through personal contacts and 1-on-1 communication with potential candidates. It allowed not only to share the info but also for the other side to ask questions and to build a relationship with them. It was a good way to learn their direct reactions regarding the program and the content.

The second best opportunity was to reach out to the startups that were already known from the local startup ecosystem (incubators, accelerators, venture capital) or with whom the project partners have met during the project events or for interviews. It was also wise to ask recommendations from the local network (people in the startup ecosystem).

Personal recommendations work also successfully. These can be made by relevant partners, who are aware of the competition. E.g. the winner of the competition in Latvia in 2018, Istabai, received the information through personal recommendation from the Ministry of Economics. Another example concerns the connection with the winner from Poland in 2020, Planet Heroes, which was first initiated by a friend of the project manager through LinkedIn.

For the announcement itself, it was important to spread the word in all media channels used by the partners (e.g. social media, newsletters, website). In addition to that, just as important was to share the info through personal accounts. People like to support their friends posts, by liking and sharing them, which also contributes to the wider dissemination of the information. Today, in Facebook, there are several groups with specific topics created (e.g. agritech, green technologies) – anyone can google and target the interesting ones.

Another successful approach was to spread the message through strong intermediaries/local startup ecosystem organizations and networks. Project partners used their existing network of partners and organizations or made new connections in an area of interest. Many business support organizations are having a pull of clients, who are potential applicants. Extensive informational support and utilization of the existing partners network helped to reach the target audience more effectively and faster.

To find more relevant companies in the particular field, the project partners used the startup database of the country concerned, where it existed, e.g. in Latvia (<https://startuplatvia.eu/database/latvia-based-startups>) or in Estonia (<https://startupestonia.ee/startup-database>).

Participation in the industry events as a speaker helped to promote the project and the programme and make a call for the startups to apply. Even if the partners attended in the event as a guest, they had a chance to network with relevant speakers/startups later. All partners used the possibility to attend in the major regional events, such as festivals, conferences, forums, competitions etc. Screening the possible participants in various competitions gave the hints whom to

turn to. Matchmaking events hosted by the partners itself created conditions for reaching synergy effect both for organizers and the potential applicants.

Partners also used IDing when they did not know the persons individually, through this they got the contacts and could message directly to the startups. Still, the response rate was quite low. Therefore, it was found that e-mailing was not an effective tool to get participants to apply. It was a good opportunity for the first introduction, but for further advertisement rather phone calls, intros, personal meetings etc gave much greater value.

Mass mailing nor website/social media advertising did not seem to bring much in the first years. It is understandable, because the SmartUp Accelerator brand was new and not so strong yet. Without real success stories to show, it was hard to get more applicants only by announcing the application period through different online channels. In return, several partners received some applications “out of the blue” in the third year. One reason might be the bigger awareness of the SmartUp Accelerator brand (e.g. videos about success stories from previous acceleration periods), but also broader topic, which thereby made for a wider appeal (also from companies who were not known). It gave an indication that the program has been serving a great purpose, the value is there for the startups.

Germany and Sweden were popular markets for many companies. This can be attributed to perceptions of how consumers and companies value sustainability, number of inhabitants, advanced infrastructure for developing cleantech and more. During the SmartUp acceleration phases, companies have not chosen to focus on Estonia nor Latvia. While these countries are smaller, there are great opportunities for startups here. Not only is competition not as intense as in the German market, but the Estonian startup visa, greentech communities and the developing smart city ecosystem in Latvia are only a few examples of how there can be great opportunities there as well. Estonian company Aiotex that had selected to focus primarily on the German market, simultaneously focused on Latvia and managed to gather more leads there.

One of the learnings from the SmartUp Accelerator project is for example the importance of consumer understanding, where attitudes towards digitization and sustainability are two of many examples of what comes into play for the success of new consumer cleantech solutions. Aspects in the business environment are equally important and access to data, local regulations and the level of management at which relevant decisions are made (for partnerships, purchasing) will be important and vary based on country and if the solution is B2C, B2G2C etc. For future processes where startups are supported, it can be stated that while it is important to gather knowledge about which markets are of interest to the startups, discussions between local support organizations and target market partners is valuable to enhance the chances of selecting the BSR market best suited to the solution as early as possible.

Appendix

1. Application form for SmartUp Accelerator 2020: Smart Consumption

Form Preview : ID 9
display grid show structure

Note: This is a simple form preview. This form may display differently when added to your page based on normal inheritance from parent theme styles.

Application form: SmartUp Accelerator 2020 (Smart Consumption)

Contact Details

Contact person (Please write first and last name) *

Email address *

Job title (E.g. CEO, business developer (or something totally different))

Phone number (Please provide with country code) *

Company information

Company name *

Number of team members / employees (Please note that the minimum amount of team members is two. If you represent an SME you can have up to 249 employees) *

Short company description (2-3 sentences) *

Website and/or social media channels (if existing)

Upload relevant documents such as logo and pitch deck (optional)

Drop files here or
Select files

Accepted file types: jpg, gif, png, jpeg, pdf.

Company's base of operation. (Please note that only companies based in the Baltic Sea Region are eligible for the SmartUp Accelerator) *

Sweden

City *

Solution, Customers & Impact

What is your company's product or service relating to smart consumption? (Describe in which of the above sub-categories your solution belongs.) *

0 of 500 max characters

What problem are you solving, or what needs are you meeting? *

0 of 500 max characters

Who are your customers and/or users? (In the case where your customers are not the same as your users, please describe both.) *

0 of 250 max characters

How does your solution promote improved sustainability? (For instance waste reduction, resource efficiency, energy savings, CO2 emission reduction or other improvements in sustainability including social sustainability.) *

0 of 1000 max characters

What is unique about your solution? *

0 of 500 max characters

Market

What is the estimated total addressable market globally, for your solution? (Please state in Euro) *

0 of 250 max characters

What is your revenue model? *

0 of 250 max characters

Which of the 7 countries would be the most interesting target market for your company? *

Sweden

And the second? *

Sweden

Maturity

What is the level of maturity of this solution? Mark only one option *

- ☐ MVP (minimum viable product)/prototype finished
- ☐ Product/service ready, not yet generating sales
- ☐ Commercially available (already generating sales)
- ☐ Other:

Are you present in more than one country? (If you are, please also list which ones) *

What are your company's main priorities in the coming six months? (For example, product development, customer acquisition, internationalisation) *

0 of 500 max characters

Do you have any IPR (intellectual property rights, such as patents, trademarks, etc) that relate to the proposed solution? (If you do, please briefly elaborate on it/them) *

0 of 250 max characters

Motivation & Priorities

Why would you like to enter SmartUp Accelerator? *

0 of 250 max characters

Where do you aim to be in two years time? (Regarding e.g. maturity, market size or impact concerning sustainability) *

0 of 250 max characters

To Conclude

How did you hear about SmartUp Accelerator? *

- ☐ E-mail from organisers
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Friends or colleagues
- ☐ Search engine
- ☐ Other:

Terms & Conditions *

- ☐ I have read & agree to the Terms & Conditions.
- ☐ I acknowledge that two persons representing my solution will be required to participate in the SmartUp Accelerator Bootcamp in Berlin, Germany, 24-25 March 2020 if the entry is selected for participation

Submit

Viewport (Width : 1434px , Height : 722px)

2. Target market assessment template

Domestic market

Company's product or service

What is your company's product or service and what are the problems or needs you are solving or addressing?

Company USP & competitor landscape

What are your closest competitors in your current market(s)? And how do you differentiate yourself from others?

Who is your customer(s)?

Describe your customer persona(s) (e.g. age, geographical location, needs or interests, etc)

Market conditions: Legal

Are there certain regulatory aspects in your domestic market, that are required or imperative to your business' success (e.g. subsidies, taxation, etc)?

Market conditions: Cultural

Are there certain cultural aspects in your domestic market, that are required or imperative to your business' success (e.g. environmental awareness, consumer behaviours, etc)?

Market conditions: Technical

Are there certain technical aspects in your domestic market, that are required or imperative to your business' success (e.g. access to internet, other types of technical infrastructure, etc)?

Other conditions for success

Are there any other conditions that are imperative to your business' success in your current market?



Primary target market

Target market rationale

What is the reason for pursuing this particular market; what makes that market a great opportunity (e.g. first mover advantage, low degree of competition, timing, patents, etc)?

USP viability

Is your USP in your current market(s) also viable in your new market? Are the problems or needs that you are addressing the same, and are they as important (need to have vs nice to have)?

Threats

What do you believe to be the biggest threats in entering your new market? How can they be mitigated or circumvented?

Competitor landscape

Who are your main competitors in your new market? And how do you differentiate yourself from them?

Market conditions: Legal

Are any of the legal conditions that your business are reliant upon different in the proposed target market?

Market conditions: Cultural

Are any of the cultural conditions that your business are reliant upon different in the proposed target market?

Market conditions: Technical

Are any of the technical conditions that your business are reliant upon different in the proposed target market?

Uncertainties on new market

Are there information or data that is asked for above that you are unable to find, that would be of useful to you? Please state them here

Secondary target market

Target market rationale

What is the reason for pursuing this particular market; what makes that market a great opportunity (e.g. first mover advantage, low degree of competition, timing, patents, etc)?

USP viability

Is your USP in your current market(s) also viable in your new market? Are the problems or needs that you are addressing the same, and are they as important (need to have vs nice to have)?

Threats

What do you believe to be the biggest threats in entering your new market? How can they be mitigated or circumvented?

Competitor landscape

Who are your main competitors in your new market? And how do you differentiate yourself from them?

Market conditions: Legal

Are any of the legal conditions that your business are reliant upon different in the proposed target market?

Market conditions: Cultural

Are any of the cultural conditions that your business are reliant upon different in the proposed target market?

Market conditions: Technical

Are any of the technical conditions that your business are reliant upon different in the proposed target market?

Uncertainties on new market

Are there information or data that is asked for above that you are unable to find, that would be of useful to you? Please state them here

3. Contract template

Agreement for SmartUp Accelerator

This Agreement is made on this day the 27th of February 2020

between

Company, Address, Country (the Acceleratee)

and

Company, Address, Country (the local SmartUp Partner)

Background

SmartUp Accelerator is a project co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with the aim of strengthening the innovation support system for small and medium sized Consumer Cleantech firms in the Baltic Sea Region. To this effect, each year 2018-2020 an Accelerator Process will be organised for selected companies, with the participation of one company from each of the countries represented by the SmartUp Accelerator project partners (Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Russia and Sweden). The participating companies are selected through an open call and subsequent evaluation of relevant criteria.

The Accelerator consists of three phases during a four-month period (spanning from March 2020 to June 2020) according to the following (time frames may be subject to change). The details of the Accelerator process are described in Annex 1

Duties of the Acceleratee

The Acceleratee agrees to participate in all parts of the Accelerator as described in Annex 1.

Specifically, these duties include (but are not limited to)

- Fulfilment of training assignments as set out by the Accelerator Management
- Physical participation of at least two people at the Bootcamp in Berlin, Germany 24-25 March 2020
- Preparation for and presentation at the Mid-Term and Final Presentations

Duties of the local SmartUp Partner

The local SmartUp Partner agrees to reimburse the Acceleratee for the following costs related to participation in the Accelerator

- Return tickets economy class for a maximum of three persons from the Acceleratee's base of operations to Berlin, Germany
- Costs for a maximum of three single rooms at a hotel in Berlin selected by the Accelerator management for the duration of the Bootcamp, arriving one day before the start of the Bootcamp. (23-25 March 2020)
- Costs for travel and accommodation up to a total of €10 000 (including reimbursements for Bootcamp related costs) for the purpose of meeting with prospective customers, partners, etc in the selected Target Market in BSR during the 1-on-1 acceleration period. Requests for such reimbursement must be made to the local partner before the cost has

been incurred. The local partner decides at its sole discretion on a case-by-case basis whether to reimburse these costs.

Term

This Agreement is valid from the date of the signature by both parties until 31 August 2020.

Cancellation

This Agreement can be cancelled immediately by either Party after a written notice should the other Party have committed a serious breach of the terms as set out in the Agreement. Moreover, the Agreement shall be immediately terminated should either of the Parties file for bankruptcy, enter into liquidation or receivership proceedings or otherwise become insolvent.

Limitation of Liability

The SmartUp Partner shall have no liability whatsoever under this Agreement except as expressly provided in this Agreement. The liability of the Acceleratee in case of the Acceleratee's failure to perform its duties as stated in this Agreement is limited to the amount paid by the SmartUp Partner for travel and accommodation costs for the Acceleratee's participation in the Berlin Bootcamp.

Company (Acceleratee)

Signed

Name , position (legal representative of company)

Company (local SmartUp Partner)

Signed

Name , position (legal representative of company)

Annexes

Annex 1: SmartUp Accelerator 2020 Term and Conditions

4. Evaluation table

	SMARTUP 1		
	Average (based on Person 1... Person X)	Person 1	Person 2
A) MARKET POTENTIAL 35%			
1. Solution			
0 = Hard to understand what it's about 1 = Moderate understanding what the solution is about 2 = Very good understanding what the solution is about			
2. Customers: Direct channel to customer			
0 = B2B 1 = B2B2C 2 = B2C			
3. Impact - strategic importance of the solution			
0 = Business as usual or fits only 1-2 country 1 = Novel approach to solve a problem 2 = Opportunities for global impact			
4. Technology: Evidence for demand of innovation			
0 = No 1 = Yes 2 = Evidence + unique technology (e.g. patent)			
5. Potential market size			
0 = Vague market estimation 1 = Specific but lacks either quantitative or qualitative aspects 2 = Well described/calculated market size including financial estimates			
6. Customers: Any relevant data that proves there's a foreseeable amount of earnings in the future			
0 = No 1 = Yes 2 = Existing income/turnover			
Section A points	0	0	0
Section A inc weighting	0		
B) ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS 25%			
7. Environmental benefits			
0 = No reference to environmental benefits 1 = Vague reference to environmental benefits 3 = Relevant data that proves environmental benefits			
Section B points	0	0	0

Section B inc weighting	0		
C) NEW MARKET ENTRY READINESS 40%			
8. Maturity			
0 = No prototype (TRL 6 or below) 1 = Prototype exists 2 = Customers & revenue/turnover			
9. Motivation			
0 = Technology development 1 = International growth & business expansion			
10. Priorities			
0 = No clear plans or milestones 1 = Milestones or plan exists, but are somewhat unrealistic to reach 2 = Milestones or plan exists and are realistic to achieve			
Section C points	0	0	0
Section C inc weighting	0		
TOTAL POINTS (MAX 60)	0,0		

5. Calculation table

	max points	multiplier	weighing	max section total	
Section A	12	5	35%	$12 \times 5 \times 0.35 = 21$	
Section B	3	20	25%	$3 \times 20 \times 0.25 = 15$	
Section C	5	12	40%	$5 \times 12 \times 0.40 = 24$	
				60	Max total points