



PRESS RELEASE: European Startup Network takes next steps in its expansion strategy

28 March 2022

At its General Assembly in Lille, France, the European Startup Network (ESN) took two important steps in its expansion strategy: (i) leading European regional startup ecosystems were admitted as members (Startup Valencia, Platform 6 from Tampere, EuraTechnologies from Lille and Danish Tech Startups), and (ii) the collaboration with startup associations outside Europe was intensified and associate members were welcomed (Ghana Startups, Maroc Numeric Cluster and Startup Canada).

The first part of this strategy fits the priority to ‘connect the connectors’ at the pan-European level. This will allow Europe to leverage further on its, now often disconnected, strong ecosystems of startups, talents and VCs. It will also help entrepreneurs to have a maximum of innovation opportunities independently of where they are based (‘Innovation Cohesion’).

“Regional startup ecosystems are key players, complementary to national startup associations, to achieve a strong European startup ecosystem. ESN is the only independent organisation able to ‘connect the connectors’ thanks to its large member base and its long-standing experience in networking, best-practice exchanges and the formulation of joint policy recommendations.” Nicolas Brien, ESN President.

The second part of the strategy aims to strengthen the startup ecosystems over the boundaries of the continents, by mutually beneficial exchange of information and best practices. This ESN approach is aligned with the strategic choices Europe currently makes to strengthen its role as partner in Africa (as e.g., stated during the EU-Africa Business Forum last month).

“There are many parallels between the startup ecosystems of Europe and Africa, and they have a lot to offer each other, but they mostly do not know one another yet. ESN wants to be the driving force to change that.” Jan Bormans, ESN CEO.

To ensure a successful execution of its strategy, ESN elected two new board members: Mrs. Hajdi Cenani (Croatian AI Association and Croatian Startup Association) and Mr. David Hanf (German Startup Association).

Hajdi is co-founder & CEO of the AI startup airt. Before airt, she was the Executive Director of the most awarded Croatian digital agency DRAP, to which she came after holding numerous positions in the leading media company EPH, including Director of Sales and Marketing and Director of tourism publishing. Hajdi was named among the top 100 most influential businesswomen in Croatia, nominated for the Veuve Clicquot Business Woman Award, and listed among the top 100 most important STEM entrepreneurs in Croatia. She also serves as the VP of the Croatian AI Association and has most recently co-founded Croatian Startup Ecosystem Association (Cro Startup) where she serves as the President.

David is CFO / Managing Director of thermondo.de, Germany's largest B2C heat service company with more than 600 employees. Before Thermondo, he has been part in building smava.de, Germany's leading online loan marketplace, as Managing Director, CFO/COO. David is an internet entrepreneur with management background in strategy, finance, venture capital and business intelligence. Before smava, he worked in Venture Capital. He co-founded the German Startup Association and is an active Angel Investor.

ESN members also unanimously re-elected Markus Raunig (Startup Austria), Matthias Zwingli (Swiss Startup Association digitalswitzerland) and Nicolas Brien (EuraTechnologies) for a second term on the ESN board.

About ESN:

The European Startup Network is the NGO that unifies national and regional startup associations to create a common voice for European startups, so that more can start, scale, and succeed. It uniquely represents the European startup ecosystem as it is the only independent pan-European startup association.

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