

*The  
Startup  
Studio*  
*Inspired by* **KPMG**

# Startup Ecosystem Survey

Slovakia | 2016



**KPMG**





# Contents

0	Introduction	4
1	Who Are These Slovak Entrepreneurs?	8
2	Investment Environment	18
3	The Interaction Between Startups and Investors	24
4	Corporates: An Untapped Resource?	32
5	The Infrastructure That Underpins the Startup Ecosystem	38
6	KPMG's Thoughts	48
7	Funds	52
8	Startup Spaces and Community	64
9	Business and Ecosystem Leaders	86
10	The FinTech Opportunity	100



## Introduction

KPMG are delighted to present their 3rd annual Startup Ecosystem Survey and are particularly pleased to see the highest number of respondents to date.

Our first survey was carried out in 2013 and since then the Slovak Startup Ecosystem has consistently grown and strengthened. In KPMG we firmly believe that Startups have a key role to play in Slovak economic and employment growth.

Slovak Startups have ambitious plans to grow their businesses and increased employment is a common objective. Whilst many of them are at the early stages of development, we are already seeing Slovak Startups selling their products internationally. Whilst there are challenges, there is a great opportunity for these Startups to scale and become truly global players.

This is why we need a strong ecosystem to support them. Much of the support infrastructure is already in place but, for example, many of our Startup Spaces are operating at or close to capacity. They need resources to continue their good work.

We have found the Slovak Public Sector is eager to support the Ecosystem. Slovak State support in the past 12 months has been most welcome. The ongoing support of President Andrej Kiska and the announcement of a range of new initiatives and supports by the Slovak Government is very encouraging.

We are seeing a range of new funds in the Slovak market, including venture capital and EU funding. The relative youth of the Slovak Startup Ecosystem has not deterred them and we are seeing investments being made and an appetite to make more. We estimate there is in excess of €30m available to fund Slovak Startups in the next 12 months.

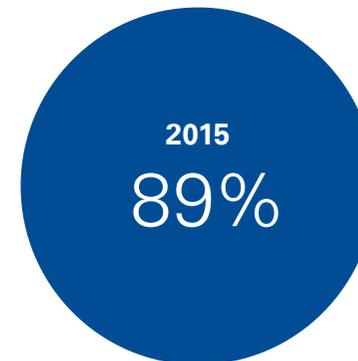
Although the opportunities are great, the Slovak Startup Ecosystem faces a number of challenges and we highlight these, as well as our own thoughts on them, at the end of this survey.

However, with the level of funding and ecosystem support available, there perhaps has never been a better time to start your own business!



Kenneth Ryan  
Managing Partner, KPMG in Slovakia

## **% of respondents who believed the Slovak Ecosystem had strengthened in the previous 12 months**

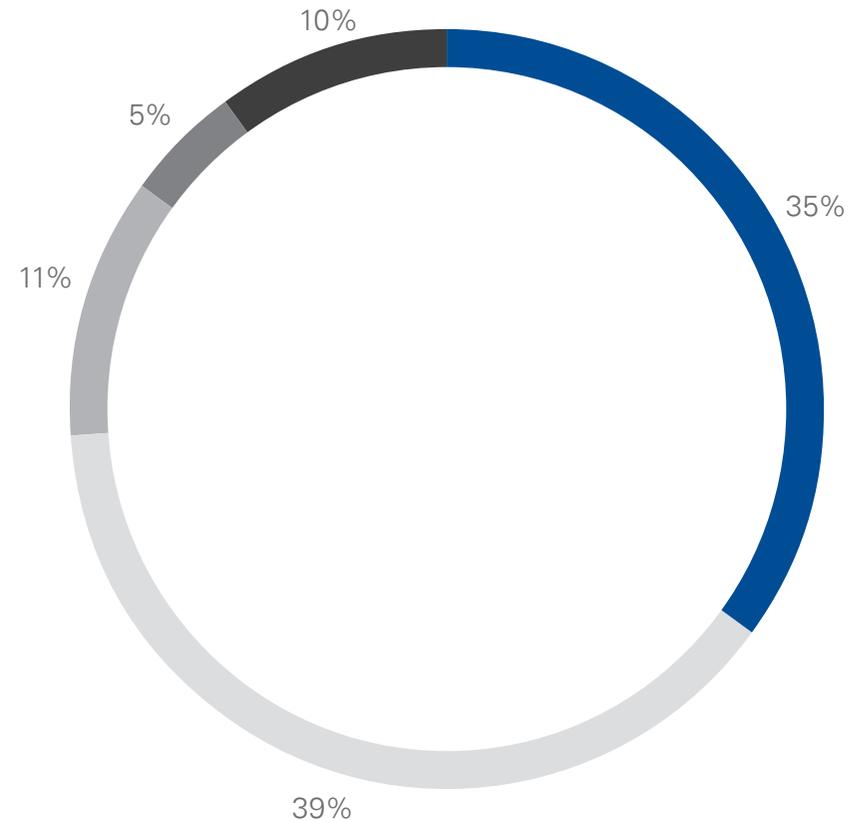


# Basis of the Report

This report is a summary of the findings of the 2016 KPMG Startup Ecosystem Survey. This survey was carried out in Autumn 2015. Each respondent was attributed to one of the following categories:

- STARTUPS
- CORPORATES
- PUBLIC SECTOR ENTITIES
- STARTUP SPACES
- INVESTORS

The findings from our survey were supplemented with discussions with key influencers in the ecosystem. Their comments are presented throughout the document.



# Relevant Terms Used in This Report

## Startup

Our survey focused on young businesses that use innovative technology, disrupt existing business models and have a global outlook. We focused on these types of companies because of their potential for rapid growth and wealth creation and because their needs are different and less generally understood than those of more traditional industries.

## Entrepreneur

Derives from the French verb '*entreprendre*', apparently first used by an Irish-French economist, Richard Cantillon, in 1862 and means '*to undertake*'. In a Startup scenario the business initiator is often referred to as a *founder*.

## Ecosystem

Most commonly used in an ecological context. Put simply, an ecosystem is a community of organisms that interact with each other and their environment. This can also be applied in an economic context when one considers businesses interacting with each other and the economic environment.

## Entrepreneurship

The term '*ship*' has Gothic origins and means '*to create something of value, to invest*'. Applying this in a business context, we can define entrepreneurship as investing time and money into something with a view to creating value.

# Who Are These Slovak Entrepreneurs?

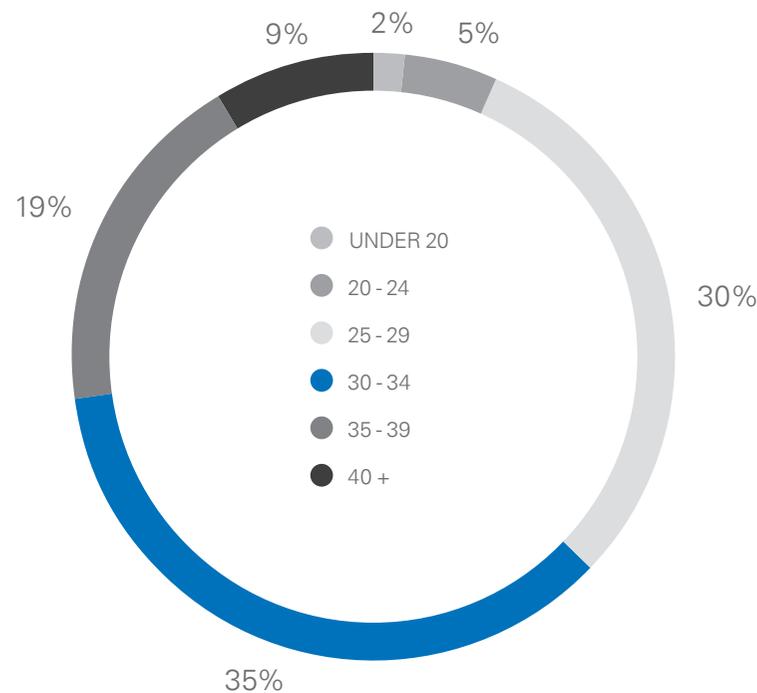
There is a growing acceptance of the importance of entrepreneurs to society and the economy, however people have different perceptions of who exactly they are.

We want to paint a picture of what a Slovak entrepreneur looks like. Through our survey, this is what we found:

# They are young and well educated

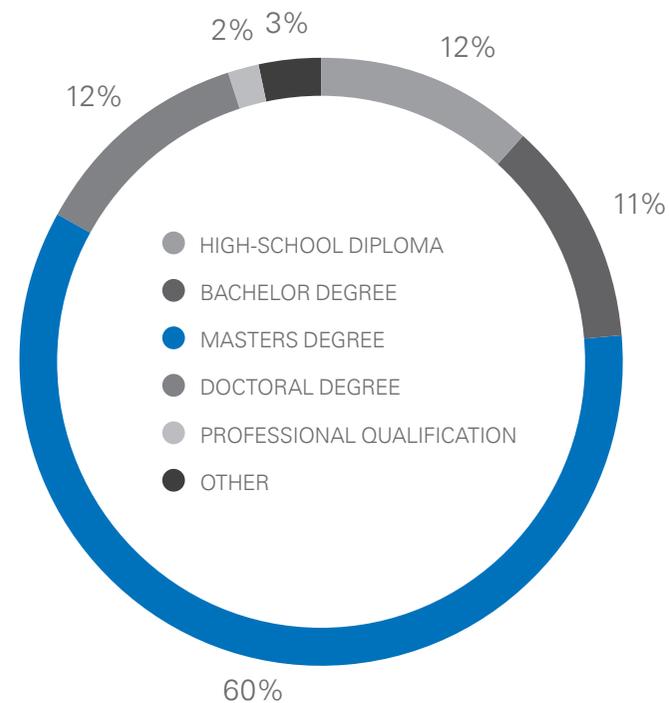
Almost 73% of respondents are under 35 and indeed only 9% were over 40. It is very encouraging that young Slovaks are showing such ambition.

## How old are you?



85% of respondents had a university / college degree or a professional qualification. This gives an indication of the potential for Slovakia's 3rd level institutions to influence and assist our future entrepreneurs. Further efforts are required for this potential to be realised. It also shows the extent to which people appreciate the importance of further education, even if they intend working for themselves.

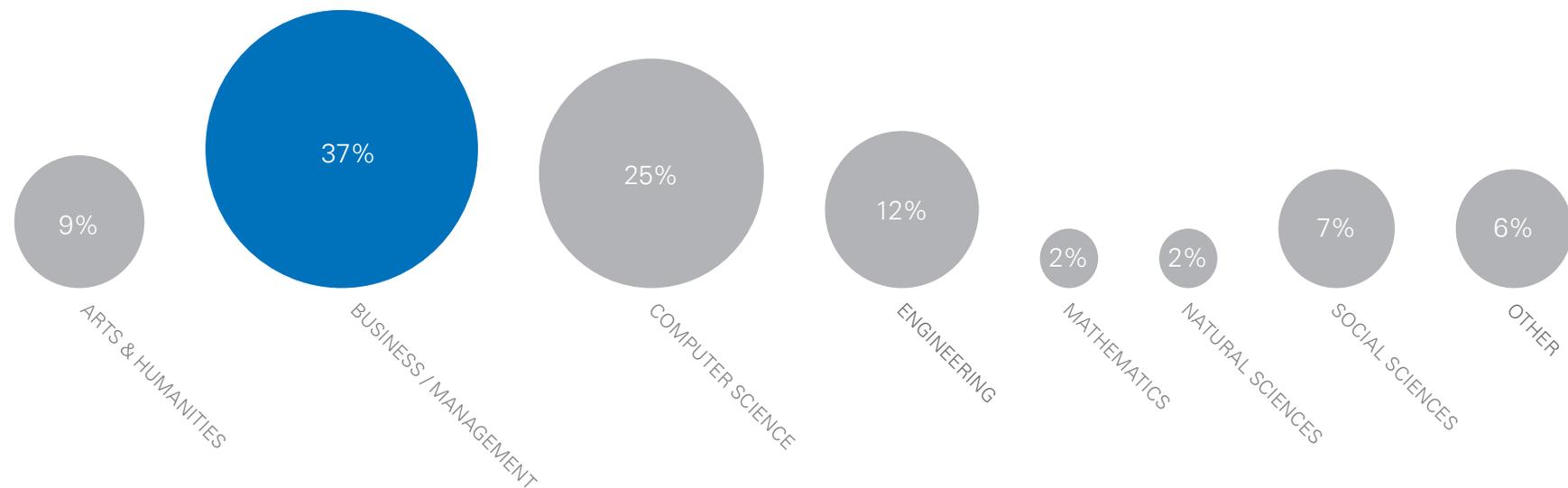
## What is the highest level of education you have achieved so far?



# They don't all have technical qualifications

Graduates with *Business / Management* qualifications had the largest representation amongst our respondents pool, at 37%. This was comparable with a combination of those with *Computer Science, Engineering* and *Mathematics* backgrounds (39%). Such a variety of academic backgrounds is a strong basis for the Slovak Startup Ecosystem.

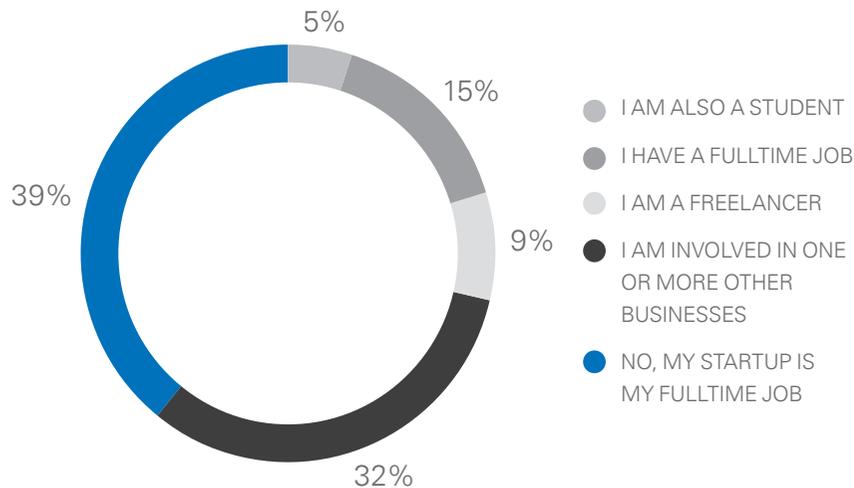
## What is your primary academic specialization?



# Many appear to have other business commitments

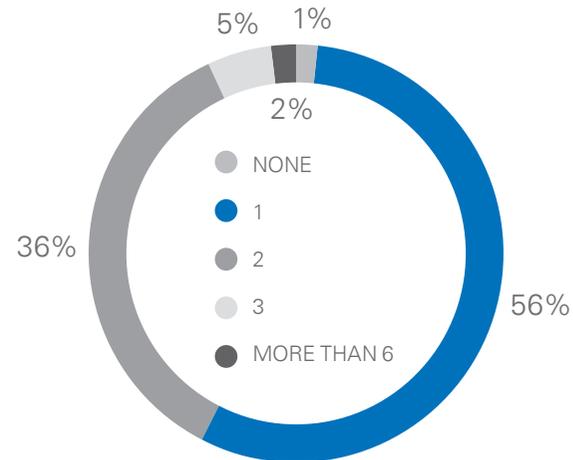
Only 39% of respondents are committing all their time to their Startup. 32% have other business commitments and indeed 15% have fulltime jobs.

## Do you currently have any other commitments beside your Startup(s)?



Furthermore, only 56% of respondents were only involved in one Startup.

## How many Startups are you currently involved in?

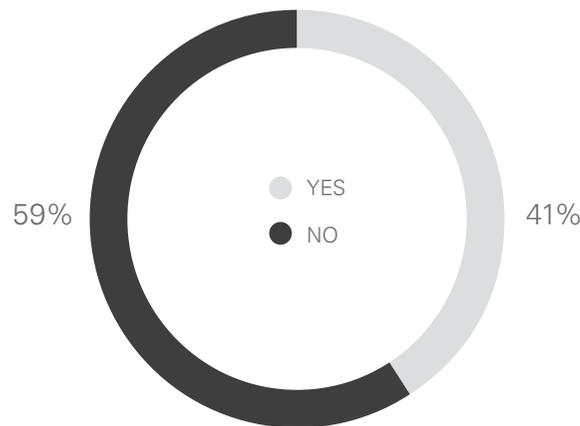


Given the relative youth of the Slovak Startup Ecosystem, it's perhaps not surprising that people have not yet committed to one business. Many need income from other sources to finance their living expenses and fund the development of their Startup. One would expect this to change as the ecosystem matures. However, we also see evidence of experienced entrepreneurs who have already been successful becoming involved as mentors and investors in a number of new Startups and this is very encouraging.

# They have experience of failure

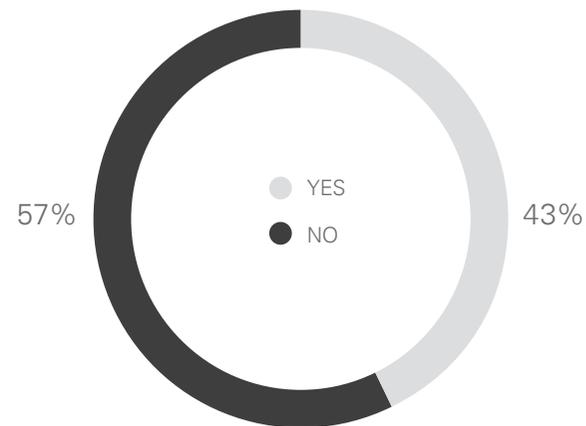
Almost 59% of respondents have been involved in a Startup that failed (up from 25% last year).

## Have any of the Startups you have been actively involved in failed?



Whilst the majority (57%) felt that there was no stigma attached to such failure, almost half felt there was. In our view this needs to be addressed.

## Do you believe there is a stigma attached to such failures in Slovakia?

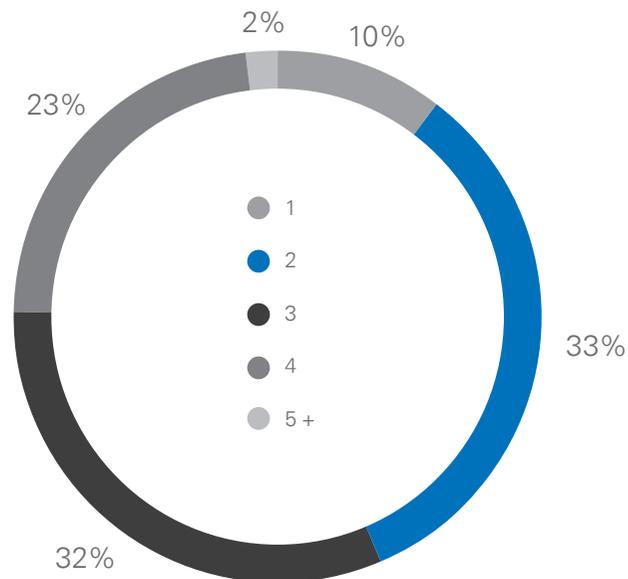


The risk of failure is always present for entrepreneurs starting out and must be overcome. The Slovak Startup Ecosystem has a role to play here in ensuring failure is not punished (e.g. through more favourable media coverage). Successful entrepreneurs should be encouraged to share their stories of failure and subsequent recovery to encourage others. More advanced ecosystems, such as the US, have largely reduced any stigma attaching to failure.

# They work as a team but unfortunately females are underrepresented

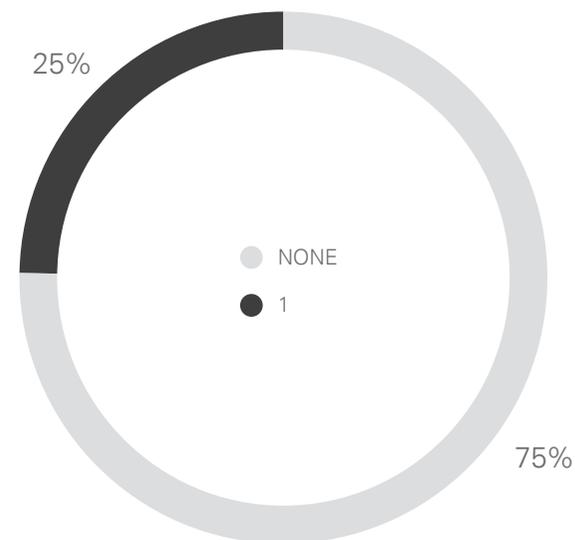
Only 10% of respondents were working on their own. Indeed, more than half (56%) were in a team of three or more. This combining of varied skills and backgrounds and having the support of other founders increases the chances of success.

## How many founders does your Startup have?



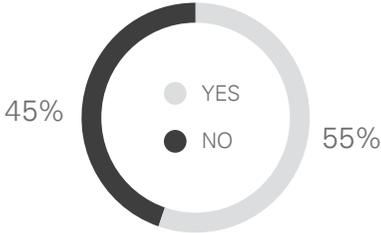
75% of Startups did not have a female founder/co-founder. In fact, no Startup had more than one. This result is similar to last year's findings and is disappointing. No startup ecosystem can afford not to be fully accessing half of its available talent pool.

## How many female founders does your Startup have?



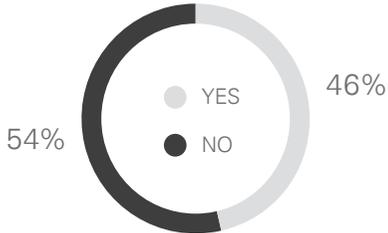
# Their businesses are at an early stage

## Is your Startup generating revenue?

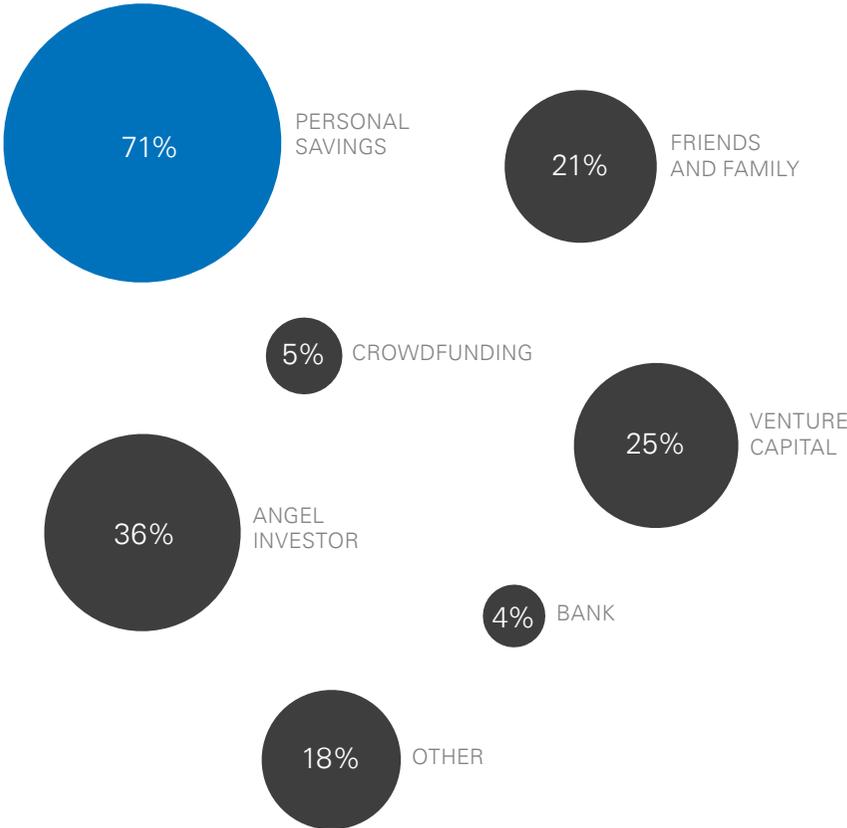


Only 46% have raised external funding (up only 5% from 2014) with only 36% having sourced funds from an angel investor and 25% from venture capitalists.

## Have you raised external funding?



## How has your Startup been funded to date?

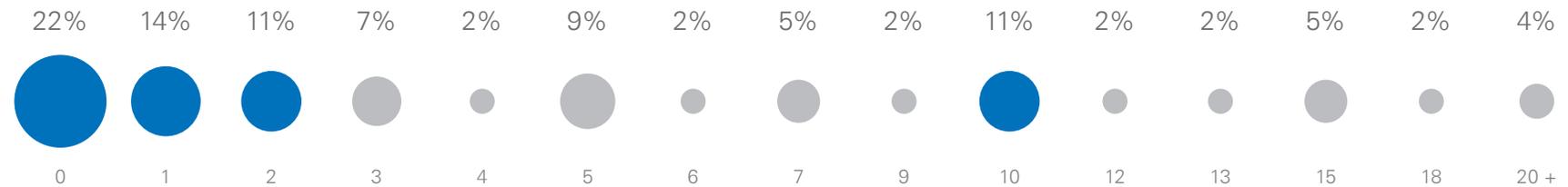


# They create employment

75% of our respondents had at least one employee and, on average, had five employees. 56% of respondents had increased employment levels since last year.

Almost 90% of respondents were planning on increasing employment in the next 12 months. **If successful in scaling, Slovak Startups could generate significant employment.**

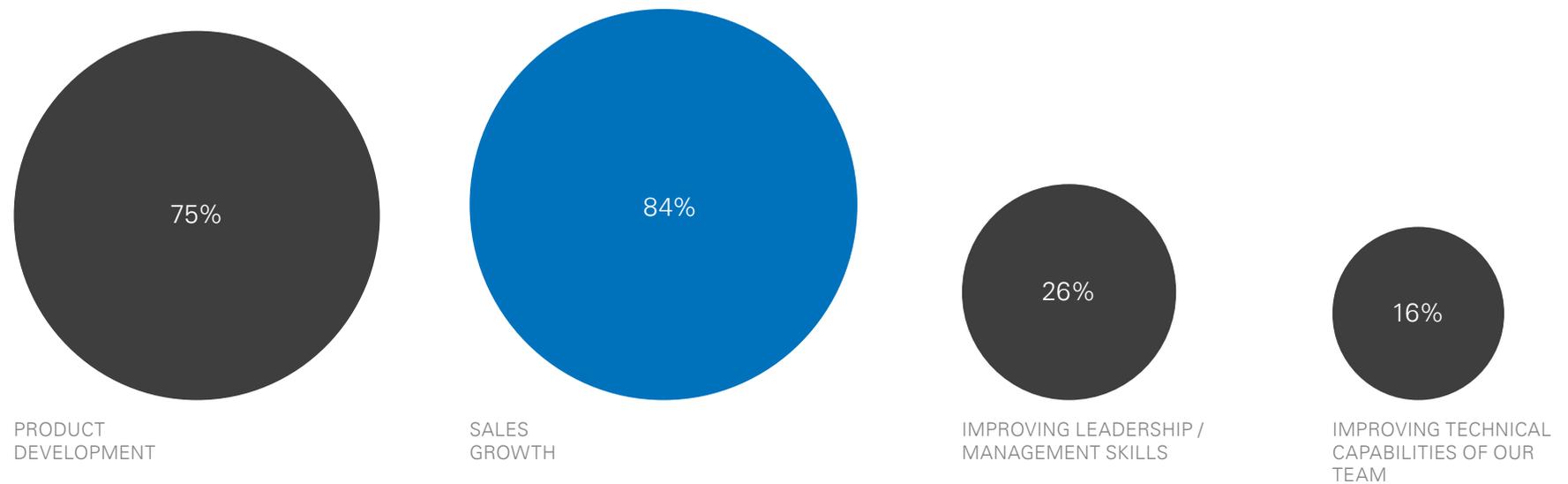
## How many employees does your Startup currently have?



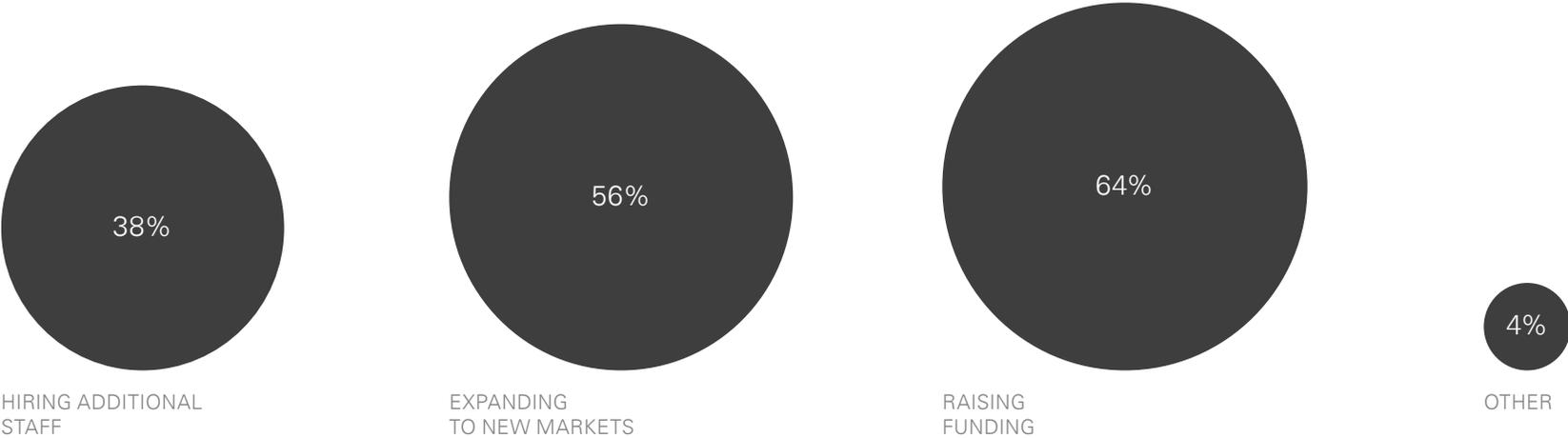
# What are their plans for the next 12 months?

87% of Startups responded that they intend raising finance in the next 12 months. Our survey has found that there is funding available and appetite to make investments (see chapter 2).

## What are your Startup's priorities for the next 12 months?



*Sales Growth (84%) and Product Development (75%)* both featured highly. Interestingly, whilst 87% of Startups intend raising finance in the next 12 months, only 64% see it as a priority. Similarly, whilst 90% of Startups indicated that they were planning on hiring staff in the next 12 months, only 38% see it as a priority.





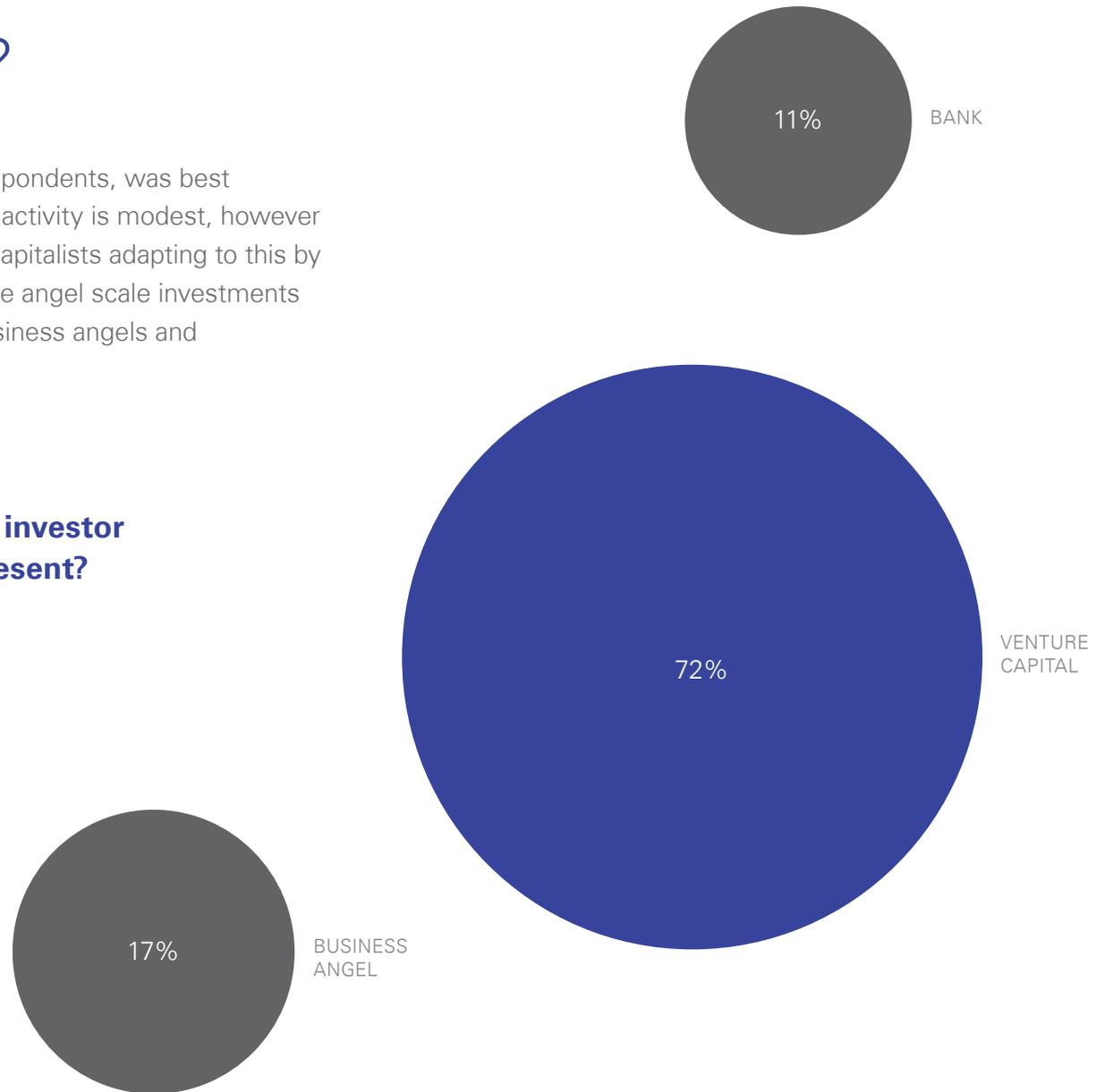
# Investment Environment

Investors provide the fuel that drives the startup ecosystem. Our 2016 survey sought to profile those investors that are active in Slovakia, gain an understanding of their expectations, and identify challenges being faced by them.

## Who are they?

Venture capital, at 72% of respondents, was best represented. Business angel activity is modest, however we see evidence of venture capitalists adapting to this by creating smaller funds to make angel scale investments and also cooperating with business angels and co-investing with them.

### Which of the following investor categories do you represent?

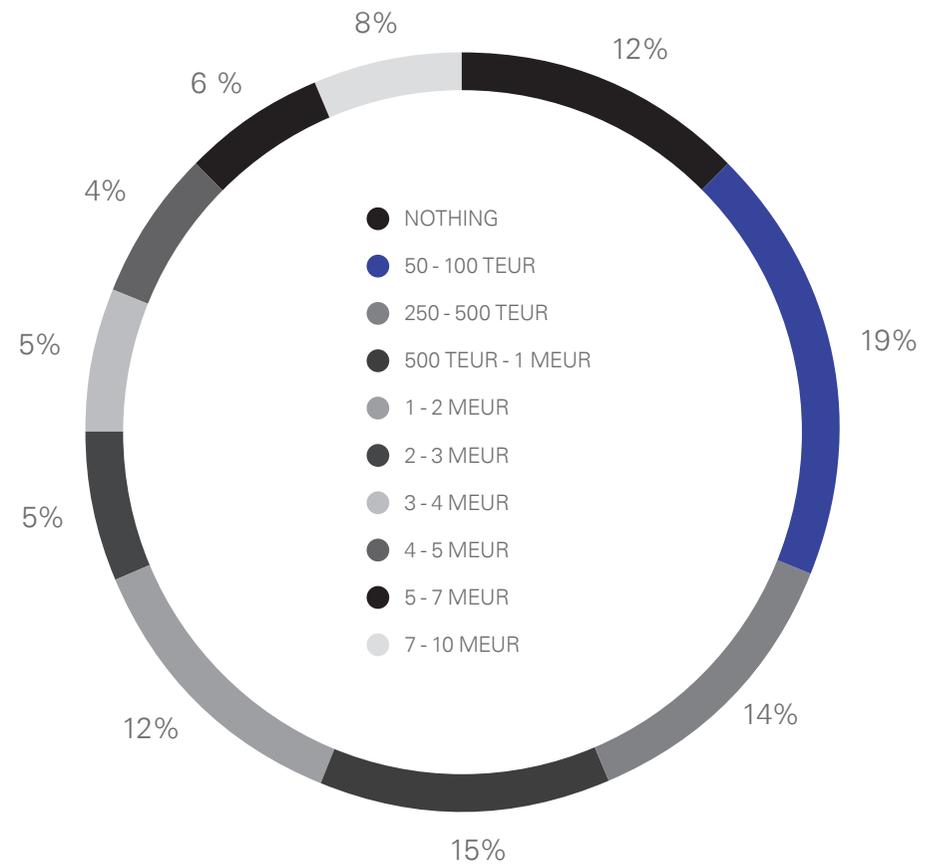


# They are active

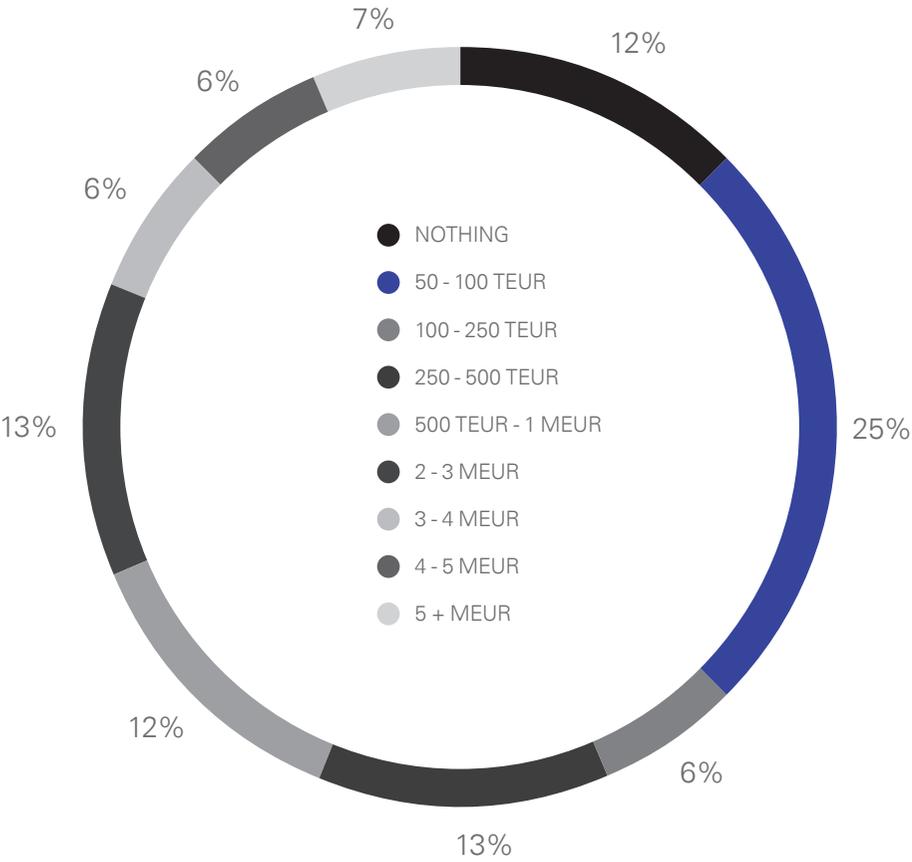
77% of investors had increased the number of investments since last year. Our respondents invested in an additional 60 Startups in the past 12 months.

Almost 40% of those responding had already invested more than €1m in Slovak Startups.

## How much have you already invested in Startups in Slovakia?



### How much have you invested in Slovak Startups in the past 12 months?



Given the number of investments made, the typical investment is quite small. However, given the relative youth of most Slovak Startups, this is not surprising.

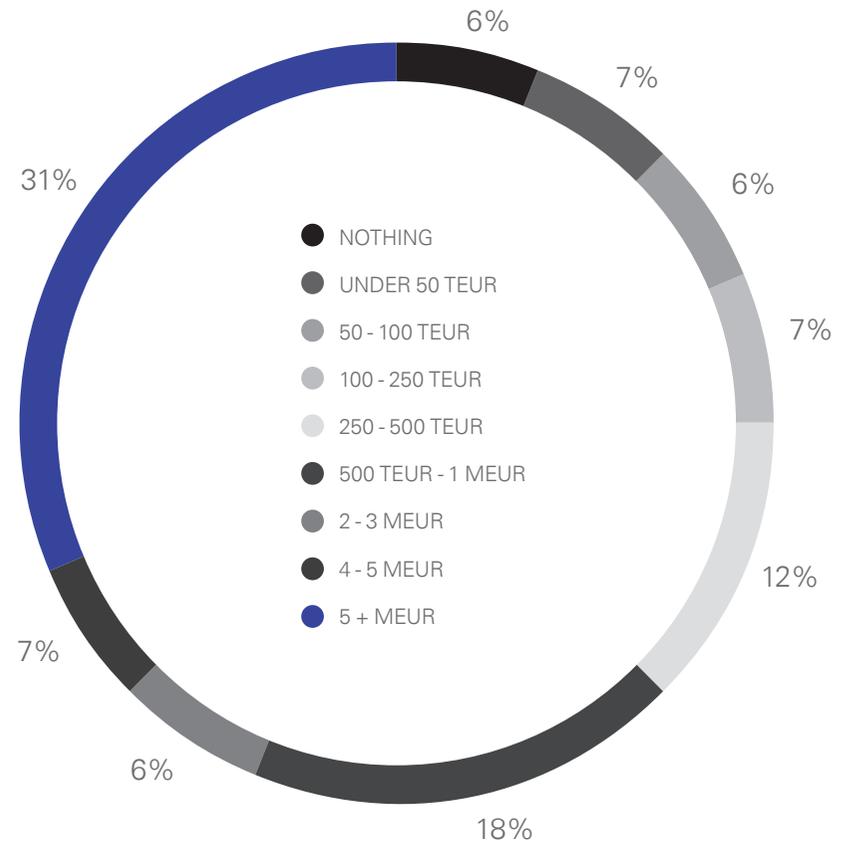
Our survey also found that the amount investors were willing to invest in a Startup varied considerably. This should be borne in mind by any Startup seeking funding. They should focus on the investor best matching their needs, in order to save time and increase their chances of success.

# They are confident of the future

When asked how much they were willing to invest in Slovak Startups in the next 12 months, the findings were encouraging.

**Among our respondents alone, there is likely to be more than €30m available to invest in the next 12 months.**

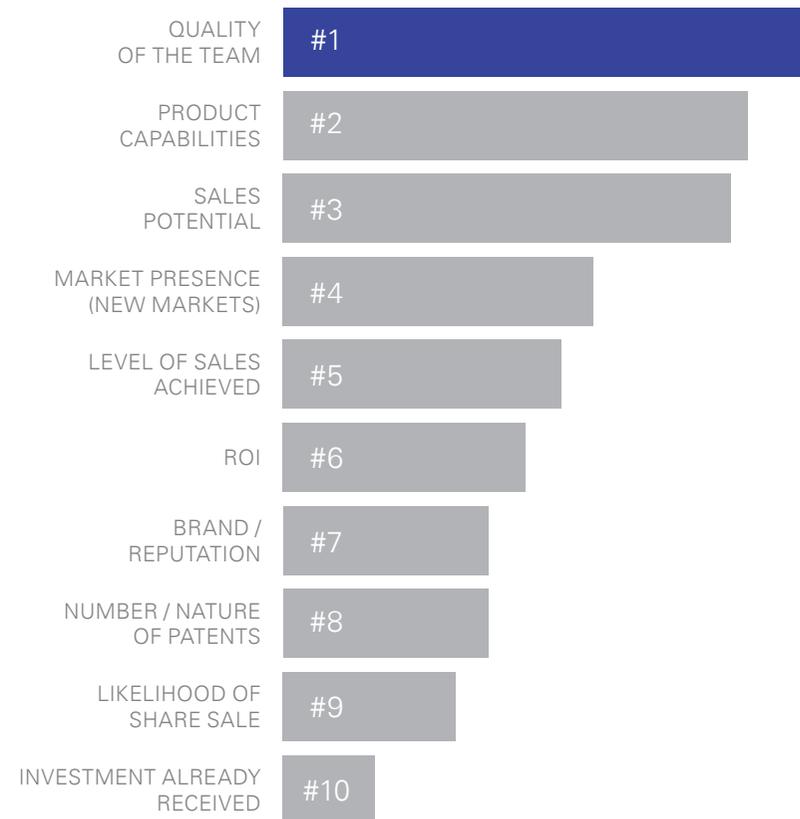
## How much are you willing and able to invest in Slovak Startups within the next 12 months?



# They place great importance on the quality of the management team

*Quality of the Team* was a clear priority. This was followed by *Product Capabilities* and *Sales Potential*. It is noteworthy that *Return on Investment* and *Likelihood of Share Sale* featured low down on the list of criteria. This insight gives founders a clear indication of the need to focus on creating a great business first, after which financial returns are more likely to follow.

## How do you evaluate Startups?





# The Interaction Between Startups and Investors

In our 2016 survey we investigated further the relationship between these two stakeholders in the Slovak Startup Ecosystem. This is what we found.

## Sectoral interests are not always aligned

SECTOR	% OF STARTUPS IN THIS SECTOR	% OF INVESTORS INTERESTED IN THIS SECTOR
FINTECH	7%	75%
EVENTECH	2%	19%
CLEANTECH / LIFE SCIENCES	2%	25%
TELECOMS	4%	25%
CYBER SECURITY	5%	63%
CONSUMER SERVICES	12%	50%
HARDWARE	18%	25%
ENTERPRISE SOFTWARE	4%	63%
MANUFACTURING	4%	13%
BUSINESS SERVICES	23%	25%
OTHER	19%	37%

The top four sectors of interest to Investors are relatively poorly represented by Slovak Startups (Fintech, Cyber Security and Enterprise Software). Only Consumer Services is strongly represented in both lists.

The two most represented sectors, Hardware and Business Services, are both only of interest to 25% of Investors.

Any Startup operating in a sector that is not of interest to Investors should seek to understand why not. There is a risk that Startups are pursuing products or services that will not be commercial or scalable.

# Slovak Startups are typically early stage but Investors are comfortable with this

## STARTUPS

### Which stage is your Startup currently at?

IDEA / CONCEPT	5%
BETA / PROTOTYPE	42%
EARLY REVENUE	26%
GROWING REVENUES	18%
EXPANDING TO NEW MARKETS	9%
MATURITY	0%

## INVESTORS

### At what stage of development are you most likely to invest in a Startup?

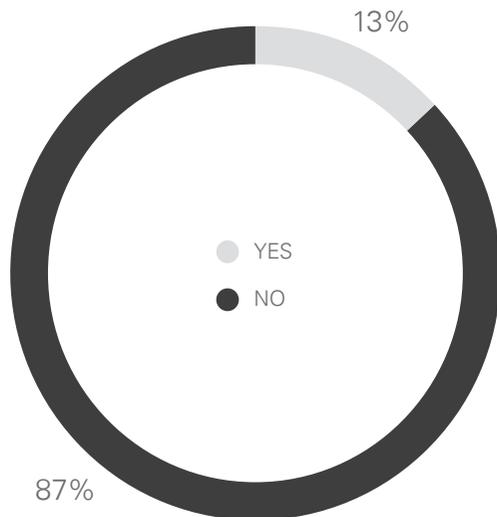
IDEA / CONCEPT	19%
BETA / PROTOTYPE	75%
EARLY REVENUE	75%
GROWING REVENUES	69%
EXPANDING TO NEW MARKETS	38%
MATURE	13%
ANY STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT	6%

68% of Slovak Startups are at the *Beta* or *Early Revenue* stage of their development. 75% of Investors are comfortable investing at this stage. Often there are time limits on the investment of funds and therefore Investors must adapt to the market they are operating in. From a Startup's viewpoint this is positive in that Investors must actively seek out investment opportunities in order to deploy funds within the required timeframes.

# Investors see Slovak Startups' ability to scale as a challenge

87% of Investors that responded to this question believed that Slovak Startups did not have realistic strategies in place (or in preparation) to scale. Our survey found that 68% of Corporates involved with Startups and 88% of Startup Spaces were of the same opinion.

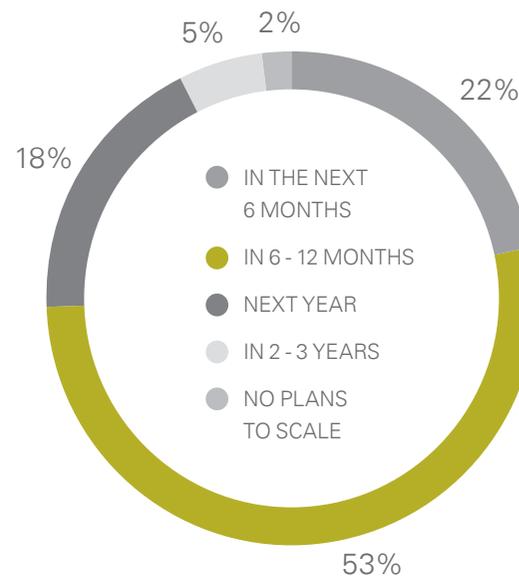
## Do Slovak Startups typically have realistic strategies in place (or in preparation) to scale?



On the other hand, 75% of Startups expected to scale within 12 months (in fact 22% within 6 months).

Our findings might lead one to question whether Slovak Startups' expectations are realistic. Given the importance of scaling to the long term success of these businesses, this finding is a concern.

## When do you expect to scale your business?

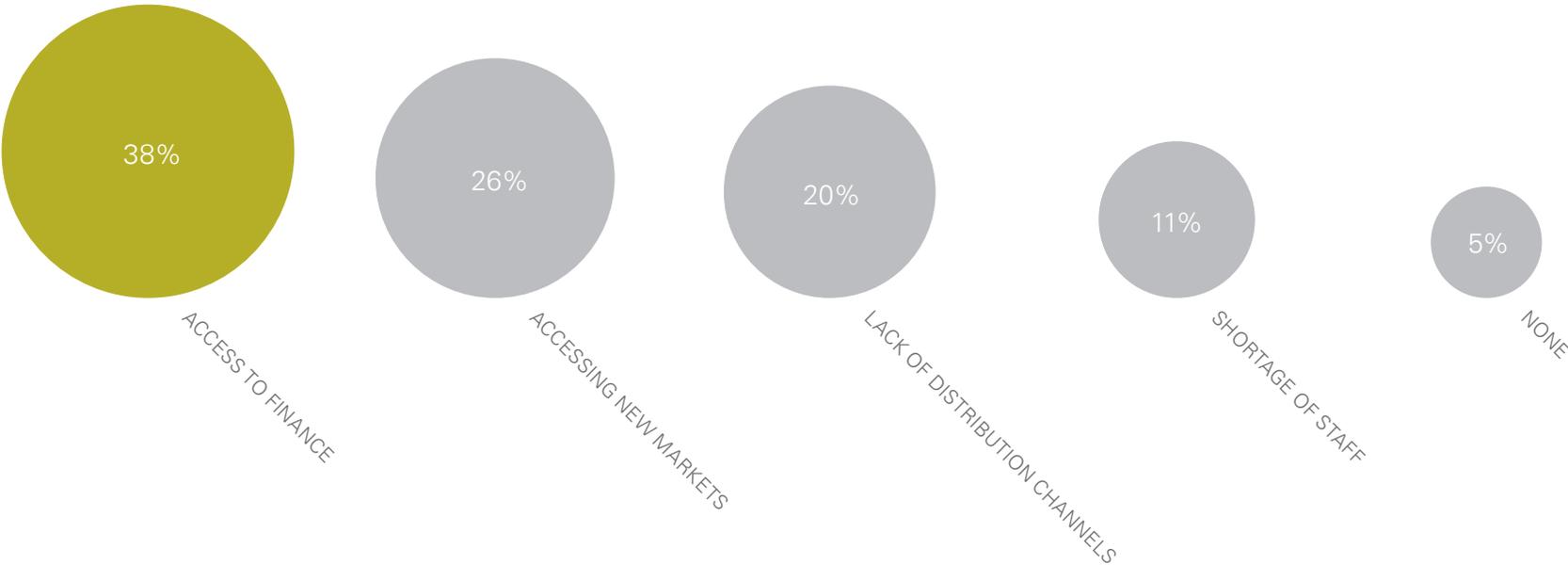


Further investigation of Investors' concerns is warranted. We also found that 38% of Startups believed that *Access to Finance* was the biggest challenge to scaling. This isn't consistent with the responses from Investors, with 82% of Investor respondents saying that available finance exceeded opportunities and our estimate of more than €30m being available to invest in the next 12 months.

KPMG shares Investors' views that finance is not the biggest challenge to scaling. Our experience is that shortcomings in management team capabilities and lack of product traction are the most significant issues.

**Scaling is key to a Startup's success and management must carry out an honest assessment of their business and prepare a realistic strategy in order to achieve scale.**

**What is the biggest challenge to scaling your business?**



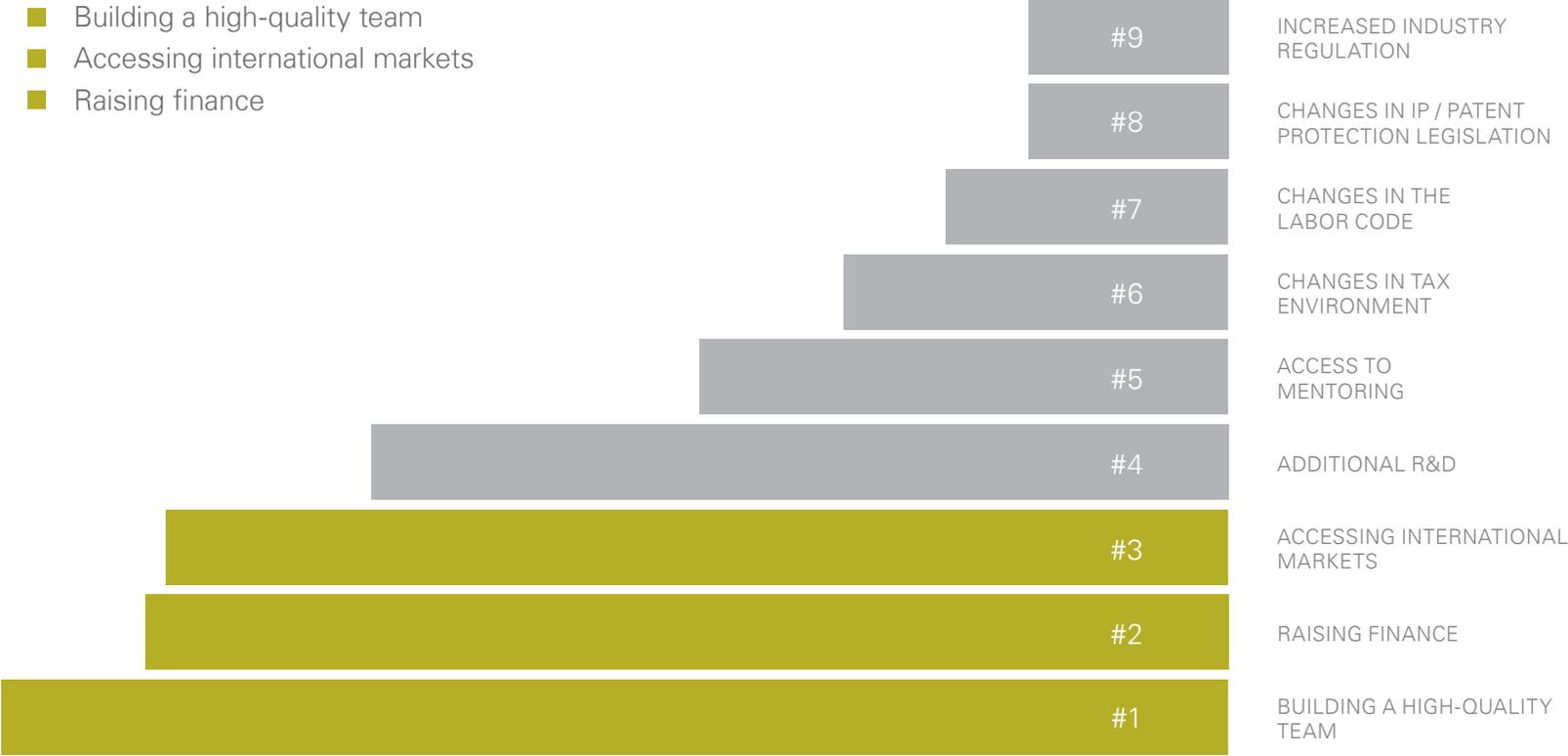
# Startups and Investors agree on the factors that will drive growth

Both Startups and Investors (and indeed Corporates and Startup Spaces also) ranked the top three factors likely to drive a Startup's success:

- Building a high-quality team
- Accessing international markets
- Raising finance

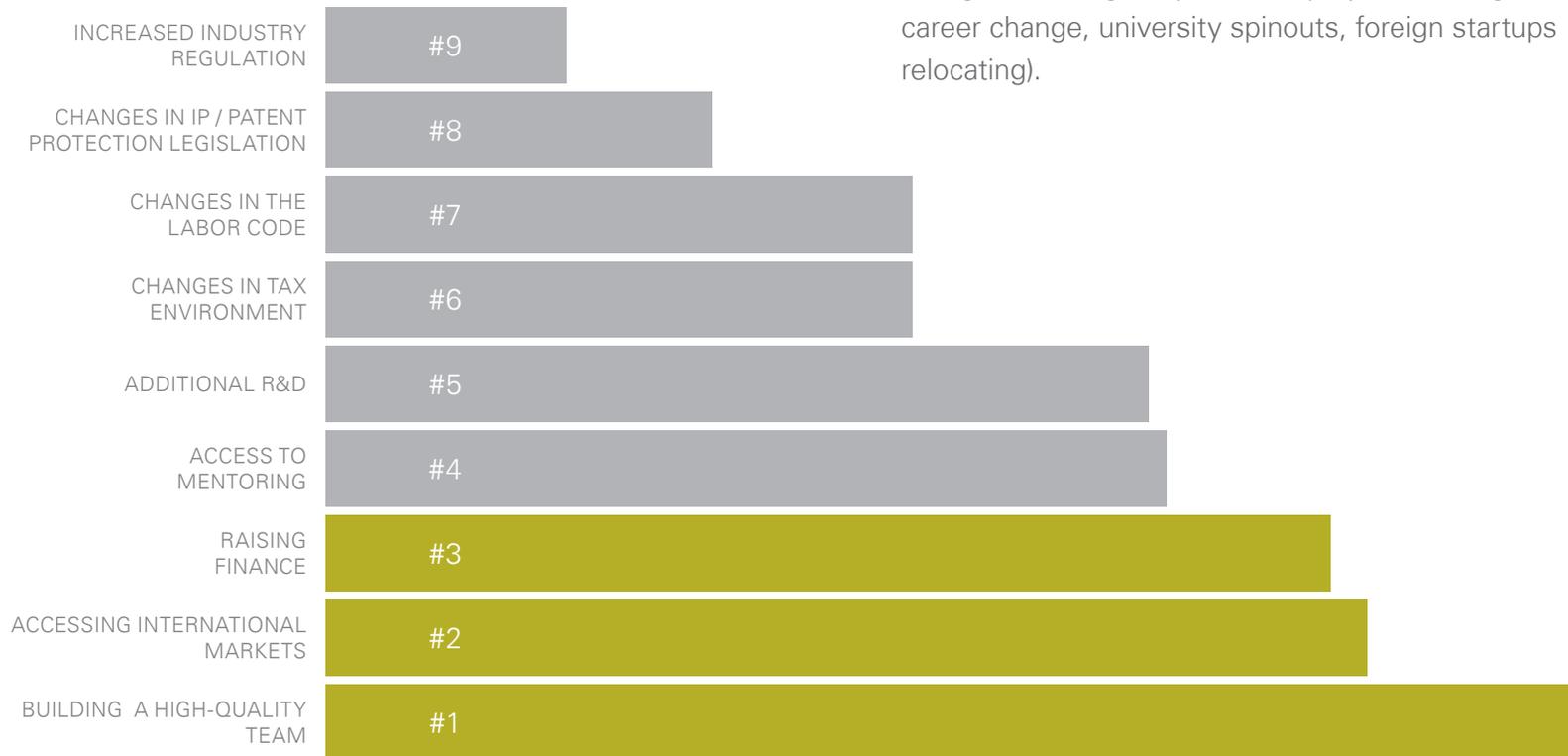
**STARTUPS**

**Which factors are likely to drive your Startup's future growth?**



**INVESTORS**

**Which factors are likely to drive Startups' growth?**



Whilst *Raising Finance* is seen by both groups as a key factor behind future growth, **82% of Investors were of the view that available finance resources exceeded opportunities.** There is scope for greater startup activity and this should be of interest to those considering founding a startup. The message that funding is available should be broadcasted and perhaps this would encourage startups by individuals with other backgrounds (e.g. corporate employees looking for a career change, university spinouts, foreign startups relocating).

## Both Startups and Investors are experiencing challenges in agreeing investment terms

	STARTUPS What are the biggest challenges in securing investment?	INVESTORS What are the biggest challenges in agreeing investment terms with a Slovak Startup?
AGREEING A VALUATION	40%	63%
RELINQUISHING CONTROL OVER ASPECTS OF YOUR BUSINESS	31%	44%
PROVIDING THE NECESSARY INFORMATION	22%	25%
AGREEING OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF CONTRACTS	44%	36%
DIFFICULTY IN ESTABLISHING A WORKING RELATIONSHIP	11%	13%
TIME INVOLVED	49%	38%
OTHER	13%	44%

There is a consensus that *Agreeing a valuation* is one of the more difficult aspects of securing investment. However, in our experience, valuation is rarely the biggest challenge in a transaction and this may be more a perception issue.

There's also a consensus that the *Time involved* is an issue. However, this is likely a consequence of the other reasons mentioned. It does, however serve as a

warning to inexperienced founders not to underestimate the time involved and to factor this into any plans. In our experience the process takes from 3 to 6 months.

*Relinquishing control* is another factor that features high on both lists. It can be difficult for founders to relinquish control, however it would be naive to expect investors to part with their money without some safeguards in this regard.



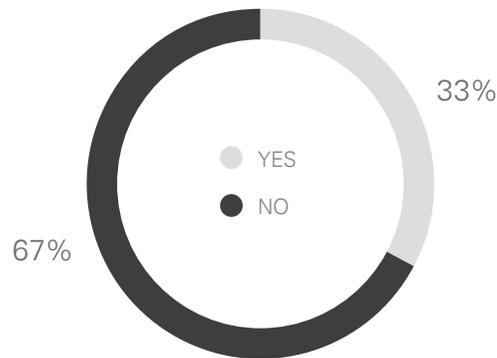
# Corporates: An Untapped Resource?

Slovakia has an extensive network of medium to large scale corporates. In many other startup ecosystems around the world such corporates are actively engaged with the local startup ecosystem. We wanted to see if the experience in Slovakia was similar.

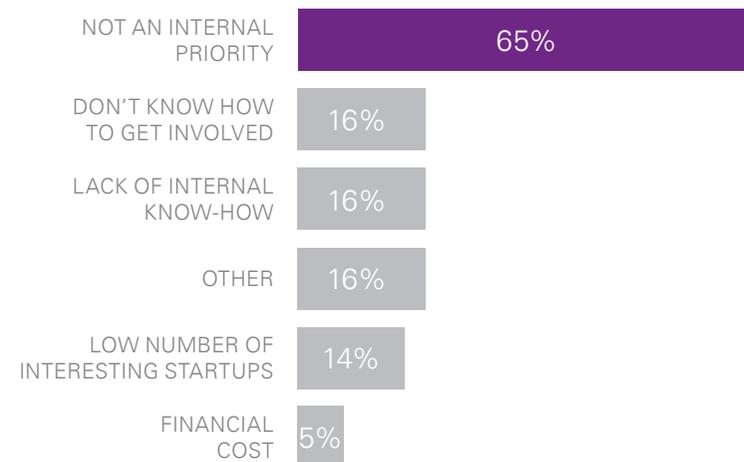
# A significant number of Corporates are not engaged

Approximately two thirds of Corporate respondents are not engaged in the Slovak Startup Ecosystem. When asked why they weren't engaged, 65% responded that it wasn't an internal priority for their business. Interestingly, 79% of Corporates that are involved quoted this reason as their biggest challenge. It is also noteworthy that the larger corporates (500+ employees) were more likely to be not engaged.

## Is your company directly involved in the Slovak Startup Ecosystem?



## Why is your company not actively involved with Startups?



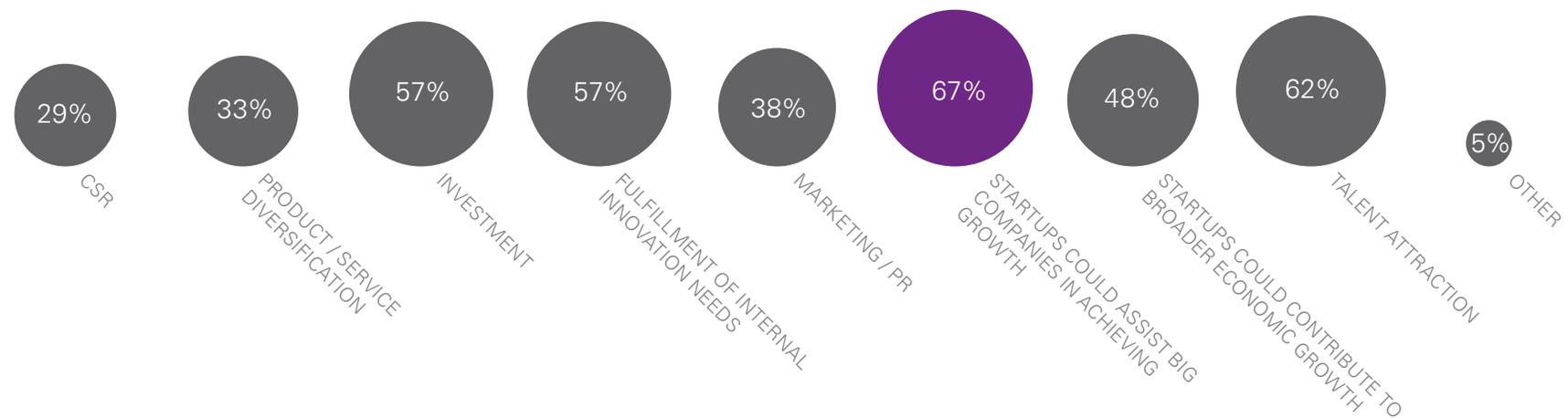
This lack of engagement and prioritisation is disappointing and worth further investigation. We believe this is something that will change with time. The benefits of involvement, as outlined by those who are engaged (see following page), should be communicated and engagement should be encouraged at all levels.

## A sizeable minority are engaged and for a wide variety of reasons

33% of Corporate respondents are actively engaged in the Slovak Startup Ecosystem. Of these, 68% were involved with more than one Startup and 63% responded that their involvement had increased in the past 12 months.

It is interesting that the most common reasons for involvement in the Ecosystem included *Assisting growth, Innovation* and *Talent acquisition*. **In general, the reasons given were actual benefits to the Corporate, rather than something that should be just done for the greater good (e.g. CSR).**

### In your view, why should Corporates be interested in Startups?



# The support provided by Corporates is wide ranging

A wide range of supports are being provided and interestingly many do not have a direct cost to the Corporates.

It is very encouraging to see that 75% were providing *Mentoring services*. This sharing of knowledge and experience is extremely valuable to founders. It is also interesting to note that 50% were providing *Direct investment*, a clear indication of a commitment to (and a belief in) Startups.

## What type of support is your company willing and able to provide to Startups?



## All sectors are of interest

No particular sectors were not of interest to the respondents and while sectoral interests are not directly matched with Startups' industry profiles, no gaps are evident. Fintech, Business Services and Enterprise Software were of interest to at least half of Corporate respondents.

	<b>% of Startups in this Sector</b>	<b>% of Corporates interested in this Sector</b>
FINTECH	7%	55%
EVENTECH	2%	15%
CLEANTECH / LIFE SCIENCES	2%	20%
TELECOMS	4%	35%
CYBER SECURITY	5%	45%
CONSUMER SERVICES (INCL. SOCIAL MEDIA)	12%	25%
HARDWARE	18%	30%
ENTERPRISE SOFTWARE	4%	50%
MANUFACTURING	4%	45%
BUSINESS SERVICES	23%	55%
OTHER	19%	5%





# The Infrastructure that Underpins the Startup Ecosystem

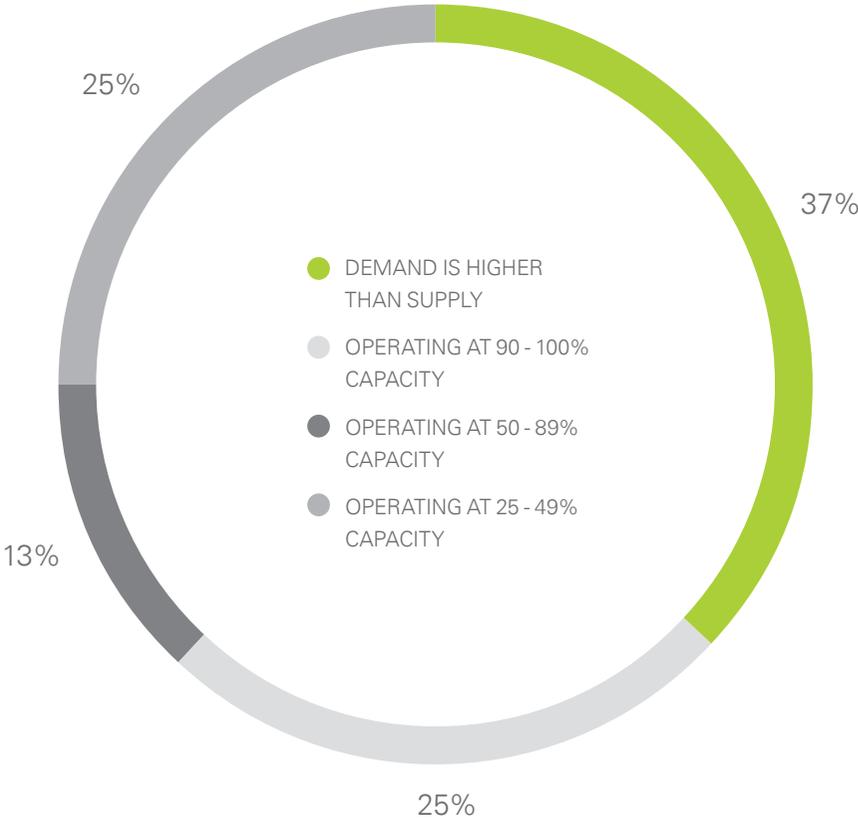
Both the Private Sector, through Startup Spaces, and the State, through Public Sector Entities are important pillars in the Slovak Startup Ecosystem. They provide facilities and services to Startups throughout their development and work with those that are successful and also those that fail. We wanted to hear their opinions of the ecosystem and the challenges they face in supporting it.

# Startup Spaces are in demand

Typically, our respondents in this category were supporting over 100 Startups and an average of 14 each. Three quarters said that this number had increased over the previous 12 months.

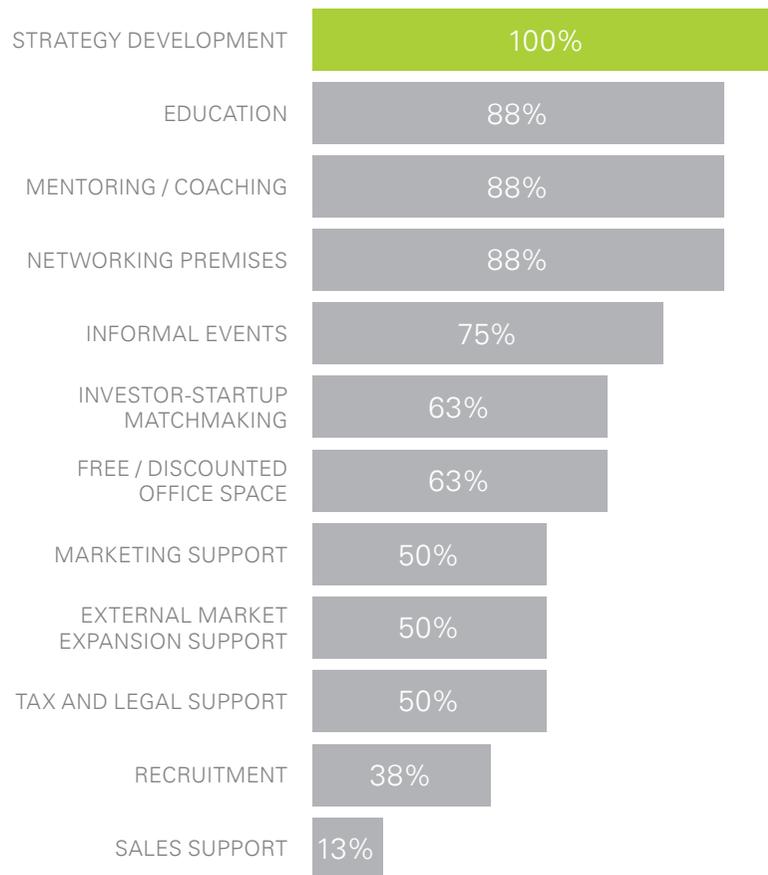
Demand for their services is high, with 62% operating at greater than 90% capacity and in fact, 37% responded that demand exceeded supply. These facilities are clearly operating at their limits and need to expand if future demand is to be met.

## To what extent are your organization's services utilized by Startups?



# A wide range of services and assistance is being provided

## What type of support does your organization provide to Startups?



All organisations provided assistance with *Strategy Development* and very high percentages provided *Education*, *Mentoring* and *Networking Assistance*. Unsurprisingly, none provided direct financial assistance. One area of concern is that none provided *Financial Reporting & Management Assistance*. This is an area that KPMG are very happy to assist with.

The fact that 75% of respondents said they had expanded their services in the previous 12 months is encouraging. It would benefit the entire ecosystem if some of the less common supports identified were given additional attention.

# They face a number of challenges

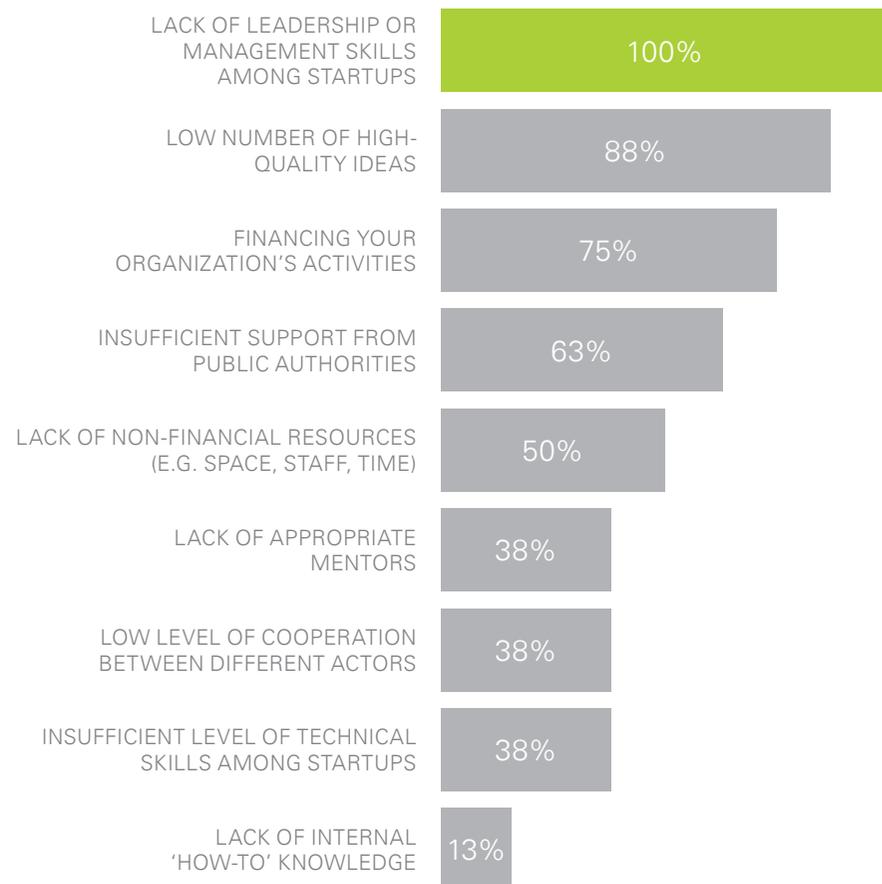
Three key challenges were identified. One of these, *Finance*, relates to their own operations. However, the two most significant challenges relate to the quality of their Startup clients.

All respondents indicated a *Lack of leadership or management skills* among Startups as a challenge. 88% questioned the *Quality of ideas* being presented.

This would indicate that, in general, Startups could benefit from some early intervention in terms of management support and screening of proposed ideas.

**Startups can clearly benefit from reaching out for external assistance at an early stage and should be encouraged and facilitated in doing so.**

## What challenges does your organization face when supporting Startups?



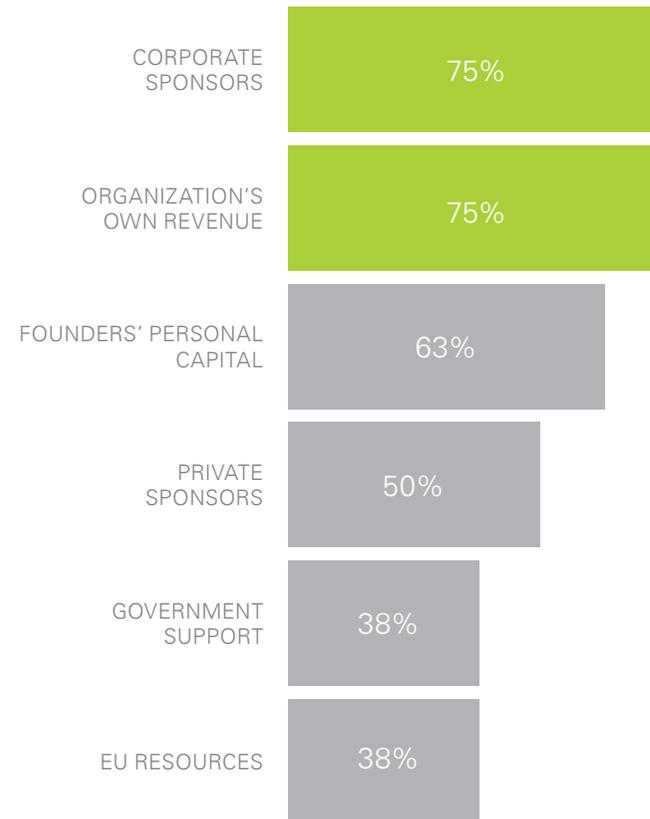
# Dependant on private sector funding

*Finance* was identified as one of the main challenges being faced, with 75% of respondents referring to it. Organisations are largely dependent on private funding.

Corporate sponsors are a key funder and in the past 12 months have continued to be so, with 75% of respondents having benefited from it.

Finance is likely to remain an issue as 75% of respondents intend expanding their supports in the next 12 months.

## How are your organization's activities funded?



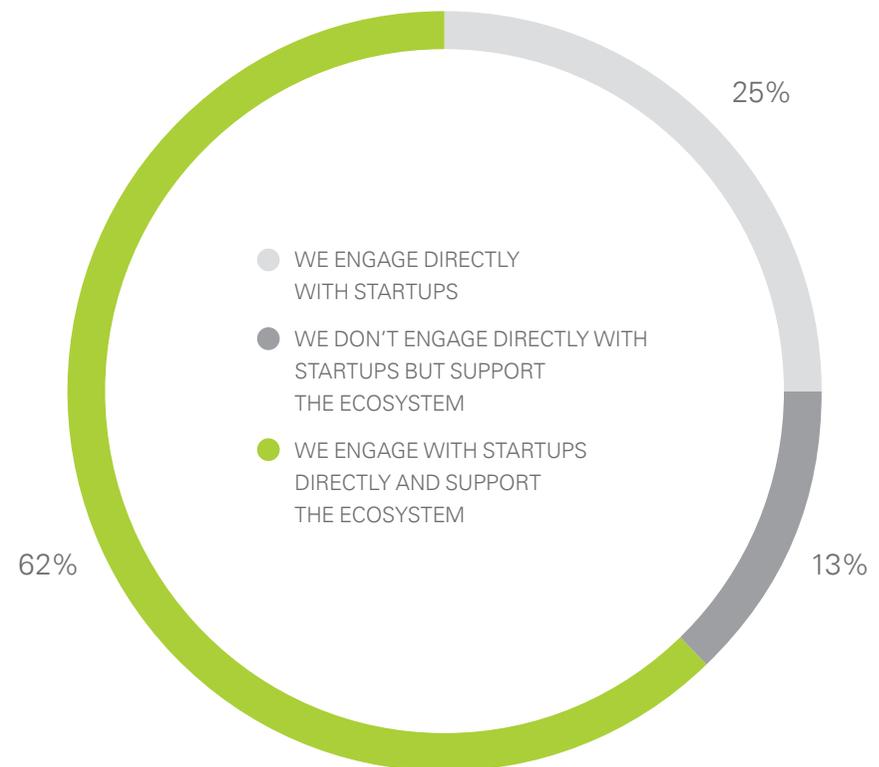
## The State is also involved

44% of the Public Sector Entities surveyed had an involvement in the Slovak Startup Ecosystem.

The nature of this involvement varied with 25% engaging directly with Startups, 13% engaging at the ecosystem level and 62% engaging with both.

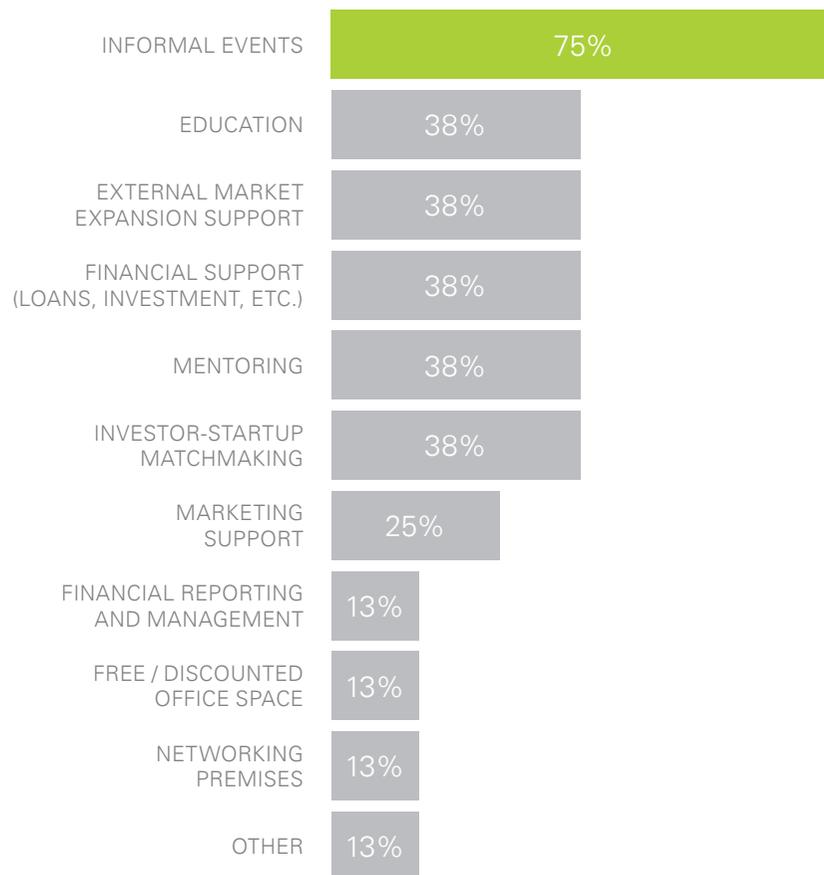
We noted that the extent of involvement varied considerably across respondents with some dealing with only a handful of Startups and others dealing with in excess of 100.

### What is your organization's involvement with Startups?



# Supports provided are varied and increasing

## What type of support does your organization provide to Startups?



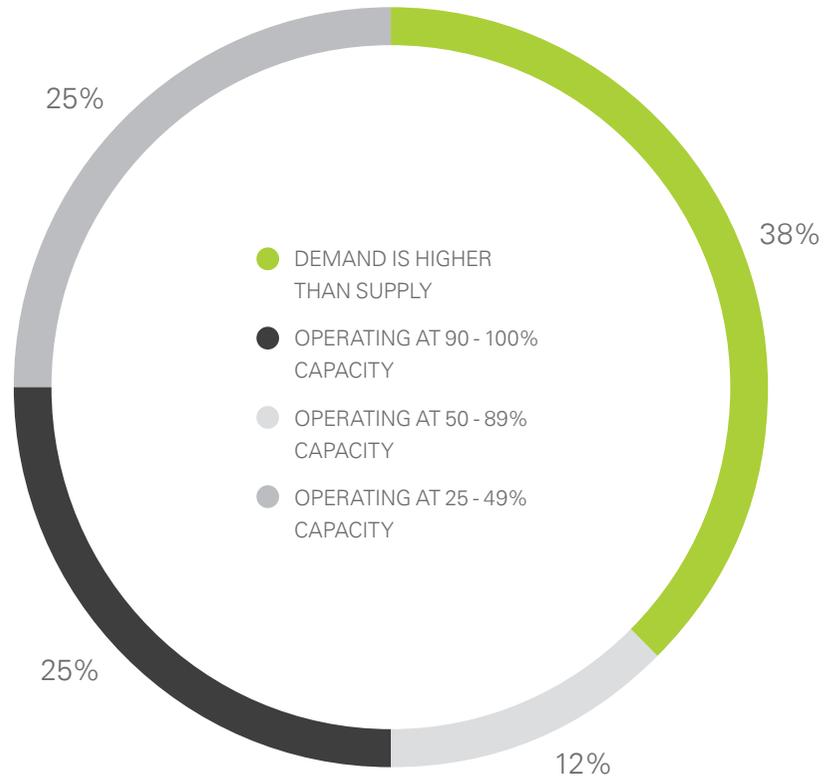
On average, there is less duplication of services across Public Sector Entities than is the case with Support Spaces. However, this is not surprising given that they tend to focus on specific areas within their remit, whereas Support Spaces provide a wide range of services to individual Startups. It is noteworthy that three of the four supports not provided (Strategy Development, Tax & Legal Support, and Recruitment) are adequately provided by Startup Spaces. Unfortunately, Sales Support is not.

88% of Public Sector Entities increased their support over the previous 12 months.

# Public Sector Entities have the capacity required to help

50% of Public Sector Entities are operating at greater than 90% capacity (compared with 63% of Support Spaces). However, 25% are operating at less than 25% capacity and therefore it appears that there is capacity within the Public Sector to support the ecosystem.

## To what extent are your organization's services utilized?



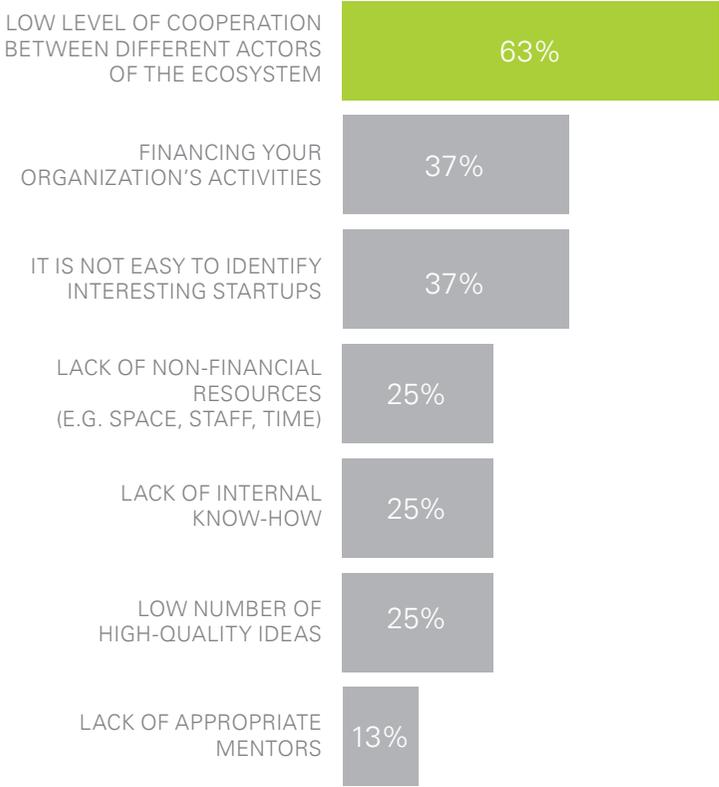
# Challenges faced by Public Sector Entities differ from Startup Spaces

When asked what challenges they face in supporting Startups, 63% of Public Sector Entities quoted *Low level of cooperation amongst those involved in the Slovak Startup Ecosystem*. Interestingly the same level of Startup Spaces quoted *Insufficient support from public authorities*.

Only 38% of Public Sector Entities referred to *Finance* compared with 75% of Startup Spaces.

**Given the additional capacity in the Public Sector and the different challenges being faced by both (Finance and Cooperation), it makes sense that greater communication and cooperation between both is encouraged.**

## What challenges does your organization face when supporting Startups / Slovak Startup Ecosystem?

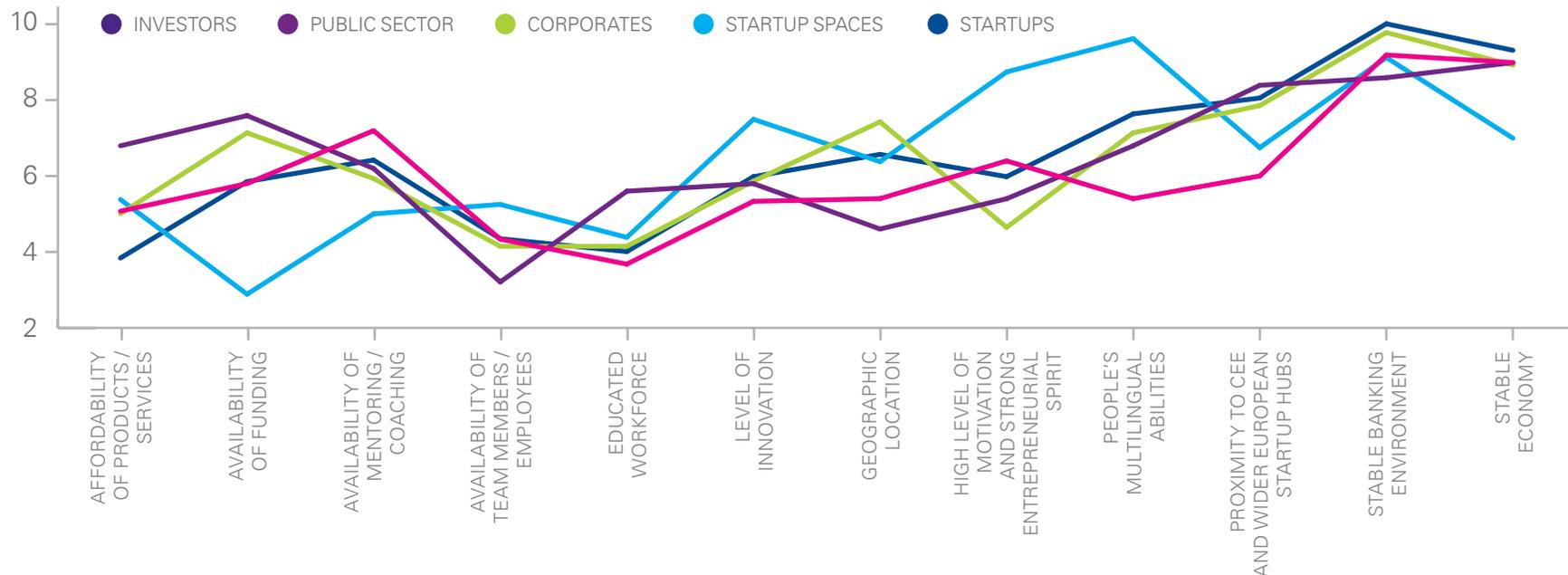


# There is a broad consensus on the Slovak Startup Ecosystem's strengths

We asked all participants to rank what they perceived as the main strengths of the Slovak Startup Ecosystem. Although there was some variation between groups, there was also some general consensus as to key strengths. All groups included *Educated workforce* in their top 3 strengths and *Availability of team members/employees* also featured very strongly.

*Affordability of goods and services, Availability of mentoring, High level of motivation and strong entrepreneurial spirit* were also consistently ranked highly.

**A significant majority of respondents in each group believed that the Slovak Startup Ecosystem had strengthened in the past 12 months (greater than 75% in all cases). In fact, 100% of Investors believed so.**





# KPMG's Thoughts

## **1 The Slovak Startup Ecosystem should work to remove the stigma attached to failure**

Almost half of Startup respondents felt there was a stigma attached to failure in Slovakia. This can be a disincentive for people to start their own business. Failure is a fact of life in business and many successful entrepreneurs have failed before achieving their eventual success.

The general public, through the Media, should be educated on the reality of business failure and we would encourage leaders within the Slovak Startup Ecosystem to share their experiences.

## **2 Everyone should focus on getting women involved in Startups**

Low participation rates by females was raised in our last survey and unfortunately there has been no improvement this year. No ecosystem can afford

to ignore 50% of its talent pool. In other startup ecosystems, females are specifically targeted and encouraged to become entrepreneurs. This can take the form of female orientated events, awards or indeed supports. Recent initiatives in this regard are most welcome and should be encouraged. Again, the Media has a role to play and female role models should be encouraged to share their stories.

### **3 The Slovak Startup Ecosystem should get more Corporates involved**

Slovakia has a wealth of indigenous and multi-national corporates. They are potentially a very significant resource, especially in terms of knowledge sharing and international networks. Corporates can also provide useful testing grounds for new products and provide invaluable feedback. They can also become early reference customers. Gaining product traction was one of the issues raised in preventing scaling and Corporates can help overcome this.

82% of our Corporate respondents believed that Corporates should be involved in the Slovak Startup Ecosystem so they are a resource waiting to be tapped.

### **4 Startups need to be investor ready at an early stage**

Our survey indicated a number of challenges in securing investment and the time it takes was one. In order to make the process efficient and increase the chances of success, we recommend that startups:

- Have the skills and experience required to scale in place or have a plan to do so
- Have their product developed (with customer references or statistics, if relevant) to the point appropriate for investment being requested (i.e. early stage, expansion, etc.)
- Have realistic valuation expectations
- Be prepared to relinquish some control
- Have all technical, commercial, financial and legal documentation ready for due diligence
- Start to build relationships with the investment community well in advance of seeking investment
- Approach appropriate investors, taking account of industry preferences and amount of funding required
- Have a convincing pitch supported by a robust business plan

## 5 **The Public Sector and Startup Spaces need to increase cooperation**

Our survey found that Startup Spaces were operating at close to capacity. Additional resources, including funding, are required to meet demand. The Public Sector is currently not facing the same level of demand, but is actively engaged and looking to become more so. We would encourage both sets of stakeholders to cooperate more closely so that duplication of effort doesn't arise and resources are channelled as efficiently as possible to the Startups that require them. A forum for communication between both is required.

## 6 **Startups should seek early intervention to assess commercial feasibility of their ideas**

87% of Startup Spaces raised concerns over the quality of business ideas being presented to them by Startups. Our own experience confirms this is an issue, with many ideas presented unlikely to be commercially successful.

We would encourage all Startups to obtain early feedback on their idea before committing significant time and resources to it. The opinions of potential customers, industry players and those with Startup experience

should be sought. Our survey also found a number of sectors in which Startups were active but were not of interest to investors. We would particularly encourage those working in these sectors to speak with investors at an early stage and hear their reasons for this apparent lack of interest.

Our experience is that most people are more than willing to give a little of their time to hear your idea. Take advantage of this.

## 7 **Startups need to plan to scale**

Without achieving scale any financial returns will be modest. Certainly, if outside investment is being sought, the business must have the potential to scale and you must have a plan in place to achieve this. Consider:

- Sales potential of your product outside of your local market
- Distribution channels required to access new markets
- Ability of your team to operate at a higher level of activity and in other markets and indeed the amount of travel required

- Resources required to grow your business quickly
- Potential regulatory, logistical, language and cultural barriers
- Timeframe required

Identify requirements at an early stage. Consider how they will be met and the likely costs. Include this in any presentation to investors.

- Academics
- Corporate employees
- Expatriates

Event organisers, Startup Spaces, Public Sector and the Media should consider broadening their communication reach and facilitating the involvement of these potential entrepreneurs in the Slovak Startup Ecosystem.

## **Broaden the entrepreneur pool**

Our survey found that the majority of founders were young, university/college graduates. Plans are in place from both Public Sector and Startup Spaces to expand their services. We also found that the amount of finance available exceeded current opportunities and in fact estimate that more than €30m is available for investment in the next 12 months.

There is potential within the ecosystem for a greater number of Startups and to ensure the opportunity is not missed, potential founders from outside the current pool of entrepreneurs should be encouraged to start their own business. Potential sources of new entrepreneurs include:



Funds

Braun Holding | Slovakia  
BridgeStart | Slovakia  
Credo Ventures | Czech Republic  
Fond Fit | Slovakia  
J&T Ventures | Czech Republic  
Limerock | Slovakia  
LRJ Capital | Slovakia  
Neulogy Ventures | Slovakia  
Pioneers Ventures | Austria  
Primus Capital | Hungary  
Speedinvest | Austria

## 1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

While it may be the market, which is the most important factor in startup's success, it is the team that assures its failure.

## 2. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

Well communicated success stories, ideally by people who have experienced failure beforehand.

## 3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

Automotive sector

## 4. What are you looking for in startups/ founders? What traits do you personally consider to be essential?

They need to have the core competencies required to build the product and deliver it to the market. In terms of personality traits, passion for the problem the startup is solving, huge ambitions and ability to listen are very important to me.

## 5. What is your fund's 'secret sauce'?

We are one of the biggest, oldest and most active funds in Central Europe. Over the years our startups have opened many doors to customers, investors and other key contacts that our new portfolio companies can benefit from.

## 6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Kofola

## 7. Lentilky or M&Ms?

M&Ms

## 8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Mac OS

## 9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

Nobel Prize

## 10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

AirBnB



**Andrej Kiska**  
Partner

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PROVIDING

0. **INVESTMENT** FROM **SEED** TO **SERIES B** (€50K-€6MM)

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- 0. **OUR SUPPORT**
- 0. **CEO-TO-CEO MENTORS**
- 0. **INDUSTRY EXPERTS**
- 0. **FUNCTIONAL OPERATORS**

AND **GLOBAL CO-INVESTORS**

WE INVEST IN TECHNOLOGIES

€ 50+ MM  
ASSETS UNDER  
MANAGEMENT

SERIES B

SERIES A

SEED

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### 1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

That the best entrepreneurs and managers do not hesitate to act quickly, take calculated risks and are honest with their business partners.

### 2. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

We are not so sure where the hype about failure comes from. It is the lack of entrepreneurship in our genes (and often appropriate skillsets) and not the culture of failure that prohibits people from chasing their business dreams. Emergence of successful Slovak business role models would definitely help aspiring entrepreneurs to overcome the fear of unknown.

### 3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

Any sector where the founders feel they have the skills and competitive edge to perform successfully in the global business arena.

### 4. What are you looking for in startups/ founders? What traits do you personally consider to be essential?

A startup may be successful only if there is a right mixture of invention and commercialization, so the founders need to combine their inventive potential with entrepreneurship in order to reach out for the customers. Having said that, we look for an excellent team with appropriate depth and qualities, competitive technology (with sustainable competitive advantage), a business plan with clear value proposition for a particular sufficiently attractive market and customers, that is quantifiable and proven or provable. In other words, founders must be able to persuade us they know who their customer is and how they will get and retain them.

### 5. What is your fund's 'secret sauce'?

In fact, there is no secret sauce. We deal principally with the same issues as any other VC and strive to represent maximum value-add for our partners.

### 6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

From the consumer as well as investment angle, we have to say plant waters, protein sugar-free milk shakes or similar innovative and healthy organic alternatives.

### 7. Lentilky or M&Ms?

Some big huge Belgian chocolate or other giant candy. If one is to derail from sugar free diet, it should be worth the bad feeling.

### 8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Does it really matter? Customers know best what they need. We just use it and have no personal allegiance to either.

### 9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

Definitely 15 minutes of fame on the cover of magazine.

### 10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

Perhaps AirBnB rents, but we would donate it to someone who really can use it. We will keep ourselves busy in the foreseeable future to productively deploy the capital of our fund.



**Teppo Kettula**  
Investment Director  
**Roman Čmelík**  
Investment Director  
**Michal Jablonka**  
Investment Director



**WE HELP  
INVENTIONS  
BECOME  
SUCCESSFUL  
BUSINESSES**

**LIMEROCK FUND  
MANAGER**

**GUIDING  
INNOVATION LIFE CYCLE  
INTO THE NEXT STAGE**



- 12,240,000 EURO UNDER MANAGEMENT**
- 4 COMPLETED INVESTMENTS IN JAN-SEPT 2015 WITH 6 REPUTABLE CO-INVESTORS**
- 20+ ACTIVE CO-INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIPS**
- 200% ANNUAL INCREASE IN REVENUE EXPECTED FOR OUR PORTFOLIO COMPANIES THIS YEAR**
- 60,000 USERS IN OUR SHARED ECONOMY VENTURES**

**1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?**

It is always better to work in a team than do it all alone.

**2. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?**

If people who have succeeded would speak more about their past failures and what it gave them.

**3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...**

Sector-wise I think this should be security, automotive and tourism. If you mean skillswise, it is definitely sales and marketing, or strategic thinking.

**4. What are you looking for in startups/ founders? What traits do you personally consider to be essential?**

Team player, visionary and trustworthy

**5. What is your fund's 'secret sauce'?**

It is a secret.... No, I think it is the diversity of skills, experience, industry focus and age of the team.

**6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?**

Kofola

**7. Lentilky or M&Ms?**

M&Ms

**8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?**

Windows

**9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?**

Nobel Prize

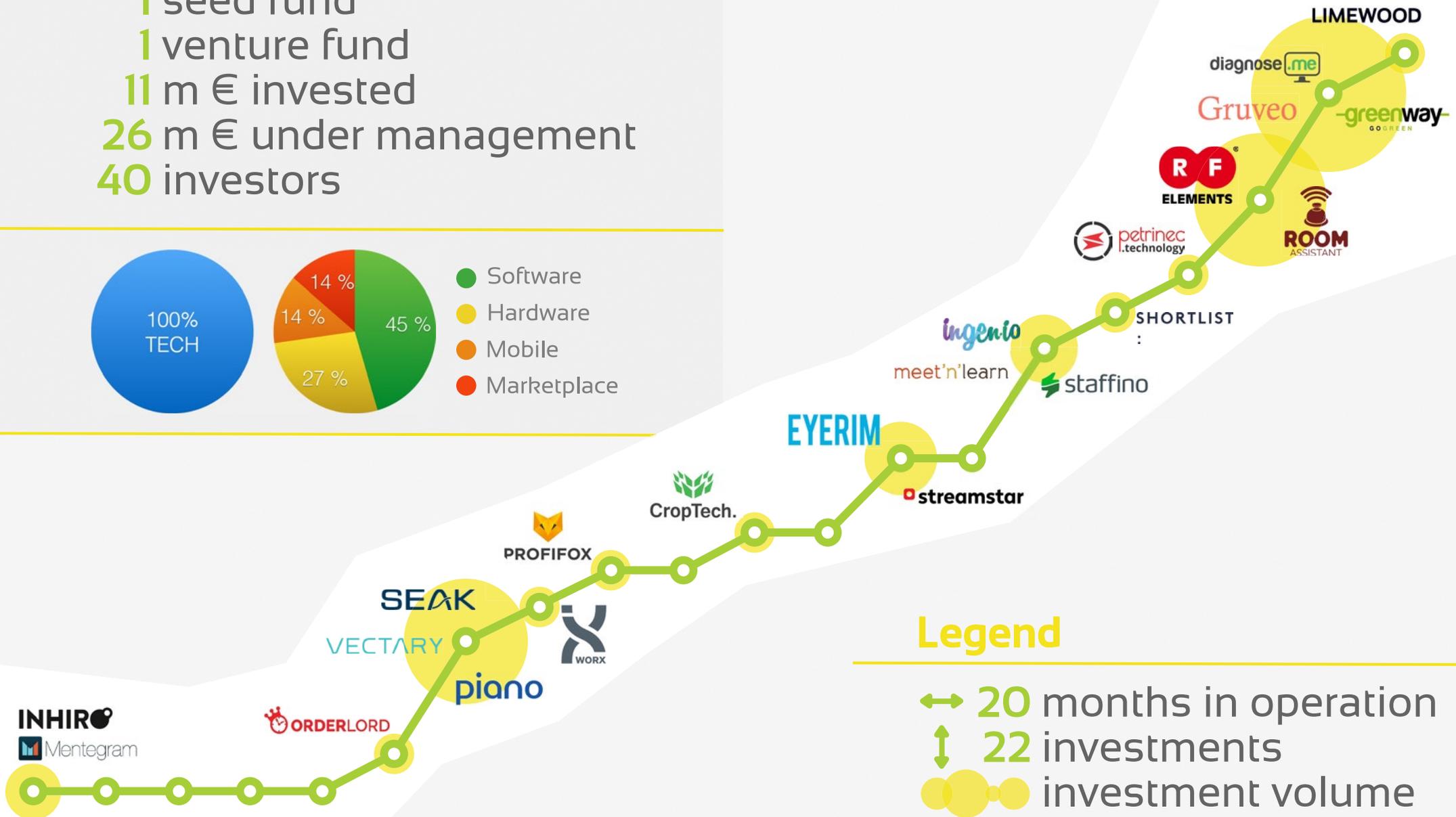
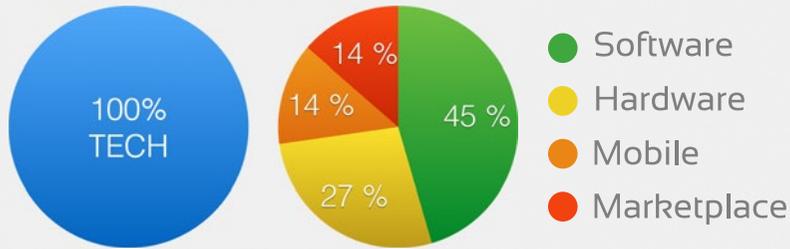
**10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?**

AirBnB rents



**Ivan Štefunko**  
Managing Partner

1 seed fund  
 1 venture fund  
 11 m € invested  
 26 m € under management  
 40 investors



### Legend

- ↔ 20 months in operation
- ↑↓ 22 investments
- investment volume

**1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?**

Be proactive and always well prepared. In the long-term this will lead to less work, less hassle and better results.

**2. What could contribute towards a transformation of ‘the culture of failure’ in Slovakia?**

Appreciating the experiences a person earned while failing, for example by inviting them to panels and as speakers at startup events. Often their insights are at least as valuable as those from founders of companies who are successful (at the moment).

**3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...**

Business Productivity Software - we already have an investment in that field (Cludo.co) and would love to see a competence cluster in that area.

**4. What are you looking for in startups/ founders? What traits do you personally consider to be essential?**

The best startup founders have incredibly big ambitions, but also very down-to-earth and realistic plans how to get there. They are very good in telling their story and inspire others.

**5. What is your fund’s ‘secret sauce’?**

We’re part of one of the most amazing networks in the world, covering the world of Entrepreneurship, Science and New Technologies: the Pioneers network, with the Pioneers Festival being the nucleus. There is so much value in there that our startups can make use of, that our cash investment really is more or less only an add-on.

**6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?**

Definitely Kofola, since we’re always going for the local taste. At the end of the day, that’s what Europe is all about: the biggest economy in the world with the most important things being harmonized, but with still plenty of room for the local differences that make it interesting to travel. It would be horrible, if there were no local specialities to explore, wouldn’t it? In terms of making business and investing it’s very similar: of course, it’s a big challenge to have to localize to 27 countries to serve the European Union. On the other hand: once you’re ready for Europe, it’s only a minor step to think even bigger and internationalize globally.

**7. Lentilky or M&Ms?**

Lentilky again for pretty much the same reasons as with Kofola :)

**8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?**

Once you go Mac, you never go back! We have a feeling it really makes our lives easier and also we want to try to be at least a little bit as cool as our founders are :)

**9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?**

Being business people it will definitely be the Fortune magazine. That’s not necessarily a bad thing though - even the greatest academic achievements and the biggest inventions need business people to make them available to people in a commercially viable way. Making business is, at the end of the day, about arranging resources to make things happen and if you’re really, really good at it, you might end up at the Fortune magazine’s cover...

**10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?**

That’s a tough one. It probably needs a pretty sophisticated Excel sheet to figure out the better option, since we’re using both services quite frequently. However, given that we’re on the road a good part of the year, we’ll go with the free AirBnB rents and try to take the metro to get there :)



**Markus Lang**  
Investment Manager

**Philipp Stangl**  
Investment Manager



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## 1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

Ambition is key. Raising your level of ambition will fundamentally change everything. It seems easy once you mastered it, but is impossible to dare at first.

## 2. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

I think all that 'the learning from failure' thing is overrated. After all, failure was due to very special circumstances and the lessons are limited. It is more growth than learning that makes failure interesting. Our brains are hardwired for progress, that's in all of us. Failure is just part of progressing. You don't learn that much from falling, but from standing up and trying again.

## 3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

Bigger bets, bolder ideas and core technology.  
C'mon, you can do better!

## 4. What are you looking for in startups/ founders? What traits do you personally consider to be essential?

Team first: characters, cohesion, experience, skills  
Product second: innovation, excellence, beauty  
Business third: scalability, demand, disruption

## 5. What is your fund's 'secret sauce'?

Adding hands-on resources with many years of (startup) experience.

## 6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Red Bull Cola ;)

## 7. Lentilky or M&Ms? (Lentilky = Smarties)

Smarties - who would eat nuts covered in chocolate?

## 8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Mac OS

## 9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

Nobel Prize

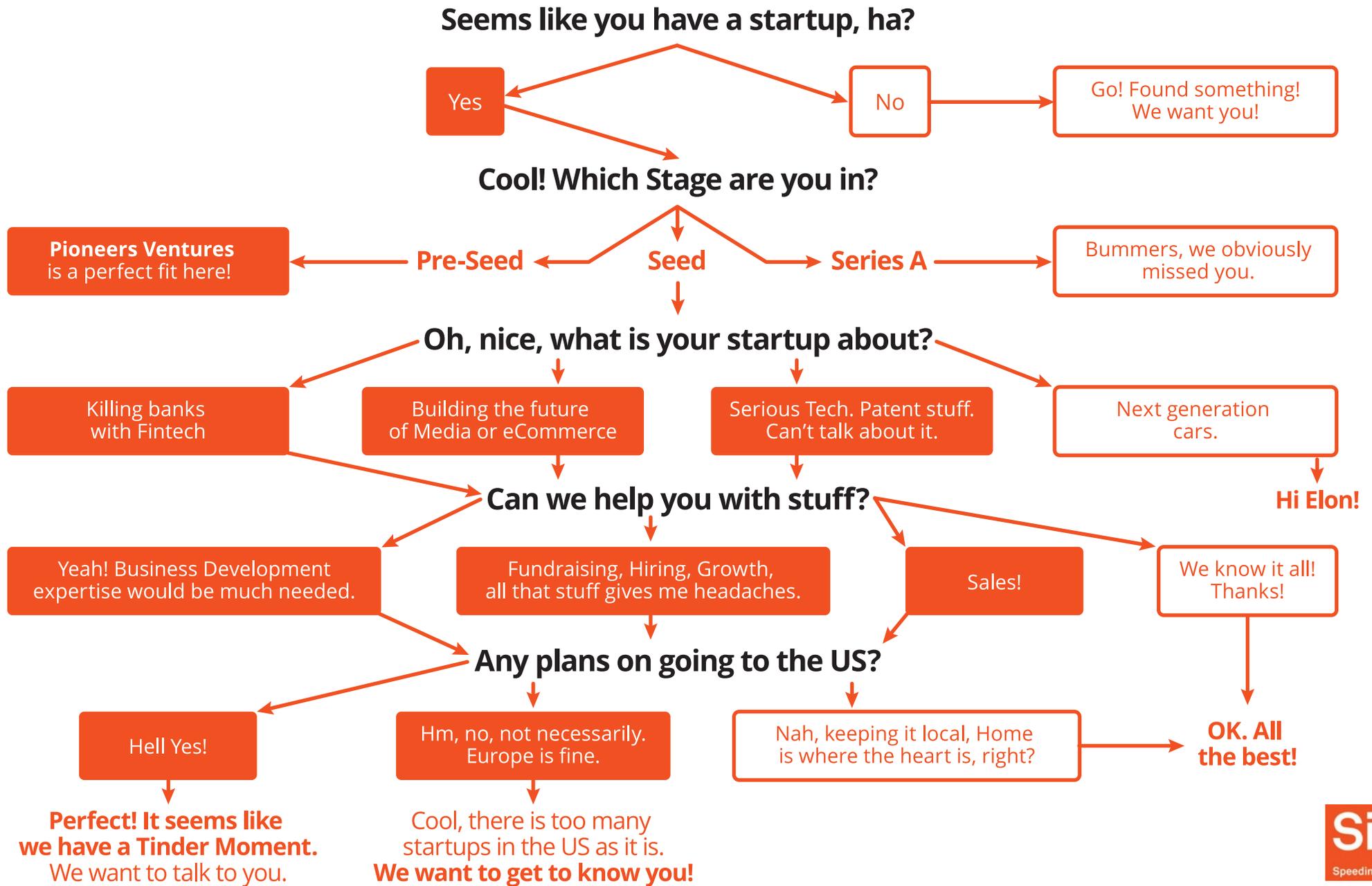
## 10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

Uber rides



**Michael Schuster**  
Partner & Founder

# The Ultimate Questionnaire to find out „Should I talk to Speedinvest or Pioneers Ventures?“





# Startup Spaces & Community

BrainHouse | Bratislava

Clusterhaus | Bratislava

Connect | Bratislava

Eastcubator | Košice

Impact Hub | Bratislava

Launcher | Bratislava

RubixLab | Bratislava

SAPIE | Bratislava

Startup Weekend | Bratislava, Košice, Žilina

The Spot | Booster | Bratislava

VTP | Žilina

## 1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

**V:** It's about people. Things go easier when you have good relationships. Under-promise and over-deliver.

**N:** Hire slowly, fire fast. And even when you fire, stay human. It's still all about people and relationships.

**J:** Procrastination is the devil of good intentions. Only really hard work can yield some results.

## 2. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

**V:** Let people speak off their fails. Don't point fingers on them for failing. Make the lessons learned from others fails. After organizing several FuckUp nights in Connect, I can say that Slovakia is slowly opening for the culture of failure.

**N:** First of all, don't judge yourself. We are the biggest enemies of ourselves, not the people pointing at us. Failure is a point of view - another point of view is learning experience. Although an expensive one :)

**J:** Failure in Slovakia is perceived too negatively. Instead of taking risks, we play it safe. But only through failures, a transformation can begin. There are growing places that support people to be brave and take risks, from early age to elderly. Connect is one of them.

## 3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

**V:** I don't think that putting focus on one specific sector is somehow strategic. From historical point of view we have several industries that had led our country and we still can build on that. Fashion, electronics, etc. Last two decades shown us our strengths on digital economy as well. By supporting startup ecosystem towards several sectors, we can avoid being a country building just one product (yeah, no more Slovakia, the car producing country).

**N:** Services, innovation and design. We are a small nation and something like stem cells in global business. We should be flexible and cross-industrial, not focusing primarily on specific field as we are now in automotive e.g.

**J:** Appart from the obvious, I am a strong supporter of regional business growth. Slovakia used to be a strong agricultural country, but at the moment you can hardly find local produce. Slovakia has great potential in industry and an educated nation that can make it happen. Let's continue supporting the growth of local businesses and R&D in the same rate as we are supporting foreign investment.

## 4. What are your plans for the upcoming 12 months? What are you preparing for your community?

**V, N, J:** Our plans for the upcoming year are quite ambitious. Our coworking is almost full and our event venue has reached its capacity too. The next logical step is to extend our premises. So that we can connect even more people. We are expanding our space within Cvernovka and elsewhere. We are opening a new prototyping LAB - multifunctional space and cafeteria for designers, students and startups. It will be connecting the most modern technology, education and networking.

## 5. What is your organization's / entity's 'secret sauce'? What makes you special?

**V, N, J:** Our team is 90% women and 200% results. :) Although we do understand the necessity of balance. Thanks to sector diversity and a wide scale of specialization of our members we have a great environment for innovation and new idea creation. Our industrial and kind of an "imperfect" environment gives a chance to new ideas to be born and step by step grow up.

## 6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

**V:** Tea / **N:** Sungit / **J:** Chai:)

## 7. Lentilky or M&Ms?

**V, N, J:** Lentilky

## 8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

**V:** Linux / **N,J:** Whatever works. Have you tried turning it off and on again? :)

## 9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

**V:** Nobel Prize / **N:** Happiness / **J:** Peace on Earth :)

## 10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

**V, N, J:** AirBnB rents



### Jana Shafique Bielíková

Founder & CFO

### Nada Stránská

Founder & COO

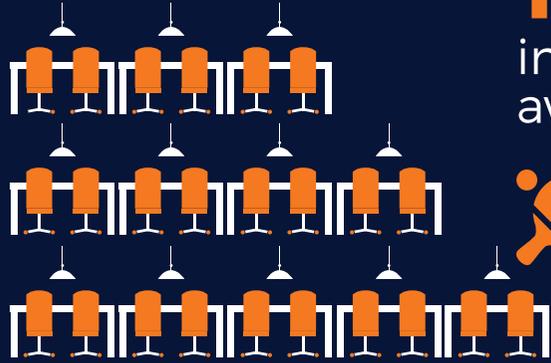
### Vlado 'Vaco' Vaculík

Founder & CEO

## COWORKING

250+

connect members



10+

internationally  
awarded members



members  
pingpong league

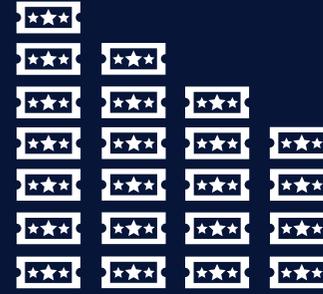
pet&kids friendly

# CONNECT

## EVENTS

500+

events



12 000

participants

150+

speakers

40+

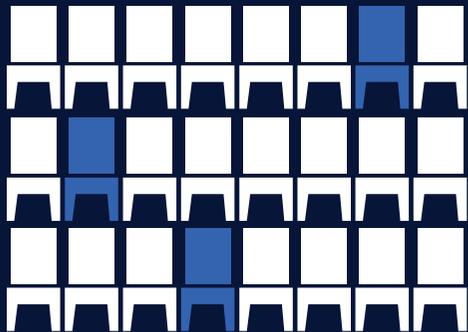
themed  
Connect nights

workshops & meetups

## VENUE

1000m<sup>2</sup>

conference space



3

creative  
meeting rooms



networking  
events

key based solution  
photo shootings  
product demos



## SUPPORT

40+

artists exhibited



NEW

prototyping lab  
for startups  
& designers

4 Mentors  
nights

9 hackathons

**1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?**

The biggest mistake is not to learn from failure and mistakes. Ignoring our own failures will lead to challenges in business and everyday life.

**2. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?**

A combination of tolerance and continuous education. The most important factor is the attitude of the media. During one of the recent "failure stories" representatives of "specialized" media were the ones adding negative emotions and subjective stances instead of relevant explanations.

**3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...**

Cyber security

**4. What are your plans for the upcoming 12 months? What are you preparing for your community?**

Specialized hackathons with e-government and i-healthcare focus.  
New premises, new hardware development lab and a couple of surprises.

**5. What is your organization's / entity's 'secret sauce'? What makes you special?**

We are not that special. But what makes us exceptional are people, who work within our co-working. It is a group of people who are trying to change the world around them – we simply support them.

**6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?**

Fofola...when they don't have Pepsi

**7. Lentilky or M&Ms?**

M&Ms

**8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?**

Mac OS

**9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?**

My face with Nobel Prize on a cover of Fortune magazine

**10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?**

AirBnB rents



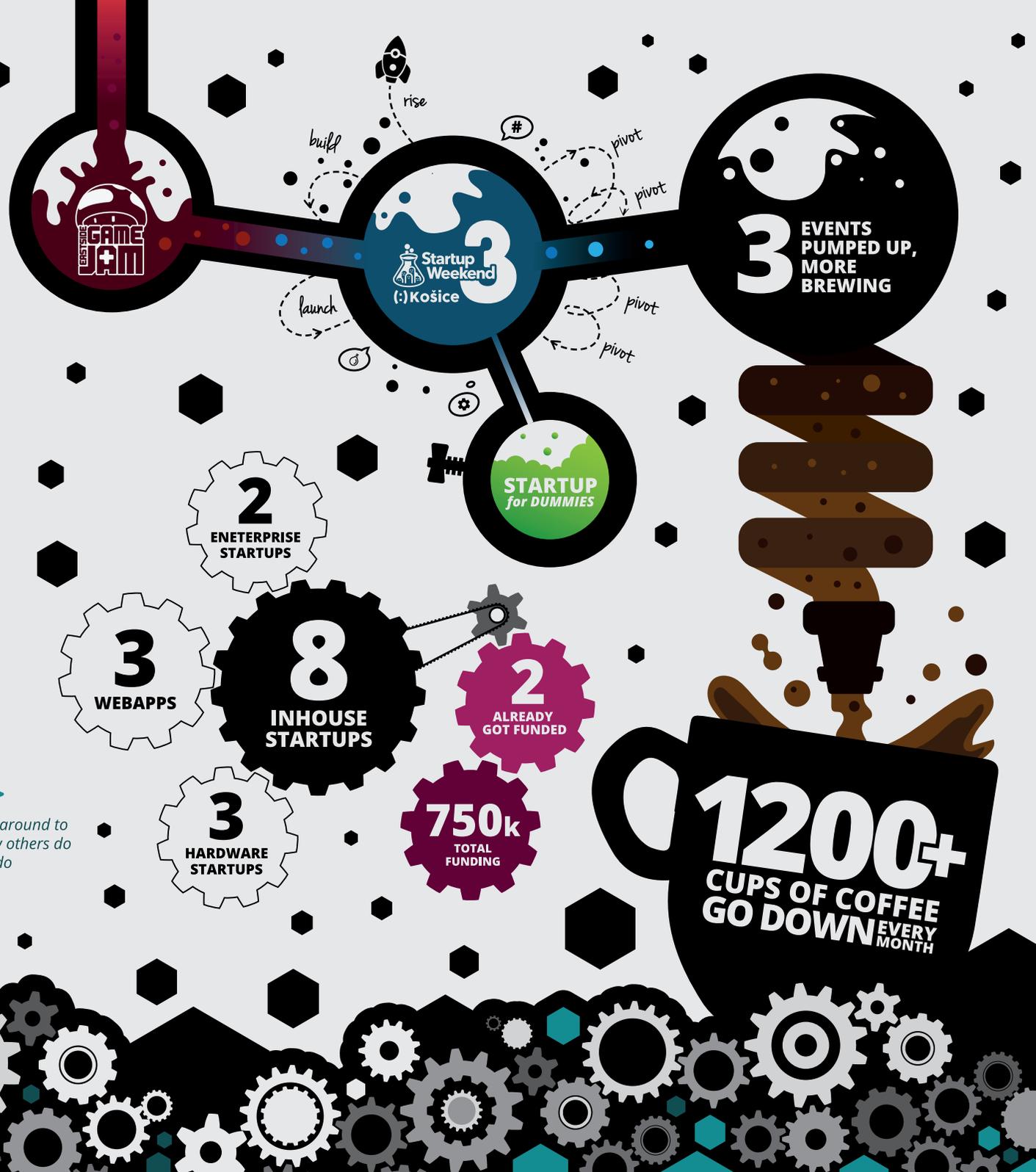
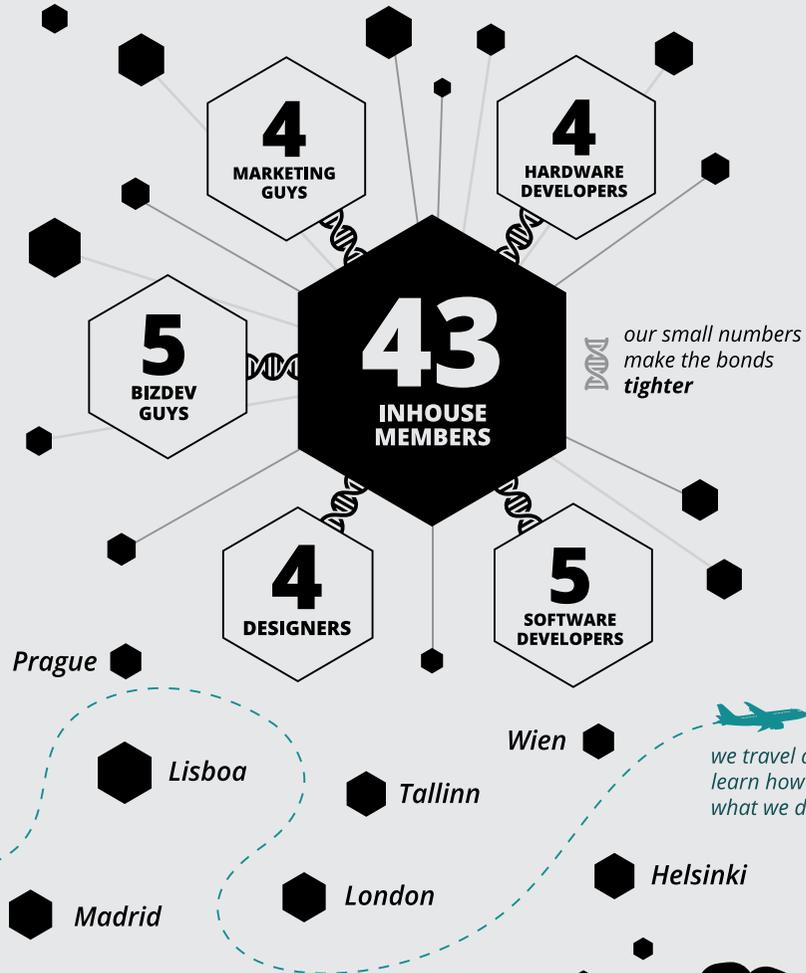
**Marek Lavčák**  
Co-Founder & CEO



# HOW WE ROLL AFTER 377 DAYS IN eastcubator

## EASTCUBATION /i:stkjubeɪfn/

(n) painful but surprisingly enjoyable process of evolving eastern part of your homeworld necessarily incorporating patience, discipline and loads of coffee to achieve remarkable results



**1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?**

Dream big and keep both feet well on the ground. Stay focused and always keep in mind why you are doing something in good as well as bad times. Be flexible and experiment in all you do, but don't compromise on your vision and key values.

**2. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?**

More success stories from various segments would help. Be vocal about the fact that every real success comes from partial failures and mistakes - there is probably no other way to that. It's absolutely ok to fail few times on the way to achieve something valuable. Only those who don't try don't fail at all. Don't quit too early, but if failure is unavoidable fail fast, don't be defeated and try something else. Sharing failures and mistakes openly and letting others to learn from it can also help.

**3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...**

I am a big fan of startups and projects that link technology/digital with social innovations - so would be great to see more attempts there. I see some potential in big data optimisation for specific niche segments and customised 3D printing. Personally I'd be happy to see more projects and innovations in areas like CleanTech, Eco, Sport, Food & Nutrition, Education, and Healthcare. And again leverage technology for progress in those.

**4. What are your plans for the upcoming 12 months? What are you preparing for your community?**

Our next year's roadmap is filling pretty quickly – sometimes too quickly :). In general we plan to continue with our regular formats like Mash Up and

series of thematic workshops. We intend to offer practical and professional education to as many people as possible. Besides that we are preparing long term programs for entrepreneurs and projects in early stages of development in various segments. And for sure we will organise and host number of inspiring events and activities for the community and general public. Already today our members can work temporarily from other regional Impact Hubs (currently from Prague, Brno and Ostrava) - based on the demand from our community we plan to add few attractive cities in the near future. And if all goes well we plan some surprises as well.

**5. What is your organization's / entity's 'secret sauce'? What makes you special?**

If said it's not secret anymore :). But seriously, I believe the thing we do and the way we do it is a bit different and maybe that's what makes us unique. We as an organisation and as humans believe a better world evolves through the combined accomplishments of creative, committed and compassionate individuals focused on a common purpose. And the purpose is in the centre of our effort and activities. In all we do we keep in mind our common values trust – courage – collaboration, which we share globally. And surprisingly it can work even in Slovakia :).

**6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?**

Kofola and Vinea

**7. Lentilky or M&Ms?**

Lentilky on the way to kindergarten

**8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?**

Still on Windows, but don't ask me why :)

**9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?**

Both of course :) + few others :)

**10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?**

AirBnB would work for me



**Branislav Šmidt**  
Co-Founder & Managing Director

## Global Network and Reach



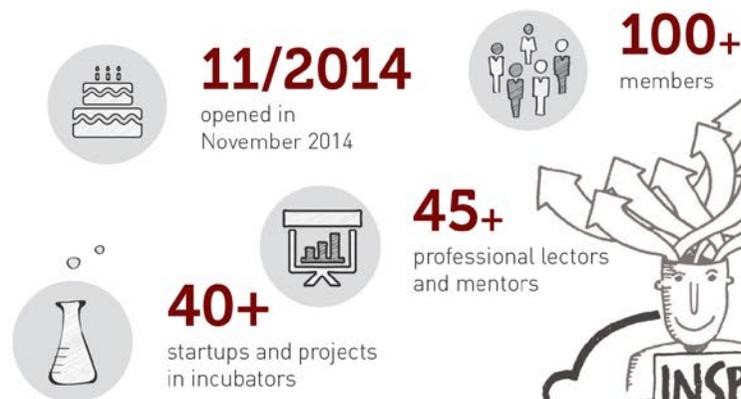
## Local Network Members Types



Vibrant **Community**  
 Inspiring **Space**  
 Incubation **Program**  
 Meaningful **Content**

# IMPACT HUB Bratislava

## Impact HUB Bratislava: FIRST year in facts



SOCIAL & ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

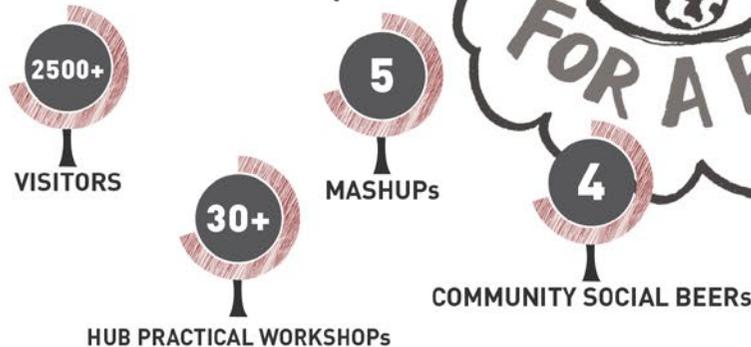
INSPIRATION

DE-IMAGIN

## Biggest Opportunities for You



250+ Events & Meetups



**1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?**

The most important lesson I've learned so far is to never give up. Always think in a structured and positive way and be patient and realistic about your goals and accomplishments. Do not be afraid to go against the wall and be always ready to fight for your idea. At the same time be open for different opinions and gather yourself with a perfect team and partners. Having smart people on your side is the key to success.

**2. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?**

If you fail, you just have to stand up and move forward so it is always a step further. Having experienced the failure in business is often being considered by investors as a plus, not as symbol of averseness in their eyes. Individual who has failed in one project had the opportunity to learn from this lesson and turn it into advantage.

To contribute towards transformation we all shall educate people to not be afraid of failing. It is also crucial to create ecosystem that is failure friendly to offer an environment in which fail means not the end of entrepreneur's life but the start. It is also important to show positive examples of local successful companies and people.

**3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...**

Slovakia has got many great talents in various fields of specialization. Adding our great geographical location and talented people in IT, digital services, security and perhaps automotive could lead to perfect match for potential raise of great and globally successful companies and IT oriented startup ecosystem.

**4. What are your plans for the upcoming 12 months? What are you preparing for your community?**

We look mainly for experienced people with passion and with the right drive/attitude for the project-startup they are involved in. The idea itself is important but not that much as the quality of people that are executing the idea. Another important aspect we look for is the market, scalability and synergies with our activities. We want to make sure that what we invest in has potential to succeed on international level, not just local.

**5. What is your organization's / entity's 'secret sauce'? What makes you special?**

We strive to be a place where startups are being accelerated and being raised. We provide funding, tailored-made services, mentoring, access to our network and our experience of doing business in IT within last 25 years.

**6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?**

Coke

**7. Lentilky or M&Ms?**

Protein bars

**8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?**

Windows

**9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?**

Fortune magazine

**10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?**

One year of free Uber rides towards free AirBnB rentals



**Viktor Mikulášek**  
CEO

# LAUNCHER

STARTUP & INNOVATION STUDIO



We are a team of investors, successful entrepreneurs and specialists running an acceleration program. Our mission is to build and support startups and turn them into real companies.



3,5 mil. € invested



Extensive network in B2B segment



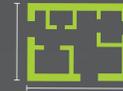
7 countries where we do business



8 direct investments



10+ in-house experts at Launcher



620m<sup>2</sup> of office space



10+ startups supported



50+ people working at our startups



3 cooperations with universities



[www.launcher.sk](http://www.launcher.sk)

## 25 years of doing successful business in IT



### We invest

Our companies receive funding from us that is crucial for growth and expansion all the way through their seed and early stages.



### We build

Startups and spin-offs is our main audience. We provide them with our network, experience, internal resources, team formation and expansion.



### We support

To maximize synergies we support and enable viable cooperations with our partners. We work with universities and take an active part in the startup ecosystem.

**1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?**

Finding the right team. It is important that everyone on your team is sharing the same vision and values for doing business.

**2. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?**

It is important to see examples of company failures and to talk about it openly with no shame. Also to see examples of failures that managed to get back and find new ways of doing business.

**3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...**

Internet of Things. Slovakia has ideal technical skillset for IoT and combining this with the potential of this sector, we could see some interesting projects coming up. We just need to educate and spread the word about IoT.

**4. What are your plans for the upcoming 12 months? What are you preparing for your community?**

We are introducing a set of conferences dedicated to Venture Capital around Europe through which we want to open up Slovak VC scene. We are also working on some other projects but cannot disclose them at the moment :)

**5. What is your organization's / entity's 'secret sauce'? What makes you special?**

Working with and attracting internationals to Slovakia.

**6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?**

Kofola

**7. Lentilky or M&Ms?**

M&Ms

**8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?**

Hard one but both: Windows & Mac OS.

**9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?**

Nobel Prize

**10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?**

Free AirBnB. Gosh! Feel like traveling now!



**Marek Zámečník**  
Co-Founder



# OTVORENÉ — v — 2014

PRIAMO  
PODPOROVANÉ  
PROJEKTY

3



16

PODPOROVANÝCH  
PROJEKTOV



21

EVENTOV



11

MENTOROV



2850

KÁV



6

PARTNEROV



7

NÁRODNOSTÍ

náš priestor **520M<sup>2</sup>**

**1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?**

We can change things. I know it sounds romantic, but when we get together we can create enough awareness and pressure to change things for better.

**2. What could contribute towards a transformation of ‘the culture of failure’ in Slovakia?**

Trying and failing. Let everyone taste it and see it’s not the end of the world. It makes you smarter and stronger.

**3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...**

I think just having more people trying the life of an entrepreneur and giving it all, will help us have more great companies in the future.

**4. What are your plans for the upcoming 12 months? What are you preparing for your community?**

We want to connect more innovative and internet companies. Our goal is to reach 100 members and cover all corners of Slovakia.

**5. What is your organization’s / entity’s ‘secret sauce’? What makes you special?**

The people behind SAPIE are honest, talented, experienced and are doing all this for the good of the country. It’s the spirit of making the world-class Slovakia that motivates people to join us, work with us and support us.

**6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?**

Kofola

**7. Lentilky or M&Ms?**

Staying in love with Mila

**8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?**

Mac OS

**9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?**

Fortune magazine

**10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?**

AirBnB, I love to travel and when I do I walk a lot.



**Petra Dzurovčinová**  
Executive Manager



BOOSTING THE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM



FOSTERING IT, BUSINESS & CREATIVE EDUCATION

sapie



SLOVAK ALLIANCE FOR THE INTERNET ECONOMY



TAKING SLOVAK COMPANIES GLOBAL

### CREATING WORLD - CLASS SLOVAKIA

PRIVATE - PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP

REGIONAL COOPERATION

SCALING SLOVAK STARTUPS

GLOBAL INSPIRATION

PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY

## 1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

Always surround yourself with people that are better than you. Admit that you don't have answers for everything and always listen, evaluate and learn.

## 2. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

The single most important factor I believe this transformation needs is time. And then I would like to see diversion from proclaimed state provided security in life, work and such which makes people dependent and relying on something beyond their control and creates the notion that you do not need to risk, venture into fulfilling your dreams. This is something that whole society needs to embrace and raise the kids with. You should not be pushed by your family and friends into safe jobs, where there is no risk.

## 3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

... problems, that really matter to relevant audience. Everyone has special skills and experience so use that. I don't think we have special advantage right now for any particular sector for startups to have an easier path to success.

## 4. What are your plans for the upcoming 12 months? What are you preparing for your community?

We are running second cohort of our acceleration programme - The Spot Booster. This time we narrowed our focus to work with startups in fin-tech sector so that we can tailor the content and bring top mentors and experts from the field that are going to be useful for most startups in the batch. Such close cooperation with our partners within the industry will help the teams perfect the go to market phase and gain relevant traction.

## 5. What is your organization's / entity's 'secret sauce'? What makes you special?

The real hands-on approach to the teams and founders we work with, expertise and connections with key players in fintech industry. In the end, large and powerful network is what can help you get the insights, traction and partners.

## 6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Coke Light

## 7. Lentilky or M&Ms?

Lentilky

## 8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Mac OS

## 9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

Fortune magazine

## 10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

AirBnB



**Ivan Debnár**  
Founder

**1.5 mil €**

of received funding

**8**

startups have joined international accelerators

**400**

spot members

**113**

years of business experience



**Startups**

**25**

startup teams at spot

**150+**

supported startups

**67**

mentors



**Strong Team**

**8**

nationalities

**14**

team members

**56%**

received funding

*Boosting  
the startup world*

**21**

partners

Up to  
**1 mil €**

funding



**Events**

**6500**

participants

**60+**

speakers



**Academy**

**80+**

hours of video

**Accelerator**



**Booster**

**Incubator**

**420**

events

**50+**

teams

**1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?**

You need to work hard, be responsible and trust people you are working with.

**2. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?**

To realize that anyone can be wrong.

**3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...**

Doing business.

**4. What are your plans for the upcoming 12 months? What are you preparing for your community?**

Enterprise spin-off program.

**5. What is your organization's / entity's 'secret sauce'? What makes you special?**

Are we special? Don't think so...

**6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?**

Coke

**7. Lentilky or M&Ms?**

Lentilky

**8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?**

Mac OS

**9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?**

Fortune magazine

**10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?**

AirBnB



**Juraj Kavecký**  
Director

# Zilina Startup Ecosystem



## Incubator Since 2003



## Call of Entrepreneur University of Zilina Startup Program Since 2010



## Startup Weekend Zilina Since 2012



## Banka Zilina Coworking and business centre Since 2015



Done by **VTP Zilina**

## 1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

Never take no for an answer. Starting a startup isn't easy and there will always be people who tell you that something is impossible or will not work. Don't listen.

## 2. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

Change in the mentality of students at universities and even in high schools. Young people must understand that founding a company is an alternative to a standardized and established way of thinking. Easier rules for establishment of new companies, less bureaucracy for all companies and entrepreneurs.

## 3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

Smart Machines - finding a balance between the active human workforce and the cold efficiency of machines that can learn.

Internet of Things - with all those connected devices, companies, governments and people, everyone has access to more information about themselves and others than they can actually use.

Luxury goods market and fashion - as technology gets smarter it has to get more stylish if it's going to become a lifestyle and that's where fashion comes in.

## 4. What are your plans for the upcoming 12 months? What are you preparing for your community?

We want to extend our Startup Weekend network to one more city. So there will be 4 Startup Weekend events in Slovakia. Next goal is to expand our Startup

education course from one university to more universities.

## 5. What is your organization's / entity's 'secret sauce'? What makes you special?

We started to organize our startup events in 2011 when startup ecosystem was not as developed as it is now, and since then we still do our activities as a non-profit organization.

## 6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Kofola

## 7. Lentilky or M&Ms?

M&Ms

## 8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Mac OS

## 9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

Fortune magazine

## 10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

AirBnB



**Michal Harušiak**  
Organizer

## 1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

The biggest mistake is not to learn from failure and mistakes. Ignoring our own failures will lead to challenges in business and everyday life.

## 2. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

A combination of tolerance and continuous education. The most important factor is the attitude of the media. During one of the recent "failure stories" representatives of "specialized" media were the ones adding negative emotions and subjective stances instead of relevant explanations.

## 3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

Cyber security

## 4. What are your plans for the upcoming 12 months? What are you preparing for your community?

Specialized hackathons with e-government and i-healthcare focus.

New premises, new hardware development lab and a couple of surprises.

## 5. What is your organization's / entity's 'secret sauce'? What makes you special?

We are not that special. But what makes us exceptional are people, who work within our co-working. It is a group of people who are trying to change the world around them – we simply support them.

## 6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Fofola...when they don't have pepsi

## 7. Lentilky or M&Ms?

M&Ms

## 8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Mac OS

## 9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

My face with Nobel Prize on a cover of Fortune magazine

## 10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

AirBnB rents



**Marek Lavčák**

Organizer

## 1. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

Why waste time in futile attempts to change what you cannot, when there are so many things you can change?

## 2. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

Unfortunately it is partially our political heritage. What could contribute? Critical mass of people understanding that failing to risk is more dangerous than risking failure. People able to be in charge for their lives, transparent, fair and able to manage the failure in steered and responsible way.

## 3. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

Enterprise software, there is significant legacy of enterprise IT in Slovakia and number of professionals experienced in building products for enterprises. Healthcare as second.

## 4. What are your plans for the upcoming 12 months? What are you preparing for your community?

Concept to empower women in tech, at regional level. Other than that, to consolidate motives and thoughts of SWZA organisers and community.

## 5. What is your organization's / entity's 'secret sauce'? What makes you special?

The team. Dedicated and ingenious people having passion for doing something on top of everyday life, believing in ability to introduce substantial change in small steps.

## 6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Code

## 7. Lentilky or M&Ms?

Neither :D Fresh hazelnuts!

## 8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Mac OS

## 9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

Nobel Prize :)

## 10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

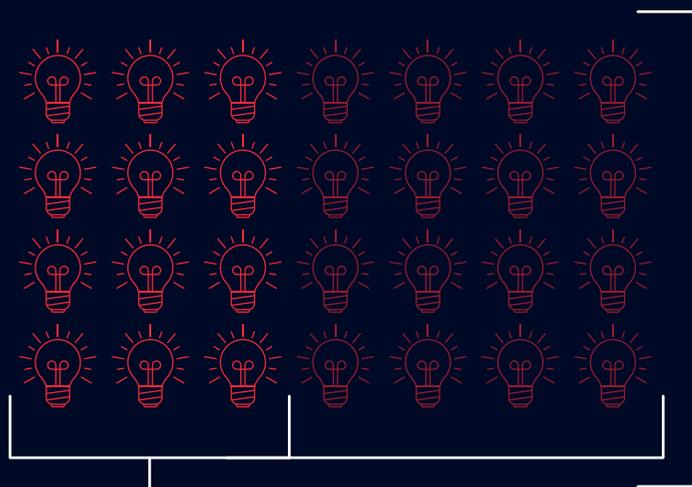
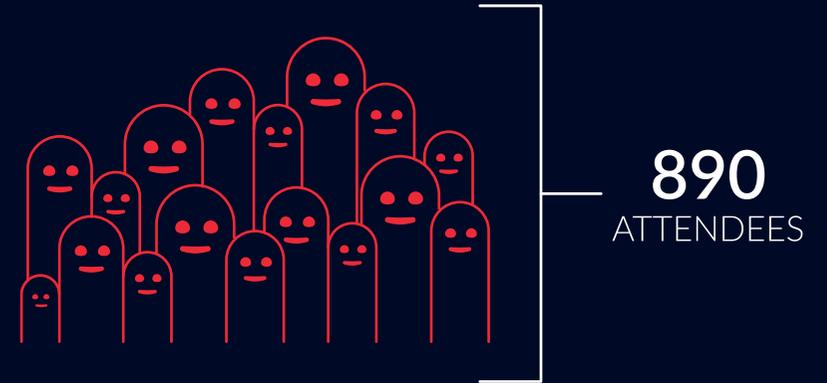
Uber rides, I am a taxi addict ;)



**Daniel Harcek**  
Organizer

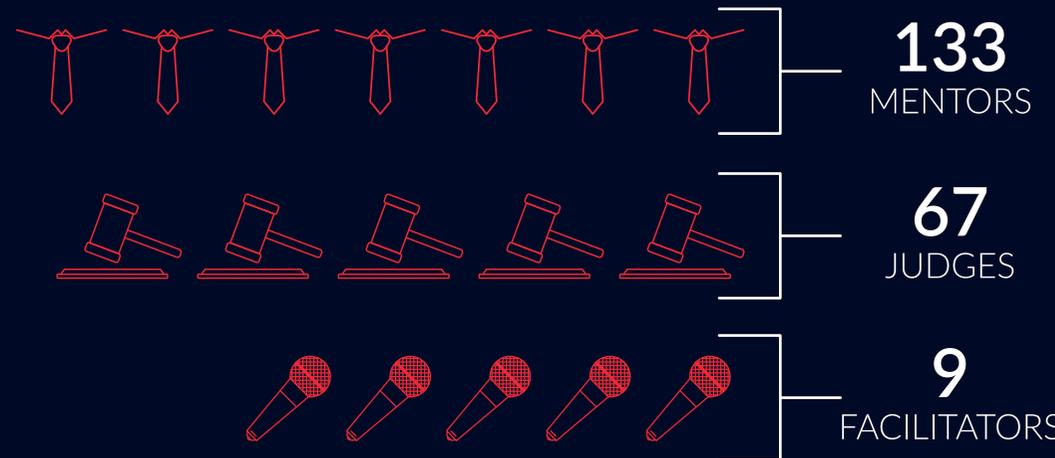
# STARTUP SLOVAKIA IN NUMBERS

13 STARTUP WEEKENDS  
IN 3 CITIES



282  
ELEVATOR  
PITCHES

6007.5  
MANDAYS SPENT ON  
STARTUP WEEKENDS





# Business & Ecosystem Leaders

Anton Zajac | President, ESET North America

Viktor Reviliak | Co-Founder of CulCharge

Šimon Šicko | Founder & CEO of Pixel Federation

Michal Hrabovec | President, Anasoft

Peter Komorník | Co-Founder & CEO of Sli.do

Lukáš Alner | Managing Partner, Diagnose.me

Michal Pastier | Group Creative Director & Co-Owner ZARAGUZA

Andrej Leontiev | Partner, Taylor Wessing

Rasťo Kulich | Country Manager, Google Slovakia

Mary MacPherson | President & CEO, Slovak-American Foundation

Marek Rosa | CEO, CTO & Founder at GoodAI and Keen Software House

# Anton Zajac

President, ESET North America



## 1. What was your biggest business success so far?

Successful launch of ESET worldwide.

## 2. What was your biggest business failure so far?

I failed to finish the room-temperature superconductivity project.

## 3. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

The devil is in the details and in timing.

## 4. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

Education and stories of the many successful entrepreneurs who failed repeatedly but refused to give up.

## 5. Which Slovak startups are most likely to 'make it big' in the upcoming year?

I believe **sli.do** will continue its exponential growth. **Diagnose.me** secured next round of funding and I believe in its concept. **Cloudo** changed its business model and has a good chance. **Staffino** released a major upgrade of its application that could boost its expansion dramatically. **Suffio** has been acquiring shopify clients steadily; once other platforms are supported next year it will face a bright future. Where did I misplace my crystal ball?

## 6. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

AI, IT security, smart transportation and energy.

## 7. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Red wine, but let's not whine about it :-)

## 8. Lentilky or M&Ms?

I like chocolate without any bells and whistles :-)

## 9. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Mac is a window to the world :-)

## 10. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

Why would one exclude the other???

## 11. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free Airbnb rents?

Depends... am I the landlord of the NYC penthouse?



# Viktor Reviliak

Co-Founder of CulCharge



## 1. What was your biggest business success so far?

Doing business with top international companies.

## 2. What was your biggest business failure so far?

At our team, we have faced many which were pretty severe, we can talk about it over a beer sometimes.

## 3. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

NEVER, NEVER GIVE UP, BE PATIENT & HUMBLE, CONTROL YOUR EGO & ALWAYS HAVE FAITH. When you will be still standing up, after falling down, there is always a chance you will be successful, statistics.

## 4. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

Among others, Time.

## 5. Which Slovak startups are most likely to 'make it big' in the upcoming year?

There are few big things already happening below the radar, but we will see in 2016. Otherwise I love how **Staffino** is rocking the stage and we also got some pretty interesting things prepared for 2016 ;)

## 6. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

Hardware/gadgets/consumer electronics oriented startups.

## 7. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Slivovica :)

## 8. Lentilky or M&Ms?

Lentilky

## 9. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Mac OS

## 10. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

I would rather see myself as someone who can help people in need.

## 11. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

Definitely AirBnB rents



# Šimon Šicko

Founder & CEO of Pixel Federation



## 1. What was your biggest business success so far?

The biggest success, and the only one for me so far, is our company Pixel Federation. From the project perspective, Trainstation is still the most successful game. From a different perspective, my biggest success is that I work while doing what I love.

## 2. What was your biggest business failure so far?

From a monetisation point of view, my biggest failure was the project Big Shop Keeper.

## 3. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

Done is better than perfect and fail harder.

## 4. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

System of education that teaches how to think critically.

## 5. Which Slovak startups are most likely to 'make it big' in the upcoming year?

GA Drilling and Aeromobil

## 6. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

Entertainment sector - gaming, movies

## 7. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Ginger lemonade without sugar (from the branding perspective, Coke)

## 8. Lentilky or M&Ms?

M&Ms

## 9. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Mac OS

## 10. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

Nobel Prize

## 11. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

AirBnB rents



# Michal Hrabovec

President, Anasoft



## 1. What was your biggest business success so far?

Founding Anasoft

## 2. What was your biggest business failure so far?

I have a lot of failures every day. Luckily, none of them stand out.

## 3. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

Energy given to others will once return to you

## 4. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

Business leaders talking more about their failure experience.

## 5. Which Slovak startups are most likely to 'make it big' in the upcoming year?

Aeromobil

## 6. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

More sophisticated solutions with segment specialization. Not only mobile applications, which could be created with basic IT knowledge.

## 7. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Pure water

## 8. Lentilky or M&Ms?

Chocolate

## 9. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Windows

## 10. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

That would depend on what for

## 11. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

Both for half a year



# Peter Komorník

Co-Founder & CEO of Sli.do



## 1. What was your biggest business success so far?

The journey with sli.do is definitely my biggest business success so far. In terms of specific achievements, having successful events with customers such as SXSWedu, LeWeb or WEF was probably the most rewarding feeling for me.

## 2. What was your biggest business failure so far?

Startup life is so full of failures, that it's hard to pinpoint the biggest one. Thankfully we have been able to recover and hopefully learn from most of them so far.

## 3. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

Again, there were so many lessons in the past 3 years that it's difficult to single out any one of them. Probably the 2 most surprising lessons for me were the importance of the pricing part of the

business model and the role of patience and pure perseverance in doing B2B sales.

## 4. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

Positive role models - inspiring people who are not afraid to admit that their journey to success was lined by failures and their willingness to use each failure to become smarter and stronger.

## 5. Which Slovak startups are most likely to 'make it big' in the upcoming year?

There are several great teams worth watching, but if I could choose one, I'm a big fan of **Cloudo** and the team behind.

## 6. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

I don't think it really matters. People should find their passion and big problems worth solving and pursue those. Sectors will come as a result of a few successful startups paving the way.

## 7. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Fofola

## 8. Lentilky or M&Ms?

M&Ms

## 9. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Converted to Apple a few years back and never looked back

## 10. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

Not much chance of winning a Nobel Prize, so probably the cover of Fortune magazine. But neither really excites me much.

## 11. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

Now this is a tough one! Probably AirBnB, as I'm afraid one year of free Uber rides would completely destroy my travel habits.



# Lukáš Alner

Managing Partner, Diagnose.me



## 1. What was your biggest business success so far?

We have build Zoznam.sk into a market leader (later sold to Slovak Telecom), also exited Netlab as the biggest ISP to Telenor... but perhaps most I'm proud of what I'm doing now – because we are trying to establish Diagnose.me among an international competition. It's not a complete business success yet but we are helping people from all over the world, doesn't get better than that :)

## 2. What was your biggest business failure so far?

We were providing a first ever online trading platform for Slovak traders on NASDAQ – online-investor.sk. Our partner - a big czech based broker company went bust and we had all our clients money at their accounts. Luckily we got all clients money back, but it was a definitive (and not very glorious) end of the service :(

## 3. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

Choose the right people to work with (sounds a bit cliché but it's true).

## 4. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

Role models

## 5. Which Slovak startups are most likely to 'make it big' in the upcoming year?

I like **GA Drilling** very much (although I don't really understand the technology :))

## 6. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

No mobile apps please. Something with proper R&D behind it. Spin many more of the academic projects. BioTech, engineering...

## 7. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Water with lemon, please!

## 8. Lentilky or M&Ms?

I don't eat any sweets (daughter LOVES Lentilky).

## 9. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Mac OS

## 10. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

Definetly a Nobel prize (but for what....? Hmmm...)

## 11. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

Definetly AirBnB! (are flight fares included..?) :)



# Michal Pastier

Group Creative Director & Co-Owner ZARAGUZA



## 1. What was your biggest business success so far?

35,4% percent jump in sales of 0,5l Kofola with our Fofola campaign.

## 2. What was your biggest business failure so far?

Working on too much unprofitable projects just because we love them :)

## 3. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

In "sharing era", company culture is the best marketing tool. Investing in culture can have huge returns on a company's success and social media awareness.

## 4. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

We need more fresh success stories from new sectors. Not just Eset, Sygic or automotive.

## 5. Which Slovak startups are most likely to 'make it big' in the upcoming year?

I believe in **Infinario**, **AeroMobil**, **Besteron** and their global ambitions.

## 6. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

FinTech startups. Thanks to the rise of the mobile, on-demand economy and widespread frustration with big banks.

## 7. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

FOFOLA

## 8. Lentilky or M&Ms?

None

## 9. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Mac OS

## 10. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

Nobel Prize first, Fortune magazine cover second.

## 11. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

One year of free AirBnB rents with real photos from the apartment :)



# Andrej Leontiev

Partner, Taylor Wessing



## 1. What was your biggest business success so far?

We are consultants. Our people are the most valuable asset of our firm. We have invested a lot of time and resources into their development. I am particularly proud that the majority of our attorneys were raised in and by our firm.

## 2. What was your biggest business failure so far?

In ten years we have made it all the way from scratch to being ranked among the top five international law firms in Slovakia. Still, we could have done even better.

## 3. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

All the difficulties concerning business can be easily overcome, if you have the right partner. Everyone can have a bad day and then it is most important that there is someone who can take it from there.

## 4. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

Generally, Slovakia has a problem with recognizing success and even more difficulty with assuming liability for failure or misconduct. And without this, there cannot be a new beginning. However counterintuitive it may seem, only consistent enforcement of liability for past failures will promote fresh starts of new perspective projects.

## 5. Which Slovak startups are most likely to 'make it big' in the upcoming year?

[cloudo.co](#), [staffino.com](#) and [gruveo.com](#).

## 6. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

Environmental protection, feeding the planet, solving social problems and space tourism.

## 7. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Coke from a glass bottle.

## 8. Lentilky or M&Ms?

Lentilky from my daughter.

## 9. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Windows, because lawyers have no other real choice.

## 10. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

Fortune magazine, as we have already had one Nobel Prize laureate in the family.

## 11. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

I am a fan of AirBnB. Anyway, it's amazing how both apps helped strangers to trust and rely on each other again. The rise of collaborative economy poses a great challenge to the legal world and I hope that it will have the guts to strike a new path and not constrain it because the old labels do not fit.



# Rasťo Kulich

Country Manager, Google Slovakia



## 1. What was your biggest business success so far?

Hiring couple star performers & coaching them on leadership and approach to business.

## 2. What was your biggest business failure so far?

Starting a business with 5 co-founders and hoping it would work. Eventually, it did but it had to come down to 2 owners. (even that might be 1 too many :)))

## 3. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

Hire on your weaknesses - diversity works.

## 4. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

Journalists should ask about it more and successful biz guys should talk about it proactively as well.

President Andrej Kiska, for example, often talks about 2 successes and 18 failures in his business efforts.

## 5. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

Artificial intelligence, Security, Mobility - the last two are clearly emerging clusters in our Danube Valley region

## 6. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Coconut water - but if pushed, it would be Kofola

## 7. Lentilky or M&Ms?

Lentilky forever

## 8. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Mac

## 9. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

Fortune cover

## 10. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

Free AirBnB and Emirates business as a bonus :)



# Mary MacPherson

President & CEO, Slovak-American Foundation



## 1. What was your biggest business success so far?

Working for high profile startups like Apple, Blackboard and MCI, along with many not so well known, led to my work in entrepreneurial support organizations for the last 18 years. My view of success is measured in terms of the success of the startups I support. SAF's US Connections program was established to support a new generation of promising Slovak startups - check it out [www.slovakamericanfoundation.org](http://www.slovakamericanfoundation.org)!

## 2. What was your biggest business failure so far?

Being VP of Partner Marketing for a startup that raised over \$50 million in venture capital and spent it on product development rather than market development. We didn't live to tell the story.

## 3. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

Don't confuse activity with results.

## 4. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

Learning from failure is part of growth and being able to get up to go at it again. How about holding "Startup Funerals" to share lessons learned and demonstrate that there is life after death.

## 5. Which Slovak startups are most likely to 'make it big' in the upcoming year?

Oh too many to name!

## 6. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

So many Slovak startups are brilliant technically. But rather than focus on a technology or sector, how about a focus on how to build the best distribution, channel and partner strategies to effectively and efficiently get products to customers and markets?

## 7. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Coke Light, even though it is so bad for you

## 8. Lentilky or M&Ms?

Peanut M&Ms

## 9. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Have to have both iOS and Windows (hate to say that since I worked for Apple)

## 10. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

While neither are remotely likely, I'd say Fortune, in the hope that the story inside would talk about strong women role models in business, opportunities for women entrepreneurs, the importance of women

in management and the boardroom to drive bottom line performance and how women build power networks to achieve their goals.

## 11. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

Free Uber worldwide? Easy decision!



# Marek Rosa

CEO, CTO & Founder at GoodAI and Keen Software House



## 1. What was your biggest business success so far?

My greatest business success is following my dreams of creating awesome video games and building general artificial intelligence. It all began in my first company, Keen Software House, where after making the popular indie game titles Space Engineers and Medieval Engineers, I was able to personally invest \$10mil into general artificial intelligence development. That general AI project is now a company known as GoodAI, and has grown to a team of 30 researchers. I couldn't have gotten where I am today without the support of our amazing games community, and I feel really fortunate that I'm able to do what I love – make games and build general AI.

## 2. What was your biggest business failure so far?

The mission of GoodAI is to build general artificial intelligence as fast as possible. I work with a sense of urgency, because I know that every day that passes without this technology, humankind misses out on something that could improve our lives and teach us more about our universe.

## 3. What is the biggest / most important business lesson you have learned so far?

Since I started working on games, and now in my general AI company, I've known that prioritization is what determines the success of a company. Companies which can prioritize efficiently and optimize their working process are more competitive and successful. Knowing your development priorities and having a clear roadmap moving forward is the best advice I can offer to any startup.

## 4. What could contribute towards a transformation of 'the culture of failure' in Slovakia?

I don't think it's fair to say that there's a culture of failure in Slovakia. In fact, there are many success stories rising out of the country. If I had the chance to advise startups about growing their chances of success, I would say that they should look more often to how other companies have succeeded in this market.

## 5. Which Slovak startups are most likely to 'make it big' in the upcoming year?

It's very difficult to say - I think there are a lot of Slovak companies that have a great chance to make it big. I might mention that **Infinario**, which does data analysis from games and other fields, made a great decision in expanding to e-commerce. I'm really looking forward to seeing how they grow over the next year.

## 6. Slovakia should have more startups focusing on ...

Technology and the IT industry as a whole

## 7. Kofola, Coke or Pepsi?

Coke

## 8. Lentilky or M&Ms?

Lentilky

## 9. Windows, Mac OS or Linux?

Windows

## 10. Your face on a cover of Fortune magazine or a Nobel Prize?

Nobel Prize

## 11. One year of free Uber rides or one year of free AirBnB rents?

Uber rides







# The FinTech Opportunity

Fintech is one of the technology clusters we see developing in a number of locations worldwide.

The global financial services sector is being revolutionised by Fintech, where it is being used as a catalyst for innovation. Existing service providers are reacting to increased regulation, greater complexity and evolving customer behaviours and demands through the application of new technology.

We are also seeing new market entrants disrupting the market by leveraging technology to deliver both new and existing services in more relevant and convenient ways to customers. Financing activity in the sector is expected to increase from US\$3bn to US\$6-8bn by 2018\*. Our survey found that 75% of Slovak investors were interested in investing in Fintech.

Currently the principal Fintech clusters are located in Silicon Valley (US\$1.5bn investment p.a.), New York (US\$600m p.a.) and London (US\$66m p.a.)\*. London is of particular interest to Slovak Startups due to its proximity and the fact that London is actively targeting foreign startups to relocate there.

### **What is driving Fintech growth in London?**

In the past two years there has been a concerted effort by government, regulators, the City of London, and the industry to develop the city as a Fintech hub. London is second only to New York in terms of global financial services. There are currently 44,000 people working in Fintech in London\*.

### **Support provided includes:**

- Direct funding, including startup loans and investment matching
- Tax reliefs such as Entrepreneurs Relief (10% Capital Gains Tax) and Enterprise Investment Scheme (reducing Income Tax and Capital Gains)
- Immigration policies focused on attracting entrepreneurs (e.g. Entrepreneur Visa Scheme, easier access to permanent residency)

- Relaxed IPO requirements (ability to list only 10% of equity)
- Industry programs to encourage alternative funding sources (e.g. non-traditional lenders, peer-to-peer lending, equity crowd funding) and attract inward investment in the sector
- Regulatory reviews to explore opportunities in digital money

### **An opportunity for Slovak Startups**

There is a global demand for Fintech. There is clearly an appetite amongst Investors for Fintech opportunities and it was great to see the number of Fintech Startups in the recent Booster Incubator intake. One of the key global Fintech hubs, London, is a short flight away from Slovakia and it is actively encouraging Fintech Startups to relocate there. This presents a great opportunity for any Slovak Fintech Startup to scale and reach a global market.

\* Source: KPMG's Unlocking The Potential: The Fintech Opportunity For Sydney

**STARTUPS**

Capco is open to supporting potential startups. The company is active on different platforms covering the startups agenda.

(e.g. UK FinTech for Future - program with British Embassy)

**COOPERATION**

Capco supports the education system, to enable the students to connect to the practical world during their studies.

The students are working on our topics, aimed solely at the financial institutions.

Capco organizes ideation workshops to foster new thinking in the financial services area.

**STU / FIIT**

Lab at STU, FIIT

Technical University, Faculty of Informatics and Information Technologies

Launch: Dec 2014

FFFIT Lab  
Forming the future of finance with IT

**EUBA / NHF**

Lab at EUBA, NHF

University of Economics in Bratislava, Faculty of National Economy

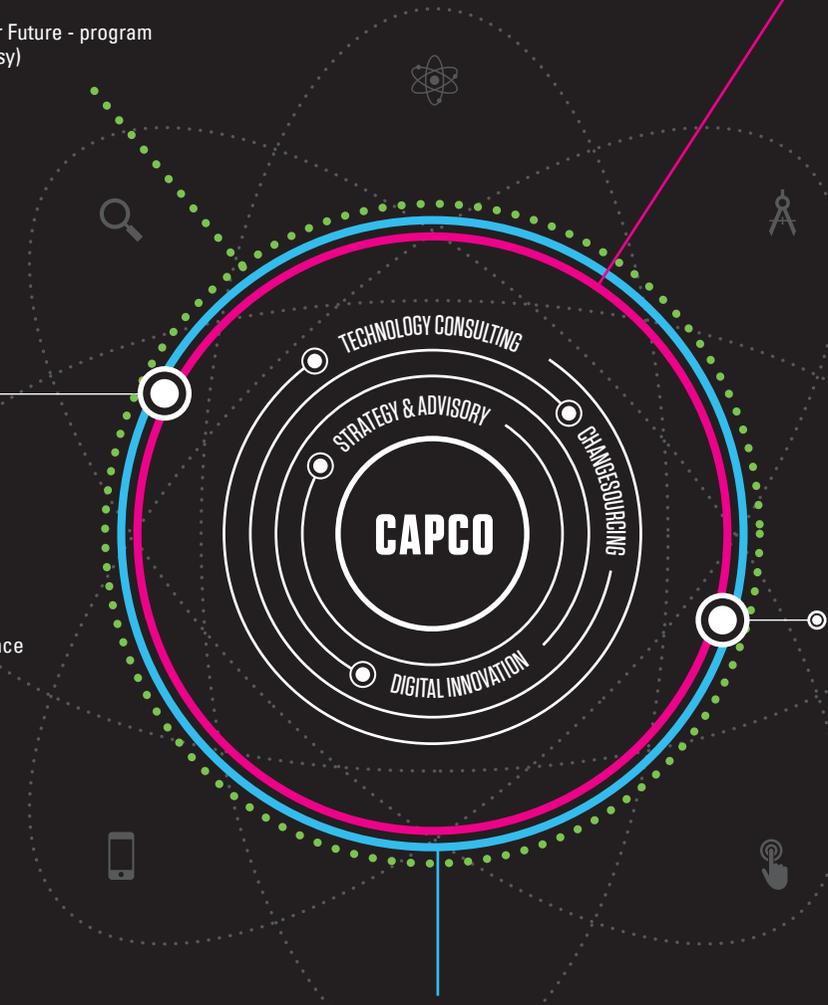
Launch: Start 2015

ZONE lab  
Zoom on new (banking) ecosystem

**SPONSORSHIP**

Sponsorship of 2 universities:

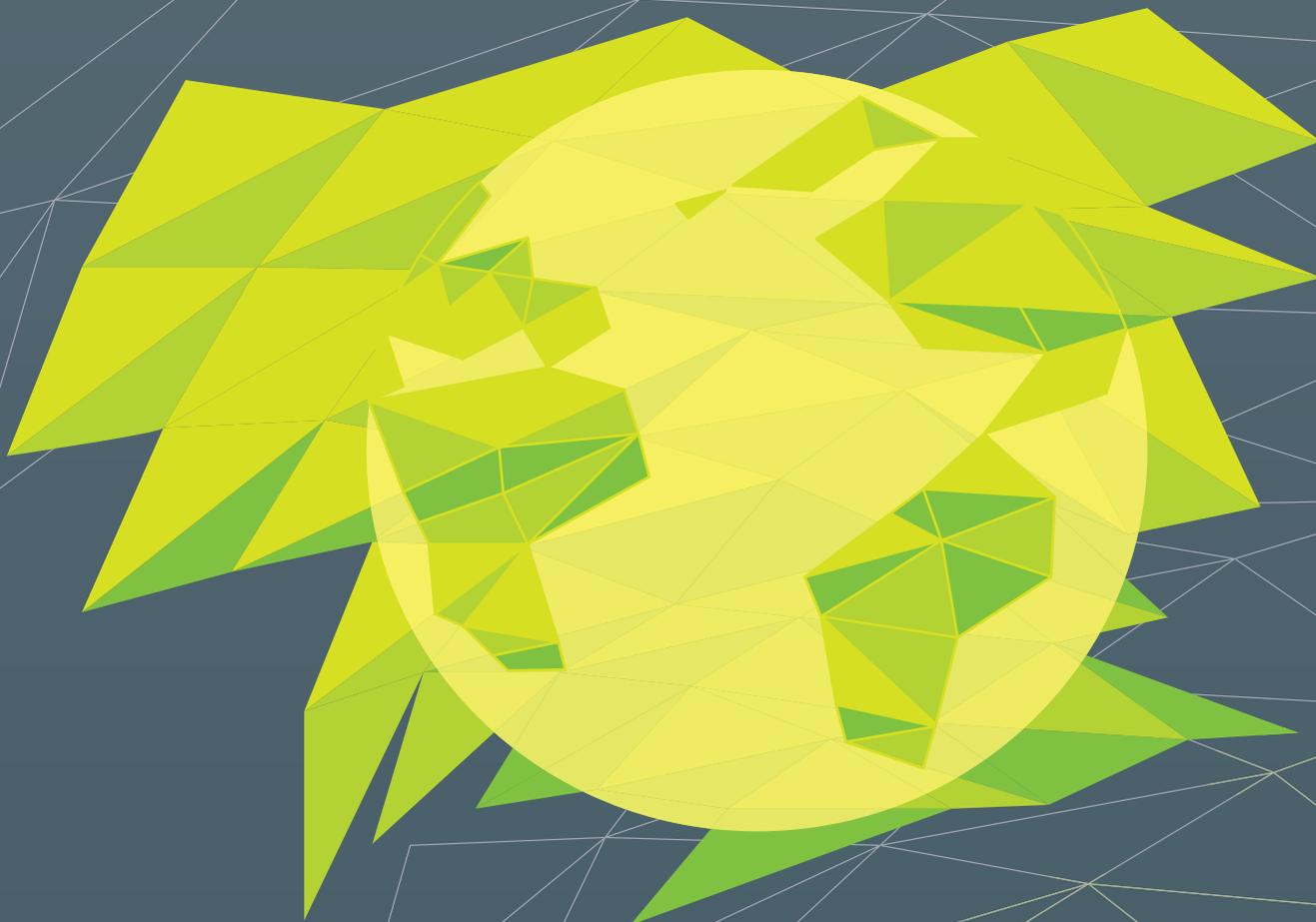
- Reconstruction of rooms
- Technical equipment
- PhD student/researcher sponsorship



**CAPCO SK  
ACTIVITIES  
WITH  
FINTECH  
STARTUPS**







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