

BLUEPRINT

SCALEUP LAUNCHPAD PROJECT MODEL



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1. Project background and purpose

Objective:

The Scaleup Launchpad aimed to accelerate the growth and internationalisation of innovative scaleups across the Central Baltic region by connecting them with new markets, investors, and strategic partners. The project provided structured support for scaling companies through cross-border collaboration, mentoring, and access to smart and sustainable city testbeds. Its primary goal was to strengthen the Central Baltic innovation ecosystem by enabling scaleups to expand faster and more sustainably.

Context:

The Scaleup Launchpad was established in response to the growing need for stronger support mechanisms for Central Baltic scaleups navigating international expansion. While many regions offer startup support, fewer initiatives focus on helping companies transition from early-stage growth to large-scale market penetration.

This project aligns with EU innovation and competitiveness strategies, such as the European Innovation Agenda and Green Deal objectives, promoting smart, sustainable, and inclusive economic development. By fostering collaboration between innovation agencies, municipalities, and industry partners, the initiative aimed to bridge regional gaps, stimulate investment, and create long-term impact on local and international markets.

Target audience / beneficiaries:

- Growth-stage startups and scaleups seeking to expand to new international markets
- Innovation agencies and accelerators supporting scaleup development and internationalisation
- Municipal partners and city clusters hosting innovation testbeds and implementing smart city solutions
- Research and academic institutions contributing knowledge and expertise
- Investors and funding organisations interested in scalable, high-impact ventures

Project structure and timeline

	PREPARATION					PROGRAMME													WRAP-UP
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
Preparation of the programme: time-plans, experts, topics, etc.	█	█	█	█	█														
Call for companies: scouting, social media, etc.			█	█	█														
Selection of companies					█														
Agreeing on detailed road maps with the participating companies						█													
Face-to-face meetings with the companies (preferably at the company venues)						█													
(Internal) evaluation of the companies (e.g. HippoMeter)							█												
International workshops								█				█					█		
Monthly online sessions: expert talks and peer-to-peer sessions						█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	
Regular (every 5-6 weeks) meetings between the companies and programme coordinators (progress, problems, plans)						█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	
Tailored support to the companies (finding the right experts, etc).						█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	
Programme wrap-up and evaluation																		█	

2. Partners and participant profiles

Delivering Partners:

Lead organisation (Business Tampere)

Project partners (Norrköping Science Park and Tartu Science Park)

Industry mentors

Public sector collaborators

Associated partners:

Business support organisations: The project enabled business support organisations to strengthen their collaboration together and share knowledge networks with each other. Project also opened new ways to support businesses to grow.

- Cities
 - Norrköping
 - Tartu
 - Tampere
- Ecosystems
 - ESBR Network - East Sweden Business Region is a joint platform for business development in Östergötland with over 50 organisations. Both, public and private sector.

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- SISP - Swedish Incubators & Science Parks - a national collaboration platform for the country's innovation environments such as incubators, science parks, innovation clusters and accelerators.
- FIBAN - Finnish business angel networks.
- Platform 6. Tampere based innovation and startup community.
- EstBAN - Estonian business angel network.
- Estonian network of regional development centres - unofficial network of business support organisations supporting regional SMEs.

Participant Profile: Scaleup-Ready Companies

The programme targeted small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that demonstrated strong potential for scaling and international growth. Eligible companies typically met the following criteria:

- Are under ten years old
- Have a motivated and engaged core team committed to growth
- Have existing clients and revenue streams demonstrating market traction
- Have completed at least one full fiscal year of operations
- Have raised at least one investment round (this criterion may be applied flexibly depending on the company's situation)
- Operate a scalable business model with potential for cross-border expansion

These criteria ensured that participating companies are beyond the early startup stage and ready to leverage the Scaleup Launchpad support for accelerated, sustainable growth.

3. Programme content: Cross-border workshops, webinars and mentoring

The Scaleup Launchpad programme included a series of thematic workshops, peer-learning webinars and one-on-one mentoring sessions designed to strengthen

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the scaling capabilities of participating companies. These activities were structured to combine knowledge transfer, peer learning, and tailored business support.

Cross-border workshops:

Overview

The Cross-Border Workshops formed a central component of the Scaleup Launchpad's internationalisation activities. These workshops were designed to connect scaleups and local partners from different regions, fostering practical collaboration and shared learning across borders. By combining on-site visits, networking events, and thematic sessions, the workshops provided hands-on opportunities for participants to explore new markets and partnership possibilities.

Purpose and format

The primary goal of the cross-border workshops was to help participating companies understand diverse business environments, regulatory frameworks, and cultural contexts while building trusted networks for future collaboration. Each event also showcased regional innovation ecosystems and facilitated direct connections between companies and potential clients, investors, and city representatives.

Key objectives included:

- Strengthening international cooperation
- Facilitating market entry and exposure to new business environments
- Promoting knowledge exchange and peer learning among scaleups
- Enabling matchmaking between companies, investors, and public stakeholders
- Business event participation

Format:

- Frequency: 3 cross-border workshops per programme
- Duration: 2–3 days per workshop
- Host Locations: Rotating among partner regions

Structure:

- Day 1 – Thematic sessions, panel discussions, and company showcases
- Day 2 – B2B matchmaking and site visits
- Day 3 – Business event participation and networking

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Workshop	Focus Area	Key Learnings / Outcomes
Sweden	Strategy	<p>Through hands-on workshop sessions (led by experts such as prof Daniel Kindström) and interactive panels with stakeholders (e.g., Business Sweden, Norrköping Science Park) the companies refined their value-proposition, identified key strategic pivots (such as target markets, revenue streams, partnerships) and received feedback from peers. Networking, matchmaking and cross-country peer-interactions strengthened the strategic perspective: companies walked away with new partner contacts, fresh ideas for internationalisation strategy, and a sense of shared challenges and opportunities in scaling.</p> <p>The first on-site gathering in Norrköping acted as a soft-landing, helping companies feel comfortable and establish trust early in the programme. Building relationships between participants proved crucial — companies began to see themselves as a team rather than individual firms, which strengthened collaboration throughout the workshops. Early feedback from participants is important for co-creating the workshop agenda with companies to ensure relevance, engagement, and stronger ownership of the process.</p>
Estonia	Opening new markets, raising funds and human resources	<p>The workshop had the aim of providing the following opportunities to the companies of the Scaleup Launchpad batches.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Active peer-to-peer networking between the companies. 2) Active networking with public and private sector partners during the workshop and at the sTARTUp Day. 3) Deeper insights into the selected topics of the Scaleup Launchpad programme - conquering new markets, raising funds for scaling and managing human resources for scaling. <p>Most of the presentations of the workshop were experience stories of companies with a remarkable scale-up competence.</p>

Workshop	Focus Area	Key Learnings / Outcomes
		<p>The participants highlighted the following benefits and take-aways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good understanding about VCs and how to think when growing and building a team ● The keynote speakers & sTARTUp day, and just mingle together in the group ● Importance of market focus. Understanding that startup funding path requires exceptional growth plans. ● Focus is everything. ● As always peer companies are the best resource. ● When expanding abroad, you need to be physically present there.
Finland	People / Opening new markets	<p>The Finland Tampere workshop was the third in its series, after Norrköping and Tartu. The companies in the project had already gotten to know each other well in previous workshops. The main focus was on the comprehensive development of companies and questions of internationalization strategies and measures. We heard the views of various companies and managers outside the project in a case-type manner about their own experiences. The accompanying program included, among other things, the large Cityverse event organized in Tampere. During the workshop, the cooperation of the companies developed even better.</p>

Peer-learning webinars: Tuesday Talks

Overview:

As part of the Scaleup Launchpad knowledge-sharing component, the Tuesday Talks webinar series provided an ongoing platform for peer learning and experience exchange among participating scaleups, partners, and external experts. The sessions were designed to foster an open dialogue around practical challenges and success stories in scaling innovation-driven companies.

Purpose and Format:

The Tuesday Talks aimed to strengthen the community dimension of the programme by connecting participants across regions and sectors. Each webinar featured a

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keynote presentation and an interactive Q&A session encouraging real-time peer exchange.

- **Frequency:** 1-2 times / month. Varied depending on the phase of the program and the wishes of the participating companies
- **Duration:** 60–90 minutes per session
- **Format:** Virtual (live-streamed via Zoom / Teams)
- **Participants:** 10-15 attendees per session, including scaleups, mentors, and partner organisations

Example Topics Covered:

Session theme	Focus area	Key take aways
Navigating Employment models across borders	HR	To have a cross border expert panel and comparing practises across the countries is a valuable insight for companies entering neighboring countries. It benefits having cross-border panel expert webinars
Finding the right public funding	Finances	Navigating public funding can be challenging, and even more challenging to determine what is right for your company.
Legal Insights - Secure your business deals	Strategy	In our program we have been working with scaleup companies that often face challenges in navigating agreements especially with corporations. It is a crucial competence for companies in scaling up phase to know how navigate agreements.

Mentoring Programme

Each scaleup was matched with experienced mentors from industry and innovation networks. Mentoring covered strategic growth, fundraising, leadership, and international partnerships.

Format: The implementation varied. In some cases, the company-mentor pairs worked regularly. In other cases, the mentors implemented a larger package that included a varying number of personal meetings. Monthly 1:1 mentoring sessions (60–90 min)

Duration: 5–11 months

Total Mentoring Hours Delivered:

Key Impact: Improved business models, investment readiness, and international connections

4. Financial Overview

Category	Description	Estimated Cost
Personnel (project manager and coordinator in each location)	Programme management, coordination	253 565,68 €
Events & Workshops	Venues, materials, logistics, speakers	35 575,00 €
Communication	Branding, dissemination, digital materials	5 000 €
Company/Target group Support	Expert fees, mentoring costs	90 223,00 €
Total Estimated Budget	One programme/18months	384 363,68 €

5. Programme Results and evaluation method

Quantitative Outputs:

- Number of companies supported
- Number of scaled-up new growth companies
- Businesses enrolled into Scaleup Launchpad -program
- Businesses joined online group trainings during the Scaleup Launchpad -program

Qualitative Outcomes:

- Overall, the program's approach was good and received good feedback. Participants were particularly satisfied with the quality, collaboration with other companies, mentoring and networks created.

Lessons learned

- The content of the program implementation was analyzed during the program and activities were changed to serve companies better. For example, helpdesk operations were discontinued and mentoring was developed.

Evaluation Methods:

The project evaluates its impact by tracking the number of participating businesses that achieve scaleup status during or shortly after the programme.

A company is considered to have reached scaleup status when it fulfils at least one of the following measurable criteria:

1. Attraction of Equity-Based Investment
The company successfully raises new equity funding from private or institutional investors to support its growth and expansion.
2. Team Expansion
The company strengthens its organisational capacity by recruiting at least one key employee (e.g., senior manager, business developer, or technical lead) who contributes directly to the scaling process.
3. Entry into a New Market Area
The company secures a new customer, pilot project, or partnership in a new geographical market through a signed sales or collaboration agreement (e.g., Memorandum of Understanding – MoU, or Memorandum of Agreement – MoA).

These indicators collectively captured tangible evidence of business growth, market expansion, and enhanced investment readiness among participating scaleups.

6. Lessons learned and the feedback

Lessons learned

Following the completion of the first Scaleup Programme under the Scaleup Launchpad project, partners reflected on key lessons to improve future programme delivery and enhance participant engagement. The insights below summarise practical improvements in mentoring, communication, company engagement, and programme management.

1. Strengthening the Mentoring Process

Project partners learned the importance of actively promoting mentoring opportunities to ensure full utilisation of available hours. Without proactive communication and encouragement, mentoring hours tended to remain unused.

To address this, partners established a WhatsApp group connecting companies, mentors, and project partners. The purpose of this group was to facilitate direct communication, allowing companies to easily reach out for guidance or mentoring support related to specific challenges or development needs. This approach made the mentoring process more dynamic, responsive, and accessible.

2. Expanding and enriching Tuesday Talks

The Tuesday Talks webinar series was opened to a broader audience beyond programme participants, attracting external companies. This has enriched the discussions by introducing more diverse perspectives and experiences.

To increase relevance, participating companies were invited to propose discussion topics based on their interests and needs. This co-creation approach has led to higher engagement and ensured that webinar content remains practical and impactful.

3. Building stronger relationships through early engagement

Meeting participating companies face-to-face at the beginning of the programme was proven crucial for establishing trust and creating a closer working relationship.

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These early interactions strengthened cooperation and made it easier to engage companies in subsequent activities such as mentoring, workshops, and events.

4. Enhancing communication through regular check-ins

Introducing regular meetings (every 5–6 weeks) with participating companies had multiple benefits. These sessions provided an opportunity to:

- Demonstrate the project's ongoing commitment to each company's progress
- Monitor development and achievements toward roadmap goals
- Identify challenges early and react promptly with targeted support

Additionally, these regular check-ins served as an effective platform to promote upcoming activities, such as cross-border workshops and Tuesday Talks, and to remind companies of available services. This systematic communication approach has increased participation, strengthened accountability, and improved overall programme outcomes.

Feedback from the companies

Below are examples of feedback provided by companies.

Program and workshops:

- Good presentations at the workshop
- Great community vibe and real life experiences
- Great talks, location and most importantly peer to peer chats
- Great lecturers
- Super inspiring presentations
- Valuable contacts for a research program that was relevant for us.

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- Great setup to get to know the companies
- Very insightful conversations with other founders and staff
- I really enjoyed that you included people from such different fields - true professionals. The whole event was inspiring, and the cherry on top was having the other event running simultaneously with an afterparty, excellent.
- Good presentations at the workshop
- Good experience.

Hippometer tool experience:

- Although we're not the typical target group for this tool due to our small company size, it drew attention to the right things and we even adjusted the equity distribution in our company as a result.
- It was somewhat valuable, did not bring anything super new insight to us
- Not all parts of it were relevant, but I understand this is dependent on the specific case. Great feedback on company alignment.
- Not raising funding and small team (just me at the start) made it so that my company was not a good fit for it.
- Eventhough the Hippometer tool is a bit heavy, it is very good tool to make it more visible where we are at and how people inside the organization see the status quo. Fruitfull discussions

Mentor discussions:

- Great to have possibility for the mentoring hours, valuable mentoring for us
- The chance to work with a mentor long term and develop strategies was very helpful.
- Perhaps these just weren't useful for our stage.
- Very good. We had multiple mentors that we utilized

Tuesday talks:

- I took part multiple times, and this approach really suits me. Big, well-organized workshops are excellent and needed, but learning new mindsets and skills is a process, and in this format it somehow better trains your brain to think freely.
- Interesting topics.

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- They were good

Slush and Final seminar:

- Was nice way to get to together last time and really generous to do it during Slush. Good presentation about Wolt.
- I was left really inspired by Wolt's story! So great to interact with people who know the geography and people and have done something big.
- Great!
- AWESOME! This was the highlight of the project, thank you so much for making it possible for us to attend Slush and the final seminar.
- Nice to be together again
- Very good and nice to see again others!
- Happy to see that all the companies appear to be very happy with the program results

Other open feedback:

- Thank you for your time! It was a very diverse program and I appreciate you giving me this opportunity.
- Good to have all the connections and networking we did.
- The possibility to have mentoring was the most valuable part
- Thank you so much! This program has been a great help to us. Especially helping with intros, Slush, and consulting for the rest of the time. It would be great to continue collaborating with you somehow. Thank you!
- Time well spent. Thank You!
- I got leads in every country when participating in this program so can not ask more. Thanks!!
- Amazing experience overall. I think I probably got life long friends. At least networked with very inspiring people.