

Publishable summary

ExpaMeco (FIWARE Accelerator EuropeanPioneers)

Description of project context and objectives

The main objective of EuropeanPioneers, an acceleration program led by the Berlin-based company builder etventure (Germany) and its four partners Fraunhofer IAIS (Germany, ThoughtBox (Ireland), Weblify (Poland) and F-Secure (Finland), is to support the Future Internet Public Private Partnership Program (FI-PPP) by supporting 25 European start-ups in 4 different business areas in the domain of social connected TV, smart city services, e-learning and pervasive games. This will be achieved through promoting and testing the FIWARE platform in real environments where entrepreneurs are encouraged to use the technology's enablers in their product and test it across prospective users. The start-ups or SMEs receive guidance and mentorship from expert individuals in the digital business or relevant fields. This helps the entrepreneurs strengthen their innovative processes and develop strong business models that will contribute and fortify the growing digital ecosystem in Europe.

In order to achieve the aforementioned goals, EuropeanPioneers addresses specific objectives to harbor a successful FI-PPP ecosystem. To do so EuropeanPioneers follows a four-step-approach with the following targets:

Firstly, strengthen the European web entrepreneur and SME ecosystem in media, education and gaming markets. Moreover, seek the need to shape the competitive position, grow sustainable competitive advantages and support economic growth of SME's. Focus is on SME's that are closely related to vibrant ecosystems and encourage their capability to constantly adapt to market changes through proactive innovation. To achieve this, EuropeanPioneers actively support teams in different business areas. This creates a knowledge-culture throughout the EuropeanPioneers accelerator, which has an impact on the overall European Internet ecosystem.

EuropeanPioneers ensures the quality of output by providing SMEs with business skills in a) identifying (so called) Minimum Viable Products (MVPs), b) constantly iterating business models, and c) running lean start-ups, through coaching activities. This is an important aspect in giving SMEs the tools and resources that will help them maintain future quality assurance, a dimension vital for the future regional entrepreneurial ecosystem. This will be achieved through delivering training and mentoring sessions that are tailored for each start-ups' technical, financial and growth needs. Experienced members of EuropeanPioneers provide the training and mentoring sessions. But crucial parts are external mentors whose experiences and knowledge is valuable and indispensable.

Secondly, EuropeanPioneers identifies 25 SMEs in total from a wide range of different European countries through the execution of two European-wide, fully transparent Open Calls. During the first open call EuropeanPioneers managed to receive applications from 29 different countries, while finally 12 teams from nine different countries have been accepted for the first acceleration round. The first open call was operated transparently, meaning that objectives, formulation, publication and evaluation were systematically structured and – if necessary - accessible for the public at any time – and so will be the second open call starting in March 2015. By selecting a total number of 25 businesses from across Europe, the variety of product and business modeling approaches as well as markets will not be jeopardized. In addition, EuropeanPioneers makes sure to have a constant exchange of executing knowledge and market insights in between the beneficiaries and countries. This already leads to cross-border uptake of FI-PPP technologies and platforms.

Thirdly, leverage different specific and generic FIWARE enablers in order to build innovative, scalable products for four different media-related market domains. By doing so, the project sets out to build on top of cross-border industries (Social connected TV, Smart city services, Pervasive games as well as E-Learning). In addition, the project focuses on fast deployment, innovation, prototyping and rapid user testing in real markets and situations.

And fourthly, ensure large scale testing of the teams' products, developed by testing the Minimum Viable Products based on FI-PPP technology in order to succeed in competitive markets. Web entrepreneurs and SMEs gather feedback on product ideas and prototypes rapidly. Building or improving Minimum Viable Products for all businesses is one major first step carried out during the acceleration program. Constantly iterating those MVPs or beta product versions based on user feedback and executing various iterations is the basis for the upcoming success of those businesses. In accordance with the business models chosen by the accelerated SMEs (e.g. some of the businesses have a business to business focus while others are clearly business to consumer oriented) the products are assessed in appropriate user tests. The tests are operated online as well as in offline sessions, when applicable. etventures' broad experience with user testing, to identify pain points and customer needs, is shared with the SMEs and Web entrepreneurs to help them achieve their goals.

Description of the work performed and main results

Planning Open Calls

For the first open call, starting in September 2014, EuropeanPioneers was aiming to receive a minimum of 100 applications from at least 5 European countries. The 5 best teams were to be selected as beneficiaries of the accelerator program. The first Open Call was published in September 2014 to reach many different entrepreneurs across Europe. It was scheduled right after main startup events concerning entrepreneurship and digital business that took place in Europe (e.g. Pirate Summit, Lange Nacht der Startups...etc.). These events were leveraged as opportunities to promote EuropeanPioneers and the FIWARE technology. Along with setting up the call, an active effort was taken up by EuropeanPioneers and the consortium partners in order to shape the brand's online existence and to maximize the reach to European Entrepreneurs.

A website as well as all common social media pages were set up in order to leave an online footprint. The EuropeanPioneers website involves all information regarding the requirements of the program and the business areas eligible for an application. Additionally, the website includes a direct link to the application platform to facilitate the process for the candidates. As for the social media pages, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn were the targeted platforms due to their popularity amongst entrepreneurs and digital business activists. This allowed EuropeanPioneers to reach the target audience more efficiently and quickly while constantly informing them on the status of the Open Call.

In order to assure a scalable execution of the originally planned three acceleration rounds during two years and to reach as many high quality teams with different nationalities, business models and target markets as possible, EuropeanPioneers asked entrepreneurs to hand in their application on the Website as well as the F6S-platform. Since online questionnaires are the common way for accelerators to request applications in a fast and easy to access process, EuropeanPioneers enabled also an efficient evaluation process to entrepreneurs. Decision on further material that should be included based on previous experiences with that sort of applications (financial plan + declarations of honor are mandatory; other materials such as pitch decks, executive summary, video were optional).

Definition of the basic and specific criteria that the applicants had to meet as requirements for their application were reflective of the ExpaMeco objectives. Those included start-ups that have a promising path where more than one founder is a part of a team. The teams are expected to fill out a financial form where they explain how they intend to spend the grants. Additionally, they are expected to highlight their use of FIWARE in their product by using a minimum of 2 enablers. Furthermore, a layout of the products competitiveness as well as its scalability was requested.

Publishing Open Calls

Marketing and preparation started prior and during publication of the Open Calls. In order to assure the adequate promotion of the project, and to maximize reach of communication, EuropeanPioneers wanted to make sure there was enough activity online and offline in spreading word about the program. This effort took the form of digital campaigns on social media and physical effort in attending events throughout Europe (by EuropeanPioneers and the consortium partners). The communication material used in those efforts emphasized the funding amounts, FIWARE platform and the business areas supported in the program. Throughout, the team at EuropeanPioneers took time to answer questions and reply to e-mails concerning the Open Calls. By keeping communication open with interested applicants, the program is opening doors for a dialogue with entrepreneurs to inquire about the specifics of the program and whether their ideas fit into the business categories. A press release with the program information was sent out announcing the Open Call and encouraging founders and entrepreneurs to apply. The press release was sent to important publications such as Gründerszene and Spiegel among other European online magazine.

Result of Open Call

The result of the first open call exceeded expectations: The original goal of 100 applications was considerably improved by the final number of 265 applications from SMEs in 29 different countries. The surprising success was due to a great performance of all 16 accelerators of the FIWARE acceleration program in Europe, which led to the right momentum and a considerable awareness of FIWARE technology in Europe.

Evaluation and Selection

The evaluation process, nomination of the evaluators and dissemination of applications amongst the evaluators was happening simultaneously as the last week of Open Call was running. The date October 31st marked the closing of EuropeanPioneers' first round of calls, and the beginning of the start-up finalists selection. The evaluation scheme used for the 265 applications included factors which assessed the start-ups against the overall objectives of the project such as innovation, scalability, use of technology and FIWARE and financial planning.

The 1st Round of Evaluation and Pre-Selection of the best 23 applicants was carried out with the support of eight different evaluators, who all signed the declaration of honour: 1. etventure team: Dr. Christian Lüdtkke, Philipp Hermann, Laura Kohler, 2. ThoughtBox Team: Christina Luminea, 3. External advisors: Rolf Zipf (Investor Relations Manager), Thierry Nagellen (FIWARE Expert, Orange), Ayah Halilah (Advisor), Hendrik Fixen (entrepreneur).

The 2nd Round of Evaluation and Final Selection of the best 12 entering the accelerator was initiated by inviting the 23 selected finalists to Berlin to pitch in front of the jury. The jury consisted of: 1. Philipp Herrmann (Founder & CEO - etventure), 2. Dominik Blank (Founder & CEO of POSpulse), and 3. Thierry Nagellen (FIWARE coach – FIWARE IoT chapter leader, Orange).

In the end of the selection day the jury made the final decision during a consensus meeting. Based on their evaluations nine candidates were chosen. Eleven other teams were rejected for different reasons (most of them due to weak FIWARE knowledge, a weak business model or an unclear presentation of their plans for the next eight months). The remaining three teams that had pitched during the selection day were asked to clarify further questions that did not become clear during the pitches. All three teams delivered satisfying information, what led to the invitation of 12 teams for the contract negotiation.

This decision provoked another important decision the EuropeanPioneers team made during this important period of the project: The originally planned number of three open calls and three acceleration rounds during two project years was now reduced to two open calls and two acceleration rounds. This outcome was encourage by the desire to dedicate more project time to the support of the 25 teams in total and to decrease the person months used for promotion of open calls. This decision was approved and supported by the European Commission as the assumed impact on the European Startup Ecosystem and the implementation of FIWARE to real business environments will most probably be increased compared to the original project plan.

The final twelve teams were the following:

	Team	Batch	Industry/Business Area	Location
#1	eloptico	1	e-learning	Denmark
#2	Konnektid	1	e-learning	Netherlands
#3	Livecoding	1	e-learning	Germany
#4	Zylia	1	Pervasive Gaming	Poland
#5	Muuselabs	1	Pervasive Gaming	Belguim
#6	GameGenetics	1	Pervasive Gaming	Germany
#7	TobyRich GmbH	1	Pervasive Gaming	Germany
#8	Avuxi	1	Smart City Services	Spain
#9	Smart Drive	1	Smart City Services	Hungary
#10	3Desk (Peoplegraph)	1	Smart City Services	UK
#11	Appscend	1	Social Connected TV	Romania
#12	We love Cinema	1	Social Connected TV	Ireland

Expected final results and their potential impact and use

To date, EuropeanPioneers is supporting 12 different teams from nine countries and four different business sectors. The investments have been around 200.000 Euros on average – 2,28 Mio. € in total. This investment is tied towards carefully developed milestones based on the 8 months program. Payout is in 4 different tranches. Those teams are undergoing personal remote mentoring sessions with EuropeanPioneers on a weekly basis. The online sessions allow start-ups to make the best out of EuropeanPioneers network with FIWARE experts, investors, business experts and the press. This will give them the direction that they need and will boost their businesses because of the increasing traction their businesses are experiencing. Furthermore, EuropeanPioneers is organizing at least 2

very intense training weeks in Berlin. All teams were physically present in order to meet mentors of the program, deliver and present set milestones for the funding payout, and receive valuable FIWARE deployment support from the consortium partner Fraunhofer IAIS. Further, investors were invited in order strengthen the important connections for potential follow up funding.

Simultaneously, EuropeanPioneers was planning the opening of the second Open call starting March 30th, 2015. The planned projections are to receive around 500 applications, which is twice as much as in the first Open Call. The end of the acceleration program in 2016 will reach all milestones initially set in the proposal. 25 young startups will be benefiting from the technologies offered from the FIWARE platform, in order to make their products better. Also, EuropeanPioneers focuses on supporting the newly born FIWARE use case teams in finding the next investment for their businesses in order to grow them further after the program. That's being not only done by bringing "friendly" investors to the mentoring weeks, but also by planning the final demo day on July 8th in Berlin, where all teams will go on stage and pitch their businesses to around 200 people, of which at least 30% will be investors. A representative of the European Commission will be invited as a keynote speaker for sharing the power of FIWARE with the audience. That event also kicks off the next round of the 2nd Open Call.

EuropeanPioneers will help shaping a streamlined European Internet business, in order to maximize exploitation at a global scale. Innovative business ideas will be supported throughout their whole early-stage life cycle. From shaping of the business idea, through a prototypical implementation carried out on top of an existing implementation infrastructure, towards a go-to-market support enabled by bringing together innovative business ideas with venture capitalists, EuropeanPioneers significantly reduced the entry barrier to the FI-PPP ecosystem. Not only because of the funding that is carefully put into the teams, but also the technological support that is offered. This cleared the way for individual exploitation evolving from the SME projects, driven autonomously by the economic interests of successful graduates. Further, EuropeanPioneers had and still has an enormous impact on the European promotion and generation of a brand for FIWARE technologies. The evolving use cases will be great examples for real businesses built on FIWARE technologies. Those will support the further development of the open source FIWARE ecosystem as well as the adoption of the technologies by further customers in many more countries, since the success stories will be shared constantly and attracted more SMEs to use FIWARE.

More information:

<http://europeanpioneers.eu/en/>