

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS WE.GO.FURTHER

The GFA Startup Learning Expedition 2025

1. About the German-French Academy for the Industry of the Future

The German-French Academy for the Industry of the Future (GFA) is a bilateral initiative created and officialized during the German-French digital conference on October 27, 2015.

The Technical University of Munich (TUM) and the Institute Mines-Télécom (IMT) have been engaged to convert the political wish expressed by both our governments, which is to enhance the competitiveness of our economies, foster French-German cooperation and address the digital transformation of our industry. In order to pursue these objectives, the GFA acts in three areas: research, education and innovation.

On a research level, the Academy has funded 32 TUM & IMT research tandem projects since 2017 with a strong benefit for the ecosystem.

On the education level, the GFA is always on the forefront of innovation and supports a variety of projects like online courses, PhD Schools and workshops as well as hackathons.

In 2023, we began focusing on startups and entrepreneurship at a French-German level, and we continue to advance in this field. This is a logical next step for the GFA with the huge incubator network of IMT on one side and the Startup Incubator, Entrepreneurship Center, and Venture Labs of TUM on the other side. Our second French partner in this project INRIA also has a strong similar background with its INRIA Startup Studio.

2. Context of the Call for Proposals

Industry 4.0 has been gathering steam for several years now, and the startup scene in Europe has been quick to capitalize on this emerging trend. In the last few years, we've seen the emergence of a number of exciting new companies working to develop cutting-edge Industry 4.0 technologies, from innovative robotics and automation solutions to groundbreaking IoT platforms and sophisticated AI and machine learning algorithms. These startups are leveraging the latest advances in digital technology to help businesses streamline their operations, boost their productivity, and stay competitive in an increasingly demanding marketplace.

At the same time, we're also seeing a surge of interest in Industry 4.0 from established companies across a wide range of industries. Many of these businesses are investing heavily in new digital infrastructure and seeking out partnerships with startups to help them stay ahead of the curve. This has created a fertile ecosystem for research and industry.

Overall, it's an exciting time to be involved in the Industry 4.0 startup scene in Europe. With so much innovation and investment pouring into this space, there are plenty of opportunities for ambitious entrepreneurs to make their mark and help shape the future of the digital economy in France and Germany. To help form new fruitful collaborations between startups, researchers and the industry in general, and in perspective of future joint (EU) projects, we created this CfP.

Objectives of the Call for Proposals

We are excited to invite startups incubated or supported by the IMT or TUM ecosystems to apply for the opportunity to participate in a unique learning expedition. This expedition will not only include visits to innovation clusters, industry clients, venture capitalists and startup fairs in France and Germany, but also meetings with researchers and academic experts from our two institutions. This will help the startups to tackle their technological challenges on the one hand, and on the other hand will provide an unparalleled opportunity to gain insights into the industry of the future with all its facets. Moreover, startups will benefit from dedicated networking events and getting in touch with the rich ecosystems.

We are specifically seeking innovative and forward-thinking startups that are working in the field of Industry 4.0. This may include areas such as data science and AI, automation, robotics, cybersecurity, Industrial IoT, sustainable manufacturing, and circular economy.

If you are a startup supported by IMT incubators or TUM Venture Labs, or come from the ecosystem of these two institutions, and you are passionate about driving change in the future of industry, we encourage you to apply. This is your chance to gain valuable knowledge, connect with like-minded entrepreneurs, and take your business to the next level.

We look forward to reviewing your proposals and can't wait to embark on this exciting journey together!

3. Goals of the Learning Expedition (value proposition)

The goals for a learning expedition for startups are multifaceted and encompass the range of activities mentioned in our program. One key aim is to expand cross-border development and business for startups, which can be achieved by meeting potential clients and project partners from the local ecosystems. This will help the startups to establish themselves in new markets and expand.

Another important goal is to multiply the startups' networks by meeting the right partners. For this reason, we give the startups the opportunity to meet with entrepreneurs, industry partners and academic institutions (researchers) who can offer high-demanded talented experts, valuable connections and insights. By building a strong network, startups can enhance their reputation, find new collaborators, learn how to "soft-land" and unlock new funding opportunities.

In addition to these external objectives, our learning expedition also focuses on internal development. Specifically, the startups will have the chance to meet academic experts from our founding institutions IMT and TUM, who can offer insights and guidance on the latest technological developments in the field of Industry of the Future. These experts can help startups to identify innovative solutions to complex problems, refine their products and services, and stay ahead of the competition.

Overall, this learning expedition aims to expand the horizons of the startups, build new relationships, and enhance their knowledge and expertise.

4. Program of the Learning Expedition

LEARNING EXPEDITION PARIS (FRANCE)

Part 1 - June 10th, 2025

Tailored local ecosystem visits (1 day)

Station F (The largest incubator in the world)

AHK & BusinessFrance
(The public investment bank)

Venture Vision and VC Reverse pitch
(Industrya, IRIS Capital, etc)

Industry meetings
(Airbus, ArianeGroup, Dassault Systèmes,
etc)

Expert meetings
(Researchers and incubation experts from
IMT)

LEARNING EXPEDITION MUNICH (GERMANY)

Part 1 - Sep 29 - Oct 1, 2025

Bits & Pretzels

The Founders festival (Sept. 29 - Oktober 1,
2025)

2 Full Days on the fair
(2 all-access passes for fair and side events)

1 Day Oktoberfest, Table Captain networking

Side events:
Afterwork with Industry

Part 2 - June 11 - 14, 2025

VivaTechnology

Pitch slots on the stage of the French-German
TechLab, the largest startup fair in Europe
(May 22-25, 2024)

4 Full Days on the startup fair
(2 all-access passes for fair and side events)

1 exposition booth for 1 day
on the French-German Tech Lab

Side events:
to be detailed

Part 2 - Oct 2, 2025

Tailored local ecosystem visit

**TUM VentureLabs, UnternehmerTUM &
partners**
(TUM Venture Labs, UnternehmerTUM, Invest
in Bavaria, IHK)

Venture Vision and VC Reverse pitch

Startup elevator pitch

Industry meetings
(Airbus, Siemens, BMW Startup Garage, etc.)

Expert meetings
(Researchers and incubation experts from
TUM)

5. Technological scope of the startups

Startups operating in any of the following areas from Industry 4.0 are welcome to apply:

- Energy transition
 - Nuclear Energy, Sustainable energy,
 - Energy storage (batteries)
 - ...
- New materials
 - Additive Manufacturing
 - Nanomaterials
 - Smart Materials
 - ...
- Industry 4.0
 - AI & ML
 - AI & Data Analytics in Health Care
 - AR/VR
 - Data Spaces & Data sharing
 - Data analytics
 - Circular economy
 - Cybersecurity
 - Green manufacturing
 - IoT
 - Re-manufacturing
 - Smart manufacturing
 - Supply chain
 - 5G and future networks
 - ...

While startups from all Industry 4.0 domains are welcome, we particularly encourage cybersecurity startups to apply as we aim to strengthen our efforts in this critical field.

If your focus area might not fit into this not-exhaustive list, please feel free to contact us anyway to discuss in further detail!

6. Profile of the eligible startups

The proposals will be reviewed by a jury of experts from the TUM Venture Labs and faculties, and the IMT Incubator Network. The following points will be taken into consideration for the selection:

- Startup related to Industry 4.0 solutions,
- The startup needs to have a legal entity,
- Level of innovation of the solutions or products developed by the startup,
- Maturity level of the startup: Pre-Seed, Seed, etc.,
- Wish to learn more about foreign ecosystems and wish to expand to foreign markets,
- Roadmap for expanding their operations and development in France or Germany.

7. Funding

The maximal allocated funding per startup from IMT and TUM is **1.500€**. The funding is allocated for a period of **6 months** and will cover **travel and accommodation expenditures** for the learning expedition in the partner country ecosystem.

The participation costs such as entry tickets will be taken in charge by the GFA additionally. Please note that it is not possible for startups to be supported by different institutions (double funding is not allowed).

Startups that already participated in the previous editions of the GFA Learning Expedition cannot apply but are invited to get in touch with the 2025 startup delegation during the networking events in Paris (June) and Munich (October).

8. Framework of the Proposals

The proposals should be submitted in accordance with the template added in the appendix of this document.

The final proposals must be sent by **Friday, March 14th at noon (12 pm)**, by e-mail to:

- paul-guilhem.meunier@imt.fr
- olivia.pahl@imt.fr
- axel.honsdorf@tum.de

Notifications of selection will be sent beginning April 2024.

9. Contact

Please contact the project managers of the GFA if you need any further information:

- Paul-Guilhem Meunier: paul-guilhem.meunier@imt.fr
- Olivia Pahl: olivia.pahl@imt.fr
- Axel Honsdorf: axel.honsdorf@tum.de