

OPPORTUNITY: Space technology start-ups are invited to apply for the incubation programme



Latvian space technology start-ups can apply for the European Space Agency Business Incubation Centre "ESA BIC Latvia" **incubation programme**. The programme will support 12 start-ups over the next five years with €60,000 each in funding, mentoring, advice and other support.

To apply for the incubation programme, a minimum product and a clear vision of the market strategy are required. Evaluation meetings are held twice a year, but applications are accepted at any time. The next evaluation meeting is scheduled for the summer.

Last year, Latvia joined the agency's community of business incubation centres with the opening of the European Space Agency's Business Incubation Centre "ESA BIC Latvia", wrote Labs of Latvia. The incubator is managed and implemented in Latvia by Komerģializācijas reaktors, which won a public tender launched by the European Space Agency.

"With the launch of ESA BIC Latvia, Latvia will join the elite of the European space ecosystem. This milestone gives our start-ups access to a world-class platform for growth and innovation," said **Nikolajs Adamovičs**, Founder and Chairman of the Board of Commercialisation Reactor.

Lev Lapkis, Head of ESA BIC Latvia, said that the Centre's mission is to build a sustainable space startup community, positioning Latvia as a science-based economy with a strong focus on the space industry. **"We believe that this can be achieved by systematically supporting the creation of new and globally positioned companies. For example, it is not necessary to immediately think about how to launch rockets or build satellites; there is a market demand for new materials and components, services for space missions, and the use of satellite data to boost the economy,"** explains L. Lapkis.

Earlier, Angelina Bekasova, Senior Expert on Space and Innovation Policy at the Ministry of Economy, stressed that participation in this project means that new companies will be born in Latvia, which will create jobs, pay taxes and export their services and products. Referring to data from the European Space Agency, she said that every euro invested in space programmes attracts an additional €2.8 in investment, while direct and indirect revenues amount to €7.2, of which 49% are exports.

"Space may look like a fashionable thing, but it is an important and fast-growing part of the economy that will only grow in the future. Timely support for the development of the space industry, such as involvement in the European Space Agency's network of Business Incubation Centres, allows us to ride the train that develops space technologies, rather than at some point just watching others on that train go past us and trying to chase after us," said Ms Bekasova.

The European Space Agency's Business Incubation Centres have been operating for more than 20 years, but the opportunity to set up such a centre in Latvia has only recently opened up. First, Latvia had to become an Associate Member of the European Space Agency, which happened in 2020. In 2023, the European Space Agency, at the request of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Economy, launched a tender with the possibility to open the European Space Agency Business Incubation Centre "ESA BIC Latvia".

Over the last 20 years, the European Space Agency's Business Incubation Centres have helped develop more than 1 700 start-ups.

Apply now and take your ideas to new heights in space: esabic.lv

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