

## WHAT IS STARTECH

StarTech is a three-year project for supporting innovation and digital transformation within Serbian economy, implemented by NALED and financed by Philip Morris in Serbia. The project aims to accelerate the growth of Serbian businesses and foster transformation from a traditional to a digital economy by providing support in terms of grants and expertise, improving the conditions for innovative entrepreneurship and promoting Serbian innovative businesses. StarTech is also the largest development project in Serbia entirely financed by a private company.

StarTech project is being implemented in cooperation with the Government of Serbia, and in line with the guidelines of Advisory Board, involving the representatives of Philip Morris in Serbia, NALED, Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Finance, National Public Policy Secretariat and the "Digital Serbia" initiative.

## THREE PILLARS OF STARTECH PROJECT



DIRECT FINANCIAL  
AND EXPERT SUPPORT  
TO SERBIAN BUSINESSES



IMPROVING THE CONDITIONS  
FOR DEVELOPING INNOVATIONS  
AND A DIGITAL ECONOMY



PROMOTING INNOVATIONS,  
INNOVATORS AND SERBIA AS  
AN INVESTMENT DESTINATION

### SUPPORTING INNOVATIVE BUSINESSES

The project provides an opportunity to domestic SMEs and start-up teams to apply, independently or in cooperation with the academia and research centers, for grants ranging from 15.000\$ to 100.000\$ to invest in digital transformation of their business, and research and development of innovative products and services.

The three annual open calls will support around 100 beneficiaries, awarding grants in total value of around 3,000,000\$. Along with financial support, grantees will also gain vouchers for up to 3,000 hours of expert support on topics such as patent registration, compliance with regulations, export and international markets, new technologies and similar services. With StarTech support, selected beneficiaries will also have the opportunity to take part in international conferences and expos to present their products or ensure additional funding sources.

### COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT FOR GRANT BENEFICIARIES

Grants for innovation  
and digital transformation

Mentor support and access to  
consulting services for business  
development (how to manage  
export, how to register patents)  
through a voucher program

Taking part at international  
conferences and expos to  
present their projects and  
manage additional fundraising

## OVERVIEW OF THE FIRST ANNUAL CALL



### SUBMITTED APPLICATIONS – FACTS & FIGURES

- 229 applications – more than 80% for innovations, around 2% for digital transformation, and around 15% for both
- More than 50% applications aim for entry into international markets
- There were 73 applications from informal start-up teams
- There were 45 applications submitted by women – around 20% of the total number
- 65% of all applications originated from three cities – Belgrade, Novi Sad and Niš
- The dominant sectors are IT (40% of all applications), food and electronic industries

### AWARDED PROJECTS – FACTS & FIGURES

- Approximately 1.000.000\$ has been allocated for 29 projects selected by the Grants Committee, of which 27 bring specific innovations
- Support was provided to creative ideas such as eco-friendly packaging, a sensor for monitoring babies' body temperature, supplements for people with diabetes, technologies for reducing safety risk on oil platforms, various AI tools that determine the market value of vehicles, or help with the selection of the best job candidates etc.
- 16 awarded projects are led by, or include women in their project teams, 6 projects are led by youth, and 5 are export-oriented

Grants between 50,000\$ to 100,000\$ were won by companies developing a digital AI software for winemakers, a supplement for eliminating Helicobacter pylori, a software for improving the efficiency of doing business and a mobile scanner for emergency vehicles.



## IMPROVING THE CONDITIONS FOR INNOVATIONS AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

With the aim of encouraging dialogue, launching analytics-based reforms and coordinating the initiatives from the public, private and civil sector, the project established an Innovation Policy Lab. With business and citizens' opinion survey, situational analyses, public campaign such as the "Innovations Month" and by engaging a broad community into a dialogue – the Lab works on mapping the challenges and identifying recommendations (Grey Book of Innovation) to improve the conditions for innovations and digital transformation of economy.

The Lab also provides contribution for the creation of the national Start-up Ecosystem Development Strategy, and supports the work of the Government of Serbia's Council for Digital Economy, established in September 2021 upon initiative by StarTech, with the Prime Minister's support.

### LAB'S FOCUS TOPICS

- Digitalization of business – the project has ensured support for the introduction of eInvoicing, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, for organizing training and mentoring for SMEs
- Future mobility – the project initiated dialogue and brought together a community of relevant experts za planning regulations related to electric and autonomous vehicles and flying objects
- Removing administrative obstacles – unifying the payment of taxes and contributions for entrepreneurs into a single account, simplifying the customs procedure for import and export of materials relevant for R&D (samples, hardware components etc.)
- Bringing together the academia and the business community – creation of online platform to support applied academic research
- Artificial intelligence – opening and re-use of data managed by the public and private sector, relevant for AI development
- Financing innovation – identifying and creating conditions for optimal use of alternative funding sources for innovations

Introducing eInvoices will generate millions in savings for administrative and operational expenses for businesses in Serbia, and ensure more efficient control and tax collection for the state.





## STARTECH FACTS AND FIGURES

PROJECT VALUE: 5.000.000\$

**5M \$**

BENEFICIARIES: start-ups and SMEs



DURATION: 2020. – 2023.



Program is implemented by NALED with the financial support of Philip Morris in Serbia and in cooperation with the Government of Serbia

### WHY STARTECH: INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION STATUS IN SERBIA

- In 2021, Serbia was ranked 54th among 132 countries in the Global Innovation Index
- Within Europe, Serbia is around the bottom of the list – its best rank is in the area of market sophistication, and the poorest relates to research and development and access to finance
- In the EU, private sector's share in financing research and development is 59%, compared to only 10% in Serbia. This results in a major gap in overall R&D investments: 0.92% GDP in Serbia compared to 2.18% in the EU
- Innovators are mostly large companies, with small and medium enterprises lagging behind
- Lack of funding sources, as well as mentor and expert support, for expansion to international markets

*„StarTech project is fully in line with the Government of Serbia priorities of ensuring strong economic growth and well-paid job creation through digitalization and encouraging economic activities based on knowledge, creativity, innovation and new technologies.“*

*Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of Serbia*

*„Since we, ourselves, relying on scientific research, transformed from a traditional-technology into a modern-tech company, we are strongly aware of the significance of innovation and we seek to support Serbia's entrepreneurs and SMEs to take the same path.“*

*Aleksandar Jakovljević, General Manager for South East Europe, Philip Morris*

*„Our mission was more than clear – to map and financially support domestic small businesses, that seek to digitalize their work, develop innovative products and services, achieve accelerated growth and start conquering the domestic and global markets.“*

*Violeta Jovanović, NALED Executive Director*

[startech.org.rs](http://startech.org.rs)

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# INNOVATION AIMING FOR STARS

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