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Heidelberg Technology Park

Start-up support for life sciences companies

How can scientists turn their know-how into marketable products and services and thereby provide society with real added value? In addition to solid financing, start-up companies need a suitable infrastructure and a dense network of partners for exchanging expertise to help them get off to a good start when it comes to setting up a business. The Heidelberg Technology Park offers company founders in the life sciences and other high-tech industries exactly these success factors. This is what has made the technology park a recognised centre for innovation.

Successful acquisition of financial resources is not the only contributor to the success of a start-up company. New companies also need room to expand, a network to pursue fruitful cooperation and the right business tools to grow. Such prerequisites exist in one of Baden-Württemberg's numerous technology parks: the Heidelberg Technology Park, founded in 1984 and the first life sciences park in Germany.

Space for something new



The Heidelberg Technology Park is located on the campus of the University of Heidelberg, "Im Neuenheimer Feld".

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Heidelberg is a place where start-ups, small companies, large research institutes and global players form an ecosystem in which internationally outstanding scientists conduct market-oriented research and international cooperation generates new perspectives.

The Heidelberg Technology Park brings together numerous companies and research institutions in the life sciences, pharmaceuticals, medical technology and information technology sectors at six locations in Heidelberg, currently providing 80,000 square metres of laboratory and office space, making it one of the major locations of its kind in Germany.

The Business Development Center (BDC) was officially opened in late 2019. It offers offices, laboratories (up to security level S2), clean room areas, a conference centre and co-working spaces to young companies from the healthcare industry as well as other sectors such as IT.

Artificial intelligence laboratory

The KI-Lab Kurpfalz at the BDC was launched in late December 2019 and is a joint initiative by the Heidelberg Technology



The new Business Development Center (BDC) in Heidelberg was officially opened at the end of September 2019.
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Park and the Baden-Württemberg: Connected e.V. (bwcon GmbH) business initiative. KI-Lab is supported with funds from the Baden-Württemberg government. Its aim is to provide small and medium-sized companies with low-threshold access artificial intelligence, which in the future will play an increasing role in our daily lives through the provision of software and hardware resources, amongst other things. "KI-Lab Kurpfalz offers young companies like ours the opportunity to have innovative and future-oriented technologies tested by experts and to discuss the results in detail," says Dr. Christoph Garbe, CEO of HD Vision Systems GmbH, one of the first companies interested in KI-Lab Kurpfalz' offer. "It gives us a solid basis for making decisions about investing in artificial intelligence technologies for producing future products. In addition, KI-Lab can help us establish a network of experts and find people who can help us solve a variety of different issues."

Incubator for path-breaking innovations



The new Business Development Center (BDC) in Heidelberg was officially opened at the end of September 2019.
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The technology park offers company founders more than laboratory and office space and infrastructure. "We see ourselves as a communication platform where we bring partners together and integrate expertise," explains Dr. André Domin, managing director of Technologiepark Heidelberg GmbH. "Young entrepreneurs are given a central contact person who advises them on structural, business and other issues related to setting up a company, be it finding funding and premises, patent applications or networking with market experts, corporations and financiers," adds Dr. Thomas Prexl, head of the start-up support bureau at the Heidelberg Technology Park.

Accelerating life sciences company foundations

In addition to various training and networking events, the technology park also has two accelerator programmes focusing on life sciences and IT (B2B). These are perfect conditions for scientists looking to get their own company off the ground.

The life sciences accelerator programme, which has supported 43 companies in Heidelberg since 2018, consists of three components: a mentoring programme, seminars on current topics and networking with potential investors and partners. "The "Life Science Accelerator Baden-Württemberg" supports participating scientists for a year and is specially tailored to the regulated markets for active ingredients, diagnostics and medical devices," says Prexl. "There are three application dates per year."

PixelBiotech GmbH is one of the companies that is working on gaining access to the German market with the help of Life Science Accelerator Baden-Württemberg: "Here we have the opportunity and the secure conditions to further develop our technologies in a targeted way into affordable and accurate molecular analyses based on single-molecule RNA," said Yong-Sheng Cheng, CEO and co-founder of PixelBiotech. "This enables us to offer precise, universal, affordable and accessible gene expression analyses."

Promoting good team structures

Mentors involved in the scheme also emphasise the importance of advising founders on their team structure. "Most young start-up teams are not strategically positioned," notes Domin. "The teams often consist of members of a research group who have similar technical knowledge." Domin and his colleagues help scientists who are thinking of starting a company acquire the necessary know-how. This includes realistically assessing the maturity level and market value of their own ideas. The mentors are also available to discuss other issues with the founders. "A team where the members have a broad range of skills from the areas of finance, science, patenting and communication is well positioned," says Domin. "This makes it easier to keep the company steady in times of crisis because tasks and responsibilities can be clearly allocated."

Article

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Further information

- Healthcare industry in Baden-Württemberg - infrastructure
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