



Press release
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Institut Mines-Télécom and the University of Pretoria launch their cross-acceleration programme between France and South Africa for start-ups

This acceleration programme will give the sprelected start-ups the opportunity to expand into new international markets

Institut Mines-Télécom (IMT) and TuksNovation, the technology business incubator at the University of Pretoria (UP), are launching the first edition of the "Cross- Acceleration Exchange Programme". This competition is open to all start-ups from IMT incubators and their partners, and will provide them with an opportunity to test and validate their business models for international expansion in the fast-growing African tech market.

This exchange programme between France and South Africa is intended for mature start-ups that already conduct business in their country and have customers and revenue demonstrating the technology's ability to meet market demands. The aim is to give these start-ups the opportunity to test, adjust and optimize their business models and solutions for international expansion. For two months, teams from both incubators will contribute their expertise to support entrepreneurs by facilitating local market access and helping them build partnerships and even sign their first contracts.

Start-up exchange between the two continents

On the French side, the start-ups will be supported by Euratechnologies, one of the top three accelerators in Europe and a partner of IMT Lille Douai via its incubator. On the South African side, they will be supported by TuksNovation, which specializes in business development for tech companies. This incubator is part of an ecosystem built around innovation which brings together scientific and technological innovators, businesses and research professors. Anton Botha, Manager of TuksNovation says, *"Internationalisation opens up global opportunity – knowing how to do business internationally, acquiring global marketing skills and understanding global business culture."*

Today, investors are very confident about growth prospects for the African continent and are stepping up their participation in funding rounds. In this tech landscape, South Africa is positioned as a major player on the continent, with an active financial market, an investment culture and innovation strongly supported by public authorities.

Programme funded with the French Embassy



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The French Embassy in South Africa is supporting this cooperation project by providing funding.

According to Aurélien Lechevallier, the French ambassador: "*This programme represents a new step in establishing closer ties between French and South African innovation ecosystems, and demonstrates the opportunities for cooperation between our two countries. It supports the internationalization of young, innovative research-based companies, an important condition for their growth and business development. It reminds us of the role higher education and research can play in promoting economic growth and underscores the importance of the link between science and innovation. The French Embassy is naturally happy and proud to work with these two prestigious institutions through this program.*"

A cooperative project initiated by IMT Lille Douai



IMT Lille Douai
École Mines-Télécom
IMT-Université de Lille

This partnership builds on a longstanding collaboration between UP and IMT Lille Douai, which began in 2015. After a first exchange, two research professors worked together on digital materials engineering.

This acceleration programme is part of a broader partnership between IMT and UP for academic and scientific collaboration.

Based on international experience and regular interaction between the two organizations, knowledge will be gained in the fields of education, research, innovation, business incubation and bringing technology to market. For IMT, the project will be led by Patrick Pizette, research professor at IMT Lille Douai.

Patrick Duvaut, Director of Innovation at Institut Mines-Télécom says: "*The cross acceleration programme is a unique win-win opportunity for all its stakeholders. The programme behaves as a genuine value-booster for start-ups that leverages foreign market growth. Larger revenues and scale-up fundraising are amongst the short-term success indicators for a selected start-up. While the French Embassy in South Africa fully supports the first edition, viewed as a proof of concept (limited to one start-up from each country), a sustainable model will help the programme to scale up. IMT and IMT Lille-Douai are very proud to have TuksNovation as a partner.*"

Odile Gauthier, Executive Director of Institut Mines-Télécom says: "*As an academic leader that supports innovation and business development, we would like to see more international partnerships of this kind, which provide more development and mobility opportunities for our incubated start-ups and our researchers. Our national network of eight incubators established throughout France fosters technological entrepreneurship and we look forward to connecting with the Future Africa* campus through this cross-acceleration programme that will serve both countries.*"

Tawana Kupe, Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor of the University of Pretoria says: "*This cross-collaborative exchange programme between TuksNovation and IMT will bring much-needed opportunities to allow the growth and development of local businesses. Most importantly, it will expose our entrepreneurs to a larger international market, thus showcasing to France and the world that South Africa— and by extension Africa— is open for business. We are also delighted to see the partnership between UP and IMT growing from strength to strength.*"

Programme conditions

The start-ups have until 30 April to apply on the IMT website. They must belong to the network of IMT incubators or its partners.

Projects will be assessed based on:

- their appropriateness
- the innovative nature of the technology or service offered
- their economic viability and potential for job creation
- access to the target market via their first customers and revenue
- their technological dimension
- their growth potential
- team organization

For more information about the programme: <https://www.imt.fr/programme-dechange-cross-acceleration>

* *Future Africa* : <https://www.future.africa/>

About IMT www.imt.fr

Institut Mines-Télécom is a public higher education and research institution under the aegis of the French Ministry for the Economy, Industry and Digital Affairs, which groups together 8 graduate schools, 2 subsidiaries and a network of strategic and affiliated partners. Its activities in the fields of engineering sciences and digital technology support the education of engineers and managers, partnership-based research, innovation and economic development. Always attentive to the economic world, IMT combines strong academic and scientific legitimacy, close corporate relations and strategic positioning in the key transformations of the 21st century: digital technology, industry, energy and ecology, and education. IMT is a founding member of the Alliance for the Industry of the Future and co-founder of the Franco-German Academy for the Industry of the Future with Technische Universität München (TUM). It is recognized by 2 Carnot Institute accreditations for the quality of its partner-based research. Each year, IMT trains over 12000 students, enters into nearly 70 million research contracts, and hosts some 100 start-ups in its incubators.



About The University of Pretoria www.up.ac.za

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on the Hatfield Campus, Pretoria. This 113-year-old institution is also the largest producer of research in South Africa. Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only university in the country that has a Faculty of Veterinary Science which is ranked top in Africa, and overall has 120 academic departments, as well as 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 55 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes.

UP is one of the top five universities in South Africa, according to the 2019-2020 rankings by the Center for World University Rankings. It is also ranked among the top 100 universities worldwide in three fields of study (veterinary science, theology and law), and among the top 1% in eight fields of study (agricultural sciences, clinical medicine, engineering, environment/ecology, immunology, microbiology, plant and animal sciences and social sciences).

In May 2020, the annual UK Financial Times Executive Education Rankings once again ranked GIBS as the top South African and African business school. The University also has an extensive community engagement programme with approximately 33 000 students involved in community upliftment. Furthermore, UP is building considerable capacities and strengths for the Fourth Industrial Revolution by preparing students for the world beyond university and offering work-readiness and entrepreneurship training to its students.

As one of South Africa's research-intensive universities, UP launched the Future Africa Campus in March 2019 as a hub for inter- and transdisciplinary research networks within UP and the global research community to maximise 4IR innovation and address the challenges and stresses our continent and world is facing. In addition UP also launched the Javett Art Centre in September 2019 as a driver of transdisciplinary research development between the Humanities and other faculties. In November 2020, UP launched Engineering 4.0 as a hub not only for Smart Cities and Transport, but also to link the vast resources in technology and data sciences to other faculties via Future Africa. These initiatives are stimulating new thinking at the frontier of 'science for transformation'. For more information, go to www.up.ac.za

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