

PRESS RELEASE

PODIM 2025 once again impressed as a hub of innovative ideas, startups, investors, and business opportunities

Maribor, May 14, 2025 – The 45th PODIM Conference, one of the most influential startup and technology events in the Alpe-Adria region and the Western Balkans, taking place from May 12 to 14 in Maribor, once again gathered the crème de la crème of the startup and tech world. The three-day event attracted over 1,000 participants from around the globe, 58 venture capital funds and other types of private investors—who are estimated to manage investment funds worth more than €8.2 billion earmarked for investing in startups—188 startups from 23 countries, more than 80 speakers from all over the world, and many successful entrepreneurs. In addition to a rich program, more than 1,300 one-on-one meetings were held at the event. Yesterday's final event of the Podim Pitching Competition also brought a winner – the startup [infrared.city](#) from Austria.

As **Matej Rus**, PODIM Director, stated: *"PODIM is not just a conference – it is becoming the central meeting point for ambitious founders, experienced investors, and innovative companies."*

It is a platform that fosters the development of the startup ecosystem in the Alpe-Adria and Western Balkans region and creates a **launchpad for successful entrepreneurial stories and bold innovative ideas**, while also strengthening connections between startup companies and large corporations that are open to startup collaboration.

This year's edition marks an important strategic milestone, as Silicon Gardens, a prominent venture capital firm led by entrepreneurs who have scaled and sold their own companies, joins as a co-organizer. The shared vision is clear: to elevate PODIM into a globally recognized platform that connects the region's most promising startups with top-tier international investors.

On this occasion, **Maja Tomanič Vidovič**, Director of the Slovenian Enterprise Fund shared about challenges and potential of the region: *"Europe is at the crossroads - innovation is no longer a choice, but a condition for sovereignty. The Slovenian Enterprise Fund is responding to this challenge by supporting startups through grants, mentoring and strategic partnerships. With the recent launch of the Slovenian Technology Fund, it opens the door to new sources of venture capital for disruptive and globally oriented companies. Events such as PODIM - one of the most influential startup and technology events in the region, play a key role in connecting these companies with investors, knowledge and international markets. Events like these are the meeting point for the vision, courage and capital that Europe needs for its future development. If Europe wants to lead, it must support those who dare to build the future. Let us do everything we can to ensure that the next generation of winners will be born not in spite of Europe, but because of it."*

Gregor Rebolj, Partner at Silicon Gardens, shared his insights about the state of the region, *"According to the results of the latest The State of Adria Tech survey, investments in technology companies in the whole Alpe-Adria region increased in 2024, but on the other hand the differences between countries are large and the situation is far from good, which shows that we don't have enough ambitious companies. It seems that we need to raise our ambitions and targets for what we want to build. I am not just referring to the size of a company, but, above all, the impact that a company or a product has. I have learnt over my lifetime that if you associate with more ambitious people, you become more ambitious yourself. And with*

this event, we want to bring as many ambitious people as possible to one place, so that as many people as possible get "infected" by it. That's the only way we'll be able to lift up the whole ecosystem."

€8.2 billion of venture capital in one place

This year again, Podim attracted a large number of investors. The conference welcomed 58 venture capital funds and other types of private investors from the region, who are estimated to manage investment funds worth more than €8.2 billion. Among them are South Central Ventures, Fil Rouge Capital, Vesna VC, TechAngels, Feelsgood, Elevator Ventures, Speedinvest, and others, all looking for opportunities to invest in startups. More than 120 investors are available for meetings and discussions with the 188 startups attending the conference, who in turn are seeking investment to grow their businesses.

While attending this year's Podim, **Tatjana Zabusu Mikuž**, partner at South Central Ventures, active primarily in the Balkans, said: *"The SCV has been working with Podim for over a decade. For us it is definitely one of the most important events that gives us the opportunity to meet colleagues from all over the region in one place. Above all, we get to meet a whole range of entrepreneurs from CEE and the Balkans in person over a few days. There are several interesting investment opportunities among the companies here, which we are really excited about. We will certainly continue our discussions with some of the companies we have met."*

More than 1,300 pre-scheduled one-on-one meetings

Beyond the exchange of knowledge and experience, Podim is also the central event for networking and creating new collaborations and business opportunities. To support this purpose, more than 1,300 pre-arranged one-on-one meetings are being held in the "Podim Deal Room", connecting startup companies, investors, and business professionals from various corporations as well as small and medium-sized enterprises.

"Podim continues to be one of the most relevant and energetic events for discovering high-potential startups in the CEE region. It consistently brings together ambitious founders, serious investors, and decision-makers who get things done. The Deal Room meetings are high-quality and focused — we've already spotted several promising teams this year. Events like Podim are essential for building real investment pipelines and strengthening the regional ecosystem," said **Julien Coustaury** from Fil Rouge Capital.

Numerous established Slovenian and international companies open to collaboration with startups are also participating in the conference, including the global company Infineon Technologies. Company representative **Andreas Muehlberger** stated: *"Podim Conference is a fantastic event to connect to deep tech startups, offers perfect networking opportunities and gives the stage for lively panel discussions and in-depth exchange within Demo Studio. Therefore, Podim conference fits perfectly to our mission: Infineon Technologies drives innovation together with the best deep tech startups worldwide."*

The best startup of Podim pitching competition crowned today

The mission of the conference is also to highlight the most promising startups from the region, help them gain greater visibility, and connect them with global investors and potential business partners. In line with this goal, Podim also hosts a **traditional Podim Pitching Competition alongside a rich program**. For many

startups, reaching the finals of the competition has led to increased visibility among investors, faster meeting arrangements, and consequently, accelerated growth.

From among 141 of the most ambitious startups from 23 countries, a strict investor jury **selected the 10 most promising startups during the online Demo Day** in early May. These startups then competed in the Podim semifinals on Monday for one of the five places in the finals.

Yesterday, the following five of the most promising startups from the region took to the Podim's main stage to compete for the title of the top Podim startup: Iknaio (Austria), infrared.city (Austria), Neubau Energy (Austria and US), Scavenger AI (Austria) and Skillplate (Bulgaria).

The experienced investor jury included many successful names from the international investment and business world, was most impressed by startup **Infrared.city from Austria** which developed an AI-powered platform that delivers real-time climate insights to help architects and planners design sustainable, resilient buildings.

Upon receiving the prestigious title, **Angelos Chronis**, CEO of Infrared.city said: *"I feel really great, but I also feel grateful for the audience and the jury. It's not just my work; it's the work of everybody and I'm mostly thankful to my team. What people don't see when they see these sort of social media posts is that for the last two days we were running around like crazy, trying to catch the investors, trying to be in the marketplace on time, trying to catch up with all the meetings and at the same time listening to all the presentations, which are very interesting. It's my first time at Podim and I'm definitely coming back. What I would advise future founders is that if you're not doing something that you love, don't do it, because you're going to do it 10-12 hours a day."*

The winner of the Podim Pitching Competition earned a spot in **the investor program The Fundraising Bootcamp**, led by angel investor and entrepreneur François Mazoudier, which will provide access to new knowledge, valuable contacts, and support in securing investment. As a cherry on top, the winner will travel with the Podim team to London—Europe's startup capital—for **a three-day Podim London Springboard program**, which includes a series of meetings and opportunities to connect with key players for growing their startup. They will also receive **a legal support package from Nlaw**, a respected law firm with offices in Palo Alto, London, Ljubljana, and Zagreb.

All finalists and semifinalists will also be **rewarded by Infobip**. All semifinalists receive credits for Infobip products worth €10,000, while finalists receive credits for Infobip services worth €15,000.

At the Podim Pitching Competition final event, an additional award was presented to a startup chosen by Podim's partner Infobip. Among the finalists, they selected startup **Skillplate from Bulgaria**, which impressed them the most and will receive €30,000 in Infobip products.

An engaging program with more than 80 speakers

Over the course of two days, participants can attend sessions on two program stages, featuring over 80 speakers. These include **successful entrepreneurs** such as Bernhard Niesner, co-founder of Busuu, which was sold for €385 million; **executives from large corporations** like Unilever and Infineon; **members of the deep tech ecosystem** such as Michael Stucky, Partner at Serpentine Ventures; and **investors** including **Varun Rekhi** from Speedinvest, who stated: *»Podim is one of the best conferences I've been to in terms of the depth and precision of the interactions. The panels are very global in their thinking, yet very targeted.*

And at the same time, every element of how founders, investors and stakeholders interact is very powerful compared to other conferences.” At the same time Rekhi advises to early-stage founders: “keep pushing and don't settle for nothing. Make sure you keep raising the bar for yourself and your team. If you think you need to grow and raise 1 million, push that number to 2 million. It's about how high you can go so that you don't get disappointed with what you've earned.”

More information about the Podim 2025 conference

- **speakers:** <https://podim.org/speakers-2025/>
- **25 game-changing speakers:** <https://podim.org/25-game-changing-speakers-bringing-bold-ideas-to-life-at-podim-2025/>
- **Program of the conference:** <https://podim.org/podim-2025-program/>
- **Program block Builders Stage:** <https://podim.org/builders-stage-b2b-go-to-market-tactics-that-actually-work/>
- **Program block Deep Tech inovacije:** <https://podim.org/deep-tech-collaborative-innovation-at-podim-2025/>
- **Statistics of 188 participating startups in 2025:** <https://podim.org/discover-the-bold-startups-of-podim-2025-and-unlock-collaboration-opportunities/>
- **Partners of the conference:** <https://podim.org/podim-2025-partners/>
- **Photos from the conference:**
https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1sfOjpSpykYfxqlmJ4ESOiZRgoV_23_mc

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Thank you for sharing the information in your media. Thank you for being with us live at Podim. If you need additional materials, please feel free to contact us at any time.

Yours sincerely,

Lea Petrej from the Podim team

We are grateful for the support of our partners.

The event has traditionally been held under the supervision of Start:up Slovenia and co-organised and co-financed by the Slovenian Enterprise Fund, the Ministry of Economy, Tourism and Sport, Silicon Gardens, and with the support of many local and international partners listed [on the website](#).

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