

# Annual report 2024





# Content

|    |                                   |
|----|-----------------------------------|
| 4  | <b>Foreword</b>                   |
| 6  | <b>Overview</b>                   |
| 8  | <b>Startup incubator</b>          |
| 18 | <b>Entrepreneurship education</b> |
| 20 | <b>Community engagement</b>       |

# Foreword

**Brilliant scientists aiming to transform their research findings into products and services capable of addressing pressing challenges across various sectors, talented students interested in entrepreneurship, industry experts and ecosystem partners motivated to support aspiring entrepreneurs, investors seeking exceptional teams solving real-world problems, and innovation enthusiasts – we are proud to count on a growing community that fosters the creation of promising science-driven startups.**

**In 2024, we continued to invest in expanding our stakeholder network, both within the academic environment and in the wider ecosystem, promoting an entrepreneurial culture and strengthening our incubation offering. This report reflects on our activities in three key areas – startup incubation, entrepreneurial education, and community engagement – and provides an overview of the results achieved by our incubated startups.**

From left to right:

**Marco Alberti**  
ICT Coach

**Umberto Bondi**  
Senior Coach

**Anastasia Bedova**  
Community and  
Communication Manager  
and Coach

**Samuele Morales**  
Incubator Coordinator

**Francesco Meli**  
Centre Management  
and Coach

**Tiziana Rosa**  
Life Sciences Coach  
and Project Manager

**Francesco Lurati**  
Director



# Overview

**Through our initiatives and programmes, we support members of the academic community interested in entrepreneurship by building awareness, offering dedicated programmes for different stages of development and project types, and expanding our network.**



Empowering the startups of tomorrow

Transforming ideas into viable business projects is a lengthy process involving important decisions, uncertainty, and numerous ups and downs. Our aim is to be the first point of contact for researchers from both USI and SUPSI seeking to turn their research findings into viable business ventures, as well as for talented and self-driven students with promising business ideas who are motivated to invest time and energy in setting up a startup during their studies.

Over the past few years, we have created a variety of initiatives centred around three key pillars – incubation programme, education, and community – to serve our different target audiences. These initiatives are constantly evolving to match emerging needs, create synergies with the broader ecosystem and enable our team to work closely with members of the academic community, providing targeted support and identifying promising projects at an early stage.

All numbers refer to 2024

Incubation

Supporting entrepreneurial talent

23 startup projects mainly from the ICT and Life Sciences sectors supported through the incubation programme

4.9 in M CHF raised by incubated startups in dilutive and non-dilutive funds

Education

Fostering skills development

167 researchers and students engaged through initiatives organised as part of the Innosuisse Entrepreneurship Training programme

10 USC training sessions on HR, finance, fundraising, governance, strategy, legal and other crucial topics that every founder should master

Community

Facilitating network building

25 events organised to engage with researchers, students, industry professionals, investors and other stakeholders in the innovation ecosystem

56 initial project ideas reviewed by the USC team through the "Desk" service





# Startup incubator

**We support motivated founders in shaping their promising startup projects into scalable ventures capable of attracting investors and clients, with proven traction, structured operations and strong governance.**

**A structured programme for promising university startups**

USI Startup Centre is embedded within the academic environment, supporting early-stage startups originating from USI, SUPSI and affiliated research partners. Therefore, our incubation programme is designed specifically to increase market and investment readiness of high-potential science-driven projects in the pre-seed and seed stage, developed by researchers and students. Whether it is a B2B application, an AI-powered solution, a biotech platform or a medical device, we help transform ideas born in labs and classrooms into viable businesses.

In 2024, ten teams, mostly from the ICT and Life Science sectors, submitted applications to the incubation programme. Following a selection process based on scientific and market criteria, four teams were accepted into the programme. Each team joining the incubation programme is assigned a dedicated startup coach, who designs customised strategic roadmaps and guides them throughout the entire duration of the programme. Every startup journey is unique, and this tailored approach ensures that each project can benefit the most from the programme, based on its current level of development and challenges it faces. To cater for the specific needs of both Life Sciences and ICT startups that constitute the majority of supported projects, the incubation programme has two vertical pathways, led by dedicated coaches. We also work closely with our colleagues from USI Transfer – Technology Transfer Office – as well as with faculties, institutes and several professors, to identify promising projects at an early stage and provide them with the necessary support from the outset.

On October 2nd 2024, at the Incubation Kick-off Pitch #4, the presenting startups for the first time were awarded with the “Incubation Programme Voucher” worth CHF 60,000 that quantifies the in-kind support provided to a single project over two years, which includes a wide range of services and benefits, from strategic coaching and guidance on national and international financial support programmes to connections with industry representatives and investors, from workspace to training, workshops and thematic events as well as, access to a network of specialised external advisors to support business development.

Incubation programme is focused on the following topics:

**Product-market fit**

**Go-to-market strategy**

**Intellectual Property strategy**

**Fundraising**

**Team & governance**

**Setting up operations**

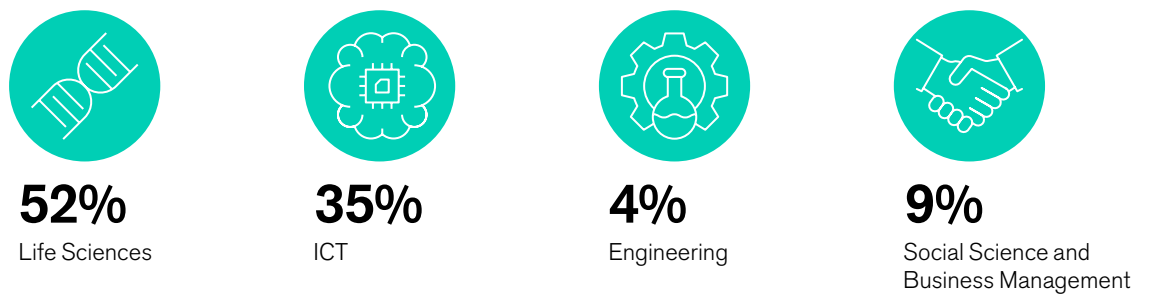
**Communication strategy**



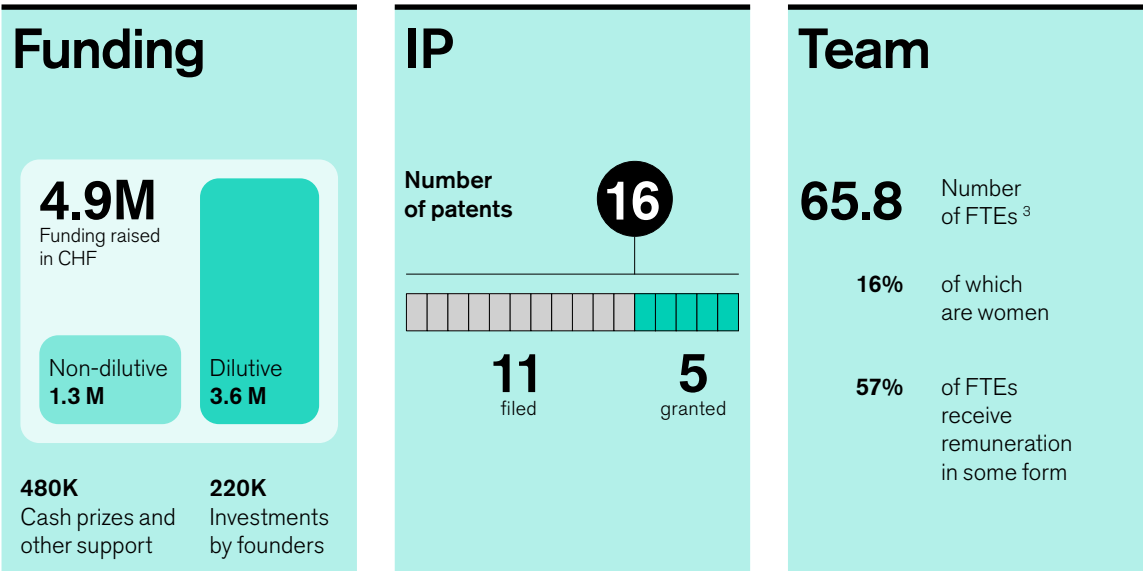
Incubated startups' results

There were 23<sup>1</sup> startup projects in our incubation programme in 2024, with the large majority of them representing the Life Science and ICT sectors. After the transition from generic to science-driven focus, completed in 2023, the number of supported projects is increasing. We admit new projects on a rolling basis, therefore, the participating startups may be in different phases of development - some have concluded the incubation, and others are at the very beginning of their journey.

Sectors



In 2024 incubated startups achieved important results<sup>2</sup>, especially in terms of fundraising, with 11 startups receiving equity investments and 16 benefiting from non-dilutive funding, expanding their teams and protecting and exploiting their intellectual property.



<sup>1</sup> Not all the startups that enter incubation terminate the programme. Those that leave due to the discontinuation of the project or because of other reasons are not considered in the analysis.  
<sup>2</sup> Information is self-reported through our annual standardised survey. The analysis is based on responses from 21 startups, collected in January 2025.  
<sup>3</sup> FTEs refer to the number of team members, including founders, employees, interns, etc.

# Life Sciences startups

A significant number of startups in our programme originate from the Life Sciences sector, reflecting the academic and research activities of USI and affiliated institutes. Based on their specific needs, the main goal during incubation is to align strategic focus with R&D activities and secure the necessary funding to move the project to the next stage.

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## InkVivo Technologies

Incubation



**InkVivo** develops a 3D advanced drug delivery platform to address one of the biggest challenges of current medications: the temporal release of active ingredients. The delivery system can be fabricated to meet specific requirements based on clinical challenges and pharmaceutical needs, and allows for the reformulation of existing molecules, extending their lifecycle.

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🔗 [inkvivo.tech](http://inkvivo.tech)

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## Go Healthy & Co

Incubation



**Go Healthy** is a platform that uses smartphone data and the results of clinical questionnaires to build digital mental health profiles. By applying the concept of Digital Phenotype, it supports continuous monitoring and therapy efficacy evaluation, helping clinicians improve triage, diagnosis accuracy, and treatment outcomes.

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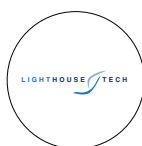
🔗 [gohealthyandco.com](http://gohealthyandco.com)

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## Lighthouse Tech

Alumni



**Lighthouse Tech** created TAMI®, a smart eyewear frame designed to help blind and visually impaired individuals navigate safely and independently. Thanks to advanced sensors and haptic feedback, the user receives alerts of potential obstacles above the waist, which a traditional white cane cannot detect.

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🔗 [www.lighthouse.tech](http://www.lighthouse.tech)

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## Skinmind

Incubation



**Skinmind** is developing a highly accurate, AI-powered system for fast self-checks of skin lesions that supports doctors in diagnosis and empowers patients to monitor their skin lesions easily and securely, facilitating the early detection of skin cancers.

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🔗 [skinmind.ch](http://skinmind.ch)

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## Regenera

Incubation



**Regenera** develops a combined approach for acute spinal cord injury repair, based upon intervention within the first 24 hours after the trauma. The technology is based on a proprietary biomaterial, SpinoSave®, which hosts autologous stem cells from the patient and can help to stop the chain of events that happens as a result of a spinal cord injury.

➤ [regenera.at](http://regenera.at)

## Archiatr

Pre-incubation



**Archiatr** creates an ecosystem of digital tools, Tibi, to help patients and caregivers with treatment management, lightening the workload, reducing errors and improving health data organisation.

➤ [archiatr.ch](http://archiatr.ch)

## MicThera

Incubation



**MicThera** develops a drug discovery platform to identify microbiome-inspired therapeutics based on preliminary evidence suggesting that commensal bacteria from cancer patients produce anti-cancer molecules that could be used to treat the disease.

➤ [www.linkedin.com/company/micthera](https://www.linkedin.com/company/micthera)

## myDoctorAngel

Pre-incubation



**myDoctorAngel** is an advanced oncology and chronic care centre that integrates continuous monitoring with innovative technologies directly at the patient's home. Using wearable devices and digital tools, it enables real-time tracking of vital signs and patient-reported outcomes, supporting early identification of complications or treatment side effects.

➤ [mydoctorangel.ch](http://mydoctorangel.ch)

## Healiva

Alumni



**Healiva** delivers personalised, affordable and cutting-edge therapies for acute and chronic wounds, bridging critical gaps in care with advanced cell therapies. Its lead product, Epidex, is a transformative treatment that uses patients' own hair follicles to regenerate skin and permanently close chronic wounds, such as venous leg ulcers and diabetic foot ulcers.

➤ [www.healiva.com](http://www.healiva.com)

## MethylX

Pre-incubation



**MethylX** pioneers a novel class of cancer therapies targeting chemically modified transcription factors, key drivers of tumour growth once thought undruggable. Our approach enables precision targeting across multiple cancers, with a first-in-class asset in prostate cancer.

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## InVirtuoLabs

Pre-incubation



**InVirtuoLabs** provides an innovative platform for drug discovery by combining advanced machine learning techniques with physics-based simulations to explore vast chemical spaces with unprecedented efficiency, identifying molecules with superior properties before making significant investments in synthesis and testing.

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➤ [www.invirtuolabs.com](http://www.invirtuolabs.com)

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## BIMINI Biotech

Incubation



**BIMINI Biotech** is developing innovative first-in-class therapeutics that target the Wiskott-Aldrich-Syndrome protein expressed exclusively in hematopoietic cells for oncology indications.

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➤ [biminibiotech.nl](http://biminibiotech.nl)

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# ICT startups

**Startup projects within the broad ICT sector benefit from a dedicated pathway within the incubation programme that focuses on market testing to align product-market fit and business model development, which are both crucial to improve the investor attractiveness of the company.**

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## Shootify

Incubation



**Shootify** transforms basic garment photos into stunning, professional on-model images using AI. Their proprietary pipelines are tailored for the fashion industry, enhancing consistency in terms of character, brand, style and garment fidelity.

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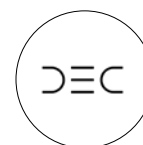
➤ [www.shootify.io](http://www.shootify.io)

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## DEC Energy

Incubation



**DEC Energy** provides an online marketplace where companies rent active solar plants around Europe, enabling them to generate their own Guarantees of Origin (GOs), ensuring that their electricity consumption is fully green while also generating annual electricity cost savings of up to 20%.

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➤ [www.dec-energy.ch](http://www.dec-energy.ch)

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## Elysium Lab

Incubation



**Elysium Lab** revolutionises digital asset management with its self-custody wallet and user-friendly process, which uses a multi-factor login algorithm to eliminate need for traditional key storage.

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➤ [www.elysiumlab.io](http://www.elysiumlab.io)

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## Flycatcher

Incubation



**Flycatcher** provides safe, reliable and cost-effective inspections for industries and large-scale infrastructures by using AI-driven anomaly detection models, focusing solely on normal operational behaviour. This solution requires minimal data, integrates with existing low-cost sensors, and highlights real-time deviations, improving efficiency without the need for extensive historical data.

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➤ [flycatcher.ai](http://flycatcher.ai)

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## InCatalyst

Incubation



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**InCatalyst** provides a patent search software that uses conversational AI to simplify the patenting process for startups and SMEs.

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➤ [in-catalyst.com](https://in-catalyst.com)

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## Graphsight

Incubation



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**GraphSight** empowers electricity traders with accurate, scalable renewable energy forecasts using advanced graph-based AI technology. By capturing spatial and temporal dependencies, their approach scales efficiently to handle large datasets and complex energy market scenarios.

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➤ [www.graphsight.ai](https://www.graphsight.ai)

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## Aility

Incubation



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**Aility** enables hoteliers to make sophisticated data-driven decisions based on people flow analytics through AI. Their in-house trained model, along with their proprietary sensor, provides highly accurate people counting data, simplifying back-of-house operations, removing redundant procedures, and enhancing guests' experience to bring improved business results.

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➤ [aility.ch](https://aility.ch)

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## Securified

Pre-incubation



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**Securified** enables secure and scalable analysis of sensitive data in distributed environments, such as cloud data centres, without compromising privacy or security, even during in-cloud computation, by leveraging cryptographic technologies.

# Startups from other sectors

**Our incubation programme is sector-agnostic and open to science-driven innovative projects in any field, from engineering to social science and business management, provided that they originate from the academic environment and have the potential to scale.**

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## Engineering

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### Foldcast

Incubation



**Foldcast** provides sustainable concrete building elements made using paper-based moulds that reduce the carbon footprint, improve structural performance and create unique architectural designs.

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➤ [foldcast.com](https://foldcast.com)

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## Social Science and Business Management

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### Clickelink

Incubation



**Clickelink** builds digital platforms to facilitate connections between individuals and businesses. It operates Jobelink, a platform that enables professional service providers to establish an online presence without creating a website, as well as Shopelink, a free online marketplace.

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➤ [www.clickelink.com](https://www.clickelink.com)

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### Crimagno

Pre-incubation



**Crimagno** creates innovative sustainable footwear by considering the entire product life cycle, from sourcing materials to manufacturing processing to product recycling. Their first product, KOB!, an eco-friendly and ergonomic shoe, has won multiple design awards and is already available online.

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➤ [crimagno.com](https://crimagno.com)

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USI  
Startup  
Centre



# Entrepreneurship education

**Building an innovative startup requires specific knowledge in different domains. Through our own workshops and educational sessions, as well as the federal entrepreneurship training programme, we equip researchers and students with the entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and experience necessary to set them up for success.**



## Closing the knowledge gap for aspiring entrepreneurs

Working closely with researchers and students turned entrepreneurs, we know that a lack of knowledge on how to build a company from scratch may represent a significant obstacle for many, especially those with a technical background. Although entrepreneurship is very much about the creative process, there is a well-defined path to transform an idea into a startup. Through our educational offering, we aim to make aspiring entrepreneurs aware of what it takes to build successful companies and provide an opportunity to fill in the gaps through tailored workshops and programmes.

In 2024, we organised 10 thematic training sessions led by experts. Some were specifically designed for startups participating in our incubation programme, while others were open to students and researchers interested in entrepreneurship. These sessions are part of a structured curriculum and cover a wide range of topics, such as HR, finance, fundraising, governance, strategy, contracts and other crucial subjects that every founder should master.

Furthermore, the opportunity to continue offering entrepreneurship training powered by Innosuisse complements and enhances other existing initiatives promoted by the USI Startup Centre and aimed at fostering a culture of science-driven innovation and entrepreneurship. Through its nationwide training programme, Innosuisse, the Swiss innovation agency, provides aspiring entrepreneurs with the essential

knowledge and practical skills to launch and develop successful business ventures. The programme consists of several training modules that cover the initial stages of the entrepreneurial journey - from raising awareness to scaling a business - and is delivered in collaboration with selected and accredited providers across Switzerland. In 2024, 167 researchers and students attended events, training courses, and other initiatives organised as part of the Innosuisse Entrepreneurship Training programme. In the meantime, Innosuisse launched a new call, significantly expanding the offering south of the Alps, and USI secured the new mandate for the implementation of the entrepreneurship training programme in Ticino from 2025 to 2028, which will be coordinated by USI Startup Centre in collaboration with SUPSI.

Throughout 2024, our team contributed to several courses related to entrepreneurship and innovation, for example, "Entrepreneurial Finance" (USI), "Writing Business Plans" (USI), "Corporate strategy" (USI), "Introduction to FinTech" (USI), "Economia aziendale 2" (SUPSI – DTI) and "Regional Development & Innovation Ecosystems" (SUPSI – DEASS). Thanks to active collaboration with course directors, we were able to reach over 350 Master's students, providing feedback on their projects and introducing available support initiatives to facilitate the transition from classroom to startup, and enhance the development of practical skills and specialised knowledge for talented students interested in entrepreneurship.





# Community engagement

**At the core of our operations is the nurturing of an engaged community of aspiring and active entrepreneurs, industry experts, investors and innovation enthusiasts in order to provide a supportive environment for emerging founders to build successful companies. We strongly believe that this approach makes a difference.**

## **A gateway to the innovation community**

As in many other fields, the world of startups is all about people and interactions. To foster the growth of our diverse community, we organise numerous events and networking opportunities every year, engaging with different audiences. These events pursue different goals, from informing and connecting to enhancing and energising, with the ultimate goal of providing a platform for forging meaningful connections.

In 2024, we organised 15 public events, including those held as part of the Innosuisse Startup Training programme. In addition, we hosted 10 events reserved for our startups and coordinated a study trip to Zurich with students and founders to foster connections with other players in the Swiss innovation ecosystem. Within our event calendar, we dedicate special attention to formats and initiatives designed to engage with researchers and students, particularly at Master's level. These initiatives aim to raise awareness about entrepreneurship as a possible career path and facilitate connections between individuals with different profiles and backgrounds, essential for the creation of multidisciplinary teams. For the third edition of "Startup Week", we transformed this series of events aimed at new students starting their studies at USI into

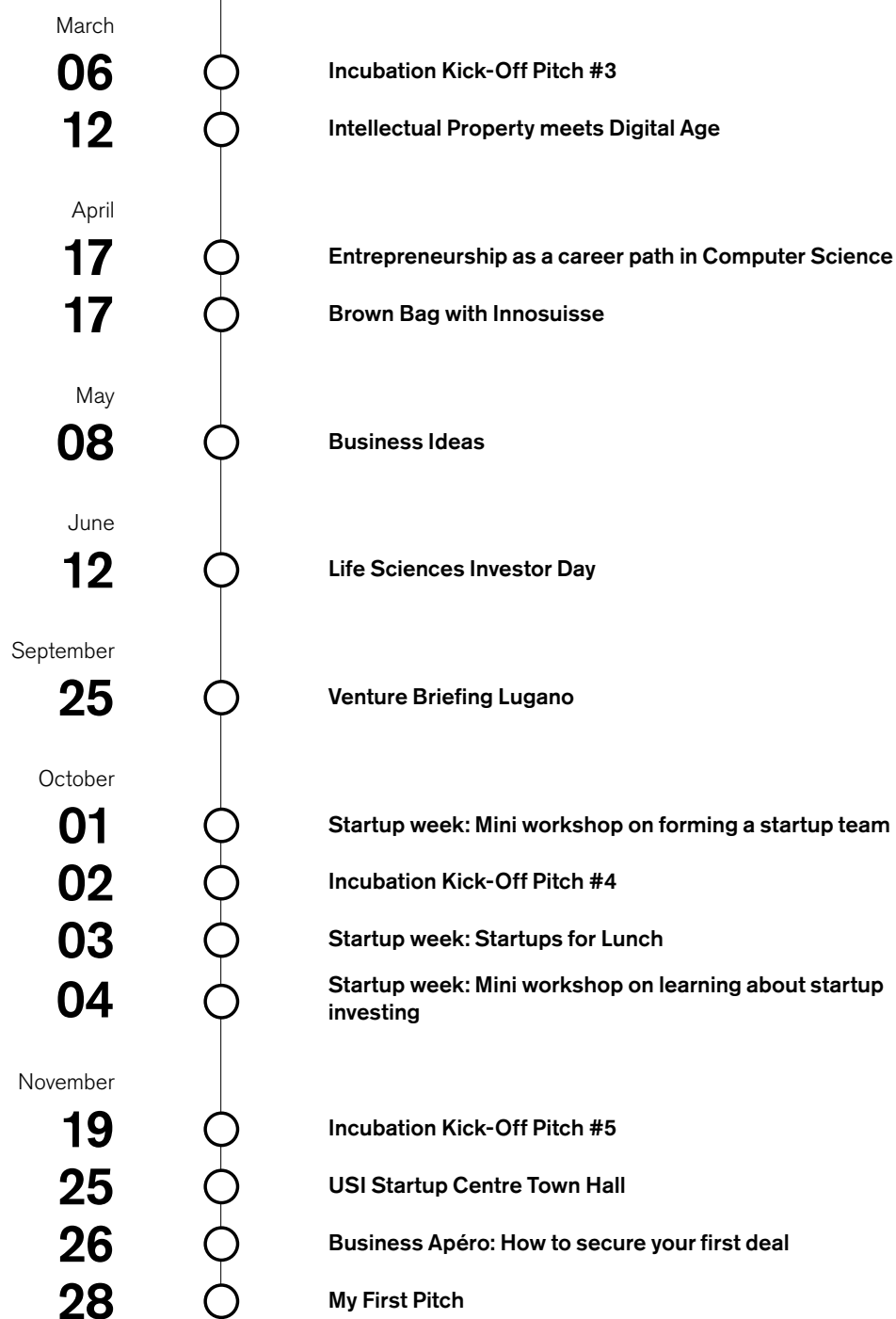
a platform where they can experience the startup ecosystem, learning not only about building a team, the starting point for any successful venture, but also about the world of venture capital, thanks to our guest speakers from Talent Kick, a cross-university programme for aspiring founders, and Privilège Ventures, an early-stage VC fund.

In addition, being in close proximity to fast-growing ventures, students have the opportunity to engage with startups and gain valuable experience. In 2024, incubated startups were involved in 11 field projects, three-month consultancy assignments carried out by teams of Master's students under the supervision of a USI professor, and offered a total of 11 internships.

We often join forces with internal and external partners to increase our reach and impact, bringing together different communities, for example, by organising Founders Dinner Ticino together with the Swiss Startup Association and Fondazione Agire, participating in the third edition of the "Giornata cantonale delle startup" and supporting several student-led events, such as the first edition of the "Neural Wave Hackathon" and the "Startup Funding Competition".



# 2024



|           |           |   |
|-----------|-----------|---|
| March     | <b>06</b> | Incubation Kick-Off Pitch #3                                    |
|           | <b>12</b> | Intellectual Property meets Digital Age                         |
| April     | <b>17</b> | Entrepreneurship as a career path in Computer Science           |
|           | <b>17</b> | Brown Bag with Innosuisse                                       |
| May       | <b>08</b> | Business Ideas  |
| June      | <b>12</b> | Life Sciences Investor Day                                      |
| September | <b>25</b> | Venture Briefing Lugano   |
| October   | <b>01</b> | Startup week: Mini workshop on forming a startup team           |
|           | <b>02</b> | Incubation Kick-Off Pitch #4                                    |
|           | <b>03</b> | Startup week: Startups for Lunch                                |
|           | <b>04</b> | Startup week: Mini workshop on learning about startup investing |
| November  | <b>19</b> | Incubation Kick-Off Pitch #5                                    |
|           | <b>25</b> | USI Startup Centre Town Hall                                    |
|           | <b>26</b> | Business Apéro: How to secure your first deal                   |
|           | <b>28</b> | My First Pitch  |

## A growing stakeholder network

During 2024, we continued to expand our network, enhancing the support we provide to startup projects originating from academia and strengthening our relationships with both internal and external stakeholders. Within the USI community, we focused on reinforcing our connections with faculties and research institutes, with the help of the members of our Scientific Board, to ensure we can share entrepreneurial knowledge and provide the right support already at the earliest stages of idea development. In September 2024, we launched a dedicated section, "Innovation and startups", in the university-wide weekly newsletter, which has provided additional visibility to the startup projects supported by the USI Startup Centre through "Startup Story" series, featuring interviews with founders.

Furthermore, we continued to establish new connections with investors and industry representatives for the benefit of our startup network. We continue to actively participate in the innovation roundtables organised by the Pro-Rectorate for Innovation and Corporate Relations, where academia and companies meet to exchange ideas and discuss collaboration opportunities across different sectors. On the investor side, in June 2024, we hosted an investor meeting

focused on Life Sciences sector, where incubated medtech and biotech startups met with five invited VC funds. Lastly, to strengthen our advisor lineup, which currently includes more than 10 professionals, we have actively engaged new experts in diverse fields, from go-to-market strategies to legal and regulatory matters.

In addition to building new connections, we continued to leverage existing collaborations. Within the framework of our partnership agreement with the Ticino Chamber of Commerce, the first four founder interviews were published in the Ticino Business magazine to give further visibility to the startup projects born in Ticino. We also collaborated in organising the 2024 edition of the Boldbrain Startup Challenge, a Ticino-based accelerator programme aimed at early-stage startups and innovative ideas.

InVirtuoLabs, a company revolutionising drug discovery with AI and physics-based methods founded by researchers from IDSIA USI-SUPSI and part of our incubation programme won the seventh edition of the programme, while another incubated startup, GraphSight, a spin-off from the Faculty of Informatics at USI developing an AI-based solution to provide electricity traders with accurate, scalable renewable energy production forecasts, secured third place.







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