



Audi employees are coaching sustainable startups: Award ceremony for the European Impact Hero

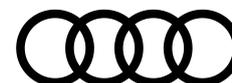
- **Innovative startups from across Europe are ending a six-month contest of ideas centered on climate neutrality, circular economies, and supply-chain innovation**
- **Corporate volunteers from Audi, Volkswagen, SAP, and Microsoft Germany lent their support to young companies as professional coaches for six months**
- **Biodiversity & Ecosystem Futures (BEF) wins the pitch among the ten finalists on 11.11.2021**

Ingolstadt, November 12, 2021 – The Day of the Heroes had finally arrived: the European Impact Hero had been chosen. Together with its partners Audi, Volkswagen, SAP, and Microsoft Germany, the Center for Open Social Innovation (COSI) invited to the closing event of this six-month ideas program for sustainable startups yesterday. In rounds of pitches, ten finalists presented their ideas and concepts concerning climate neutrality, circular economies, and supply-chain management. Corporate volunteers from Audi and its other partners had coached them for the occasion. Sabine Maassen, Board Member for Human Resources and Organization at AUDI AG, says: “That is living corporate social responsibility – and it pays into the working environment of tomorrow.”

The first [European Impact Hero](#) (EIH) event began with Impact Hero Day, a digital Thinkathon on May 25, 2021. A total of 20 European startups participated in it jointly with more than 100 corporate volunteers from the partner companies and worked on solutions for climate neutrality, circular economies, and supply chain management. The ten most promising startups qualified for the subsequent accelerator program. In the Impact Hero Lab, they were given personal mentors from the partner companies, who accompanied them for six months. On what were called “Lab Days,” there were monthly presentations from experts from Audi, Volkswagen, SAP, and Microsoft Germany, including on subjects like sustainability in and of the supply chain, human rights, and due diligence. Audi employee Alois Winkler, an expert on CO₂ management in the supply chain, is one of the volunteers who participated as coaches in this Europe-wide initiative: “It’s not about benefits for the individual, it’s about the big picture for sustainability. Sharing his knowledge is the key to mutual progress because that is how new ideas and solutions come about.”

“That is lived corporate social responsibility”

Sabine Maassen, Board Member for Human Resources and Organization at AUDI AG, agrees: “The European Impact Hero supports young companies from across Europe that address current challenges in all fields of sustainability through the expertise of highly qualified employees. I am very pleased that we at Audi were able to volunteer to do that. That is living corporate social responsibility – and it pays into the working environment of tomorrow.”



[COSI](#) co-founder Manuel Kreitmeir adds: “The expertise of highly motivated corporate volunteers moved the startups forward in their corporate development. It revealed prospects, but also weaknesses and innovatively linked established companies and their employees with young and creative entrepreneurs from Europe.”

Finals with the ten best: Biodiversity & Ecosystem Futures (BEF) on the winner’s podium

During the finals with the ten best, it became apparent what participants were able to work on in those six months. In a series of three-minute pitches, all ten startups presented their further developed companies and ideas. Rounds of questions with impact investors also offered small groups the opportunity to get to know the startups better, ask questions, and network.

The first-rate jury provided volunteers from the partner companies as well as representatives from [Ecopreneur.eu](#), the European association for sustainable economics, which also provided the € 5,000 in prize money. Tim Miksche, head of the Audi Denkwerkstatt, represented Audi on the jury. “This competition shows how much potential for change there is when creative minds come together across different companies to develop new solutions in a sustainability context.”

“Climate protection, sustainability in the supply chain, and circular economies are strategically important topics for us. Particularly in these areas, it is enormously important to keep up with the times and pick up on fresh impulses from the outside for Audi,” explains Susanne Lenz, Project Manager for European Impact Hero. “There was a particular focus on collaborative work – and we were able to do that successfully despite great distances with the help of a virtual platform.”

The following ten startups participated in the six-month program: Ecotrek GmbH, Baffi, TodaVida UG, True Colors, Circular Product Pass, Breeze Technologies, BEF Limited, GROME, Camp Collapse, and Zurück. The startup Biodiversity & Ecosystem Futures (BEF) was chosen as the winner of yesterday’s Impact Hero Day.

Videos with short presentations by the ten finalists are on the [event website](#).

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The Audi Group, with its brands Audi, Ducati and Lamborghini, is one of the most successful manufacturers of automobiles and motorcycles in the premium segment. It is present in more than 100 markets worldwide and produces at 20 locations in 12 countries. 100 percent subsidiaries of AUDI AG include Audi Sport GmbH (Neckarsulm, Germany), Automobili Lamborghini S.p.A. (Sant'Agata Bolognese, Italy), and Ducati Motor Holding S.p.A. (Bologna/Italy).

In 2020, the Audi Group delivered to customers about 1.693 million automobiles of the Audi brand, 7,430 sports cars of the Lamborghini brand and 48,042 motorcycles of the Ducati brand. In the 2020 fiscal year, AUDI AG achieved total revenue of €50.0 billion and an operating profit before special items of €2.7 billion. At present, around 87,000 people work for the company all over the world, 60,000 of them in Germany. With new models, innovative mobility offerings and other attractive services, Audi is becoming a provider of sustainable, individual premium mobility.
