**According to participants, including top international experts, the Central European Ecosystem Summit (CEES) in Budapest was regarded as the event of the season**

Press release, 20th of November, 2023

50 speakers, 40 companies, from 12 countries gathered at the conference center of the Museum of Ethnography, a gem of Budapest, for the CEEcosystem Summit. The purpose of this foundational event was to increase the visibility of the domestic startup scene, to enhance the viability of an ecosystem that, though small individually, can create significant capacity for economic development overall, especially through business development assisting emerging businesses and showcasing venture capital financiers. The highly eventful program achieved the desired effect: László Korányi, the chief advisor of KIM which provided the venue for the event, welcomed the ideas expressed at the event and hoped they would soon be followed by actions; Imre Hild, head of the newly founded venture capital fund of Óbuda University and one of the founders of the domestic startup ecosystem, sees this event as a potential turning point for the collaboration experienced. Nóra Szeles, one of the founders of TokePortál.com, which pioneered crowdfunding in Hungary, pointed out the necessity of combining bottom-up organization and top-down regulation based on knowledge and strategy for building the ecosystem. Zoltán Ács, as the CEO of the Hungarian Fintech Association and MBH Fintechlab, spoke about the development of digital services regardless of geographical boundaries; Dorka Végvári-Gerencsér, representing MVM Smart Future Lab, sees the responsibility of large corporations in knowledge sharing and innovation adaptation; Kamilla Strausz, co-founder of InnoMaker Partners, highlighting the presence of numerous students from MOME and Corvinus University, emphasized the importance of supporting the young generation. This was also represented by Milos Milicsevics, a professor at Corvinus University of Budapest. Richárd Végh, the CEO of the Budapest Stock Exchange, introduced the pathway to IPO, which is not so difficult and serves the business, exemplified by STRT and OXO Labs present at the event, aiming to make the domestic startup ecosystem capable of nurturing companies targeting successful exits and being stock market-ready, internationally competitive.

During the alternating keynote speeches, Q&A sessions, and panels, Kitti Jakab, co-founder of Lunar Incubator, presented their research findings on the Hungarian startup ecosystem, and from the excellent speaker of The Launch Code, Zoltán Várdy, we learned what distinguishes brilliant founders from the failed ones. Subsequently, we heard about the domestic implementation crowdfunding from the leaders of TokePortal.com and Brancs, Nóra Szeles, and Gábor Kövesdi. Then, representatives of two innovative domestic universities, Lasma Ivaska (MOME) and Milos Milicsevics (CUB), gave lectures, the former on the Lithuanian and the latter on the Polish ecosystem lessons. Peter Oszkó (OXO Technologies Holding Plc.) guided us into the world of investments and finance, presenting the company's path to the stock market, Richárd Végh (Budapest Stock Exchange) explained the intricacies of exit strategies, including public stock market listings, as did Kálmán Nagy (Concorde MBP), who reported on the exciting process of mergers and acquisitions. We also learned about the fintech ecosystem from the Central Bank's perspective from Péter Fáykiss (Hungarian National Bank), who reported on the state regulatory strategies related to the sector.

Numerous renowned international experts also presented at the conference. We learned about the experiences and impacts of launching the biggest British crowdfunding platform on the English ecosystem from Jeff Lynn, the founder of Seedrs. Thanks to Samantha Evans (FCx), there was a lot of first-hand information about the British tech sector. Two particularly significant figures from the highly esteemed Israeli ecosystem were present at the event: Tal Sharon (The Israeli FinTech Association) reported on building the fintech ecosystem, and then Denes Ban, a partner of one of the largest global investment platforms, OurCrowd, conducted his world-famous Fundraising Masterclass. The region's one of the biggest venture capital investors, Tunya Irkad, the Turkish regional leader of 500VC, also attended and gave an insightful presentation about their investment objectives for startups operating in the region.

Captivating panel discussions replaced the intriguing presentations throughout the day. In the introductory panel that set the tone for the event, the structure and development possibilities of the innovation ecosystem were dissected under the leadership of Imre Hild (ÓUVC) by Zoltán Ács (MAFISZ, MBH Fintechlab), István Fetter (CIB Bank), Dudu Gencel (Vienna Business Agency), Krisztián Kölkedi and Kitti Timár (Startup Hungary). This was followed by representatives of accelerators and incubators discussing the roles of their organizations in the Central and Eastern European region, with Laviniu Chis (Inno Accelerator), Gergő Gulyás (ÓUVC), Mark Kalin (ABC Accelerator), Dorottya Végvári-Gelencsér (MVM Smart Future Lab), Dr. Péter Mogyorósi (Creative Accelerator), and Baiba Rozenberga (MBH FintechLab) responding to questions from Milos Milicsevics (VC Leaders, CUB). This was followed by a discussion about the life-changing impact of universities and launchpad programs on young innovators, moderated by Imre Hild (ÓUVC) with József Gyarmati (Future Founders), Craig V. Johnson (MOME Innovation Center), László Korányi (KIM, HSUP, MIT), and Dr. Andrea Kozma, the former leader of CEU iLab and currently the incubation leader of STRT, Milos Milicsevics (Corvinus), and Tamás Müller from Pozi.io, which supports startups in entering the market. The discussion about the role of role models and successful entrepreneurs was led by László Czirják, a partner at Interactive VP, with participants including Zoltán Györkő, the founder of Balabit, Jared Schrieber, who introduced the angel investment approach based on best practices in the USA, Péter Schuszter from Univerz Invest, which deals with companies entering the stock market, and Szabolcs Szakacsits, who won the Investor of the Year award last year. Complementing the finance-themed presentations, Mary Alcantara, another leader at Interactive VP, asked about the operations and strategies of investors and family offices, interviewing Balázs Gödrösy (GFS Consulting), Miklós Kovács, a leader of one of the most successful domestic startups, Antavo, Bence Langár, who owns TFL Capital, including Frei Cafe among others, Péter Oszkó, and one of the first domestic private equity investors, the leader of Cashline, Dr. Gergely Szűcs. The conference was concluded by Kamilla Strausz, who, with her guests Péter Csillag, the president of HunBAN, Barbara Verő from Future Proof Consulting, Tunya Irkad (500VC), and Imre Hild (OUVC), talked about the importance of supporting each other in the ecosystem. Barbara Verő emphasized, and many agreed, that CEES was undoubtedly the event of the season, and as soon as it ended, everyone was already looking forward to the continuation!

The comprehensive program was further enriched by a Startup Expo, where guests could learn about and interact with various innovative companies. These included Composity, a champion for sustainability and zero waste; Dolphio Technologies, specialized in computer vision, people counting, and IT project rescue; Smart babee, representing baby technology; a HR recruitment app; Melon, planning a crowdfunding campaign; Univerz Invest, specializing in companies planning to enter the stock market or seek capital investment, and covering the topic of investor relations; Meskete, an online childrens’s tale platform also planning a crowdfunding campaign; DIGIFit, a digital gym platform; Nektária, a brand of natural fruit juices offering fantastic tasting experiences; Bookkeepie, supporting the search for accountants; Tap’n’Drink, reinventing the beer tapping experience; and the life-saving, essential, and long-standing Transplantation Foundation for Renewed Lives, which had a successful donation-based crowfunding campaign. Representatives from these companies were available for discussions. With the help of Sharity, participants could also support a good cause by directly donating to the Youth Entrepreneurship Associoation. The event, which lasted into the late evening, concluded with a music and dance dinner at the museum. The next day, on Saturday afternoon, networking continued with an Unicum tour at the notable Zwack Museum, followed by a program at the Füves Bar, provided courtesy of Zwack Unicum, where György Vuray, a founder of the popular Vállalkozás Okosan expert blog and entrepreneurial community, offered advice to attendees.

The organizing team consisted of Tokeportal.com, InnoMaker Partners, the Nonprofit Foundation for Future Innovations, Tech In The City, Startup Grind Budapest, Óbuda Uni Venture Capital, MBH Fintechlab, and the Hungarian Fintech Association, as well as the adcovates of the importance of innovation for sponsors such as MVM (as the main sponsor), Tuxera, Neo Property Services, and Dolphio Technologies. They emphasize the spread of best practices, learning from each other's mistakes, knowledge sharing, mutual support, and organizing the ecosystem.

For further info, contact: ecosystem@tokeportal.com.

About the organizers:

* TokePortal.com is the first Hungarian crowdfunding service provider for investment purposes currently undergoing ECSPR licencing.
* InnoMaker Partners assists innovative businesses as a service provider.
* The Hungarian Fintech Association represents the interests of domestic fintech service providers.
* MBH Fintechlab was the first Hungarian fintech incubator.
* The Nonprofit Foundation for Future Innovations focuses on research and development.
* Óbuda Uni Venture Capital is the latest venture capital investor and venture studio.
* Startup Grind is an international startup incubation program.
* Tech in the City is a domestic technology incubation and mentorship program.