

Meerbusch-based innovation hub, Global Entrepreneurship Centre, presents the GEC Textile Awards: EUR 350,000 for sustainable textile startups

Meerbusch, 6 March 2022 – The Global Entrepreneurship Centre (GEC) innovation hub presented the GEC Textile Awards, representing both a prize and sponsorship for sustainable innovations, to three startups at the Areal Böhler industrial park on Sunday, 6 March 2022. The awards were endowed with an individual package of services for the winners worth a total of EUR 350,000 to support the upscaling and consolidation of their businesses in their markets for a period of up to 15 months. Five further startups were honored as GEC Textile Future Innovation Champions, giving them the opportunity to participate in the exclusive GEC Catalyst program worth EUR 20,000. The winner's certificates and GEC trophies were presented by North Rhine-Westphalian Minister of Finance, Lutz Lienenkämper, and Friedrich Barth, Founder and CEO of the GEC. The evening event was hosted by actress and sustainability blogger Andrea Gerhard.

The GEC Textile Award

The GEC Textile Award is presented to companies that have developed innovative materials, products, processes, logistics concepts or business models to make fashion or technical textiles more sustainable. "We're prioritizing investments in sectors with a commitment to climate protection and a high potential to scale sustainably," explained Friedrich Barth the concept when the award was announced in October 2021. The sectors being prioritized, in addition to textiles, are building and living, mobility, and agriculture and nutrition.

MycoTEX® from the Netherlands won the main prize and services with a monetary value of EUR 200,000. The Dutch company has developed a technology for the automated production of customized vegan and sustainable garments made from mushroom mycelium.

Second prize and services worth EUR 100,000 went to Belgian startup Resortecs. The company's name combines the words 'recycling', 'sorting' and 'tech', and it develops technologies for the efficient recycling of textiles on an industrial scale, including the use of heat-dissolvable stitching threads and rivets to facilitate the end-of-lifecycle disassembly and recovery of garments and closed-loop heating systems minimize CO₂ emissions and damage in the garment recycling process.

Düsseldorf-based startup Retraced came in third place – and can look forward to a service package worth EUR 50,000. Retraced's blockchain technology allows fashion and textiles companies to trace back products and fibers back to the producer and share information – on sustainability, for instance – with relevant stakeholders.

Dr Marie Hurtgen, Ventures & Technology Director at GEC, explained what the award recipients can expect: "The GEC Scaling Factory offers sustainable enterprises a customized and hands-on program addressing their top priorities. It includes professional services, assets and a scaling infrastructure that facilitates growth and lasting impact. It also multiplies the startups' operational capacity, giving them the resilience to emerge intact from the second Valley of

Death – the phase when many startups with promising technologies or products fail. At the end of the program the enterprises have professionalized businesses, a low-risk investment profile and are equipped for sustainable commercial success.”

The GEC Textile Future Innovation Champion

Five further startups – Fairbrics, MeMi, Thullex, Kintra and Eeden – received a GEC Textile Future Innovation Champion Award. This award provides access to the GEC Catalyst Program by the Think Beyond® Foundation from Silicon Valley. The program is specifically designed for enterprises at the end of the startup phase, with a validated product or technology and initial market feedback. The first Catalyst Program starts on 1 April 2022. It is ten weeks in length and offers the young entrepreneurs the chance to validate their business model and establish a solid basis for commercial success. After completing the Catalyst Program the startups may be invited to participate in the GEC Scaling Factory.

141 entrants, 16 finalists

141 startups from 33 countries around the world submitted entries for the Textile Award. “Our expert jury scrutinized each of the entries on the basis of the criteria of sustainability, climate protection, circularity and business outlook,” said Barth. “We were looking for enterprises that are progressing well after having overcome the initial obstacles. This is what sets us apart from other innovation hubs. 16 startups were short-listed for the final – and even the ones that didn’t win an award can apply to participate in one of the GEC’s future programs.”

Awards ceremony with panel discussion

The awards were presented at an evening event on Sunday, 6 March. The program also included a panel discussion on the contribution of startups to the sustainable transformation of the economy. Panel members included:

- Dr Veerle Vandeweerd, CEO of Platform for Transformative Technologies (P4TT)
- Annette Koch, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility Gerry Weber AG
- Thimo Schwenzfeier, Head of Marketing & PR GREENTECH FESTIVAL

Welcome speeches were also provided by members of the political and business communities:

- Hans Jürgen Petrauschke, Governor of the Rhine District of Neuss
- Ulrike Kähler, Managing Director Igedo Company

Calls for plastic alternatives in next-generation agriculture and foods

The GEC will initially be supporting up to 20 startups in the sectors of building and living, textiles, mobility, agriculture and nutrition every year. It recently announced the Agriculture Plastics Innovation Challenge, which invites participants to submit concepts for alternatives to plastics in



agriculture and is being implemented in close collaboration with Think Beyond, Driscoll's and other partners. The entry process has now closed and the winners will be announced in mid-March.

About the Global Entrepreneurship Centre

Based at Areal Böhler in Meerbusch, the Global Entrepreneurship Centre (GEC) is the first structure of its kind to address the scaling challenges of promising SusTechs – deep-tech start-ups with a clear sustainability and climate protection focus – from all over the world. Launched in 2021, the GEC will initially support up to 20 start-ups per year in the sectors of building & living, textiles, mobility and agriculture & nutrition with access to venture capital, business development and advisory services and lab capacity. The GEC is funded by the Rhenish region's 'SofortprogrammPlus' initiative and the Rhine County of Neuss. In the long term it will be funded by its own resources. Up to 3,000 new jobs will be created by 2030 through the relocation of innovative companies taking part in the GEC programmes to the region.

Images and further information can be requested from the communications agency.

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