



Developing future transport solutions

Press Information

With "*Startup adVANce*" Mercedes-Benz Vans starts global search for innovative partners

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Stuttgart – With "*Startup adVANce*", a big-scale startup partnership challenge, Mercedes-Benz Vans is starting its search for intelligent solutions relating to the transport of goods and passengers. As part of its recently introduced strategic initiative *adVANce* the company is to invest a total of one million euros in the best submissions. The goal is to find new, innovative partners with whom Mercedes-Benz Vans can establish long-term partnerships without constricting the startups and, for instance, demanding shares.

Volker Mornhinweg, Head of Mercedes-Benz Vans, states: "We aren't simply looking for new solutions. We are looking for partners with whom we can drive forward and implement innovations. Our goal isn't to generate a vast number of creative ideas which, in a worst case scenario, are just going to end up in a drawer. We are looking for people and young companies that are able to work with us to transform innovative ideas quickly and successfully into initial working prototypes."

Digitalisation, urbanisation and the Internet of Things are just a few of the megatrends that are rapidly changing our world, placing new demands on virtually every industry. Goods and passenger transport are no exception here. General changes in consumer behaviour and mobility patterns are directly affecting logistics providers and vehicle manufacturers. Online buyers, for example, expect new services such as same-day or time-definite delivery and want to know where their orders are at all times. And the number of deliveries

is growing rapidly. People's mobility behaviour is changing too. Individually adaptable passenger transport systems are playing an increasingly important role. And, not least, crowded roads in inner-city zones are presenting new challenges for the transport industry and, as a result, for the manufacturers of vans.

The future of transport: three categories, one goal

The competition, initiated by Mercedes-Benz Vans and supported by the EU Commission, has a clear goal: identifying and supporting innovations and startups which will make future transport even more efficient with intelligent and new ideas. Looked for are both hardware and software solutions and innovative concepts for business models relating to the van. Mercedes-Benz Vans looks out for promising technology solutions in three specific fields. These are:

1. **Connectivity/IoT (digital@vans)**: hardware and software solutions which promote the connectivity of the van and enable real-time interaction between all factors involved in transport, such as goods and vehicle.
2. **Cargo space optimisation (solutions@vans)**: ideas and solutions relating to the cargo space, such as automated racking systems, and the optimisation of loading and unloading processes.
3. **Mobility concepts (mobility@vans)**: innovative mobility concepts and sharing solutions which, for example, increase the vehicles' capacity utilisation or offer customers new and cost-effective mobility solutions.

From idea to prototype in three stages

The competition will run in three stages: Interested startups can complete a quick, straightforward online questionnaire, outlining their ideas for the three categories until 15 January 2017. Independent startup experts will then invite a maximum of 80 applicants to take part in the **idea refinement phase**. In this phase the submitted ideas will be fleshed out in workshops together with Mercedes-Benz Vans. Personal contacts will be established. The ten best startups will take part in the **concept phase** and will each be given a financial support of 10 000 euros to generate implementable concepts within a timeframe of around two months.

"To ensure that the concepts match our needs and vision, we will maintain intensive dialogue with the participants during this phase. This will help us to establish who is in a position to manage projects and implement them efficiently," continues Mornhinweg.

As the projects are developed, the participants will gain a deeper insight into the work of Mercedes-Benz Vans. Those who prove most convincing will reach the final. In the **prototype phase** a maximum of five selected teams will work with Mercedes-Benz Vans to turn their ideas into functional prototypes. Mercedes-Benz Vans developers will work with the startups to promote the development of the prototypes, pooling resources. The prototypes will be submitted to a test phase for which Mercedes-Benz Vans will make a further 900 000 euros available.

In addition to financial assistance, Mercedes-Benz Vans will support the finalists with know-how: "As an internationally successful company, we have resources, contacts and, even more importantly, experience and expertise. The two worlds – startup and global company – will prove the ideal foil for one another. All sides will benefit from the close collaboration", continues Volker Mornhinweg.

Building long-term partnerships

Unlike many other competitions of this kind, the financial support does not go hand-in-hand with Mercedes-Benz Vans acquiring a stake in the participating companies.

The challenge offers both sides a forum which will allow them to get to know each other in an informal environment and embark on a fruitful collaboration. At the end of the challenge, there will be various options for future collaborations: "From a classic customer relationship to a strategic partnership of equals or investment in the startup – we are open to different collaborative arrangements here."

Further details and competition documents

Interested startups can find out more about "*Startup adVANCE*", including entry conditions, requirements and the competition process, at <http://startup-advance.mercedes-benz.com>. Submissions for the first phase will only be accepted via the online portal and the closing date is 15 January 2017.

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Caption 16A843:

Mercedes-Benz Vans starts startup partnership challenge "*Startup adVANce*"

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More information on *adVANce* is available online at:

www.d.ai/VanInnoCampus2016