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DAAD India
Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service

Innovators Connect Tandem

2026

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

16 Nov - 27 Nov 2026

India

A PROGRAMME OF

DWIH New Delhi
Land of Ideas

DAAD
Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service

SUPPORTED BY

Federal Foreign Office

HOST INCUBATORS

C-CAMP
Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms

KIIT
KIIT-TBI

PARTNER INCUBATORS

Universität Rostock

zfe zentrum für entrepreneurship

Fraunhofer
Fraunhofer VENTURE

TRACES
Universität Stuttgart

Gateway
Exzellenz Start-up Center
Universität zu Köln

UNIVERSITÄT ZU KÖLN

IIT HYDERABAD
TECHNOLOGY INCUBATION CENTER

NXTGN

KIT
Karlsruher Institut für Technologie

KIT GRÜNDER SCHMIEDE

hei INNOVATION

UNIVERSITÄT HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT SEIT 1386

STARTUP INCUBATION AND INNOVATION CENTRE
IIT KANPUR

Innovators Connect - Tandem 2026

16.11.26 - 27.11.26

Bengaluru and Bhubaneshwar (India)

Innovators Connect-Tandem: is a two-week immersion programme of the German Centre for Research and Innovation (DWIH New Delhi), a unit of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). It is aimed at early-career researchers and early-stage start-up founders from India and Germany. Participants are individuals associated with an incubator or start-up center within a university or research institution or researchers with interest in entrepreneurship in either country. The programme's goal is to promote collaborative research and joint technology development.

This year, 29 participants are hosted across three research incubators in Bengaluru and Bhubaneshwar. Throughout the programme, they will work in Indo-German teams to generate new ideas, receive training on bringing research innovations to market, gain tailored mentoring from experts in India and Germany, and get exposure to the start-up and innovation ecosystems of both nations. The programme includes design thinking workshops, information sessions, mentoring, networking opportunities, and start-up and industry visits.

The programme is co-curated and organised by in collaboration with a network of 12 research incubators from India and Germany, with an additional aim to foster cooperation among these incubators.

In 2026, the partner incubators are:

Germany: NXTGN, KIT Gründerschmiede (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology), Transfer Centre TRACES (University of Stuttgart), Centre for Entrepreneurship (University of Rostock), Fraunhofer Venture (Fraunhofer Gesellschaft), Hei_Innovation (Heidelberg University), and Gateway Excellence Start-up Center (University of Cologne).

India: Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP), Foundation for Science Innovation and Development - FSID (Indian Institute of Science), KIIT-Technology Business Incubator - KIIT-TBI (Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology), IIT Hyderabad Technology Incubation Centre - iTIC (Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad), and Startup Incubation and Innovation Centre - SIIC (Indian Institute of Technology - IIT Kanpur).

The programme includes the following elements:

Teamwork: Each team, with at least one participant from each country, tackles global challenges through new ideas by combining diverse skills and perspectives. Teams are matched and introduced digitally before the on-site programme to kickstart idea development.

Mentoring: Teams receive ongoing, customised mentoring from subject experts and start-up advisors from the partners.

Workshops & Information Sessions: The programme opens with a design thinking workshop, followed by sessions on start-up fundamentals like value proposition, business modelling, intellectual property and market fit. Participants also gain insights into government support for international start-ups.

Pitch Session: At the end of the programme, teams pitch their ideas to a jury of founders, industry experts, and researchers, with investors and the start-up community also in attendance. Winning teams will reconnect in Germany the following year to participate in a start-up conference, and access further incubator support.

Networking: Participants connect with local and international networks of founders, advisors, and investors, both online and on-site. Winners from India can further expand their networks during their visit to Germany.

Participants hosted at

Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP), Bengaluru

C-CAMP
Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms



/in/gurunathagouda

Gurunathagouda Biradar

MLOPs Engineer, Nivaris Healthcare Pvt. Ltd., CCAMP

Gurunathagouda is supporting the development of AI-driven solutions for critical care, remote patient monitoring, and smart hospital platforms. His expertise spans deep learning, medical AI, generative AI, and scalable deployment of intelligent healthcare systems. An award-winning innovator in AI-based medical imaging, he is passionate about translating cutting-edge research into affordable, clinically impactful MedTech solutions. Gurunathagouda holds a B.E. in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning from Dayananda Sagar College of Engineering.

Manvi Upadhyay

Founder - HeraAegis, Cologne Cluster of Excellence on Aging and Aging-associated Diseases, University of Cologne

Manvi is a biotechnologist, entrepreneur, and an MBA candidate with experience spanning molecular biology, biotech research, and startup development. She is the co-founder and business lead of HeraAegis, an early-stage biotech venture developing molecular tools to improve decision-making in IVF. With a background in RNA biology and biotechnology research, she focuses on bridging scientific innovation and commercialization through business strategy, fundraising, and partnerships.



/in/manviupadhyay/



/in/vini-dhiraj/

Vini Meshram

PhD Researcher, IIT Hyderabad

Vini is interested in advancing human health at the intersection of Computational Neuroscience, Machine Learning, and Artificial Intelligence. She is currently pursuing a PhD, combining computational biology, protein engineering, and drug discovery for neurodegenerative disorders. Alongside core doctoral research, she has expanded her technical stack into quantitative electrophysiology and biophysical modelling to advance next-generation neural interfaces and neuro-technology. Vini holds a master's degree in Molecular Biology and Genetic Engineering.



/in/meet-makwana/

Meet Makwana

Start-up Team Member - Trace Health, CCAMP and Junior Research Fellow, IISc Bengaluru

Meet is a researcher in aging biology and longevity science, with a strong interest in translating research into healthcare products that extend human health span. He is currently involved in aging research at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc). His focus lies on building experimental systems that model microgravity and radiation exposure to study their effects on aging, alongside large-scale field studies. He also supports Trace Health in setting up laboratory workflows for urine-based biomarker sensing. Meet holds a master's degree in Biotechnology.

Vaibhavi Kadam

PhD Researcher, Eberhard Karls University of Tuebingen

Vaibhavi is a neuroscientist with a research background spanning neurodegenerative diseases, biomarker research and translational neuroscience. Currently in the final stage of her PhD at the University of Tuebingen, her work focuses on fluid biomarkers and assay-based approaches in neurodegenerative diseases. Her long-standing interest in entrepreneurship sharpened during her PhD as she recognised the potential for biomarker science in transforming neurodegenerative disease care. She is interested in building scalable and population-relevant biomarker-guided tools for personalized clinical management, including diagnosis, disease progression and treatment response monitoring to address unmet healthcare needs in India. Vaibhavi holds an M.Sc. from the University of Alberta, Canada.



/in/vaibhavi-kadam/



/in/sakshi-nigavekar/

Sakshi Nigavekar

PhD Researcher, IIT Hyderabad

Sakshi is a PhD scholar in Materials Science and Metallurgical Engineering, focusing on Chemical Vapor Deposition (CVD) synthesis of 2D materials. She is interested in nanomaterials, advanced functional materials, space technology, and exploring how materials research can be translated into practical applications. She has worked at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for a year on the synthesis of multi-walled carbon nanotubes using a rapid thermal processing furnace, leading to a publication in the Journal of Materials Science: Materials in Electronics. She has also contributed to research on lunar surface habitats. Sakshi holds an Integrated B.Sc.- M.Sc. in Nanoscience and Technology from Shivaji University and has qualified GATE Physics 2025.

Bhavay Arora

PhD Researcher, University of Rostock

Bhavay is pursuing his PhD at Bosch Sensortec in cooperation with the University of Rostock, where his research focuses on modelling and verification methods for Micro-Electro-Mechanical Systems (MEMS) sensors. His interests include hardware/software co-design, system-level modelling and verification, embedded systems, and Field-Programmable Gate Array (FPGA) based hardware acceleration. Bhavay holds a master's degree in Nanoelectronic Systems from TU Dresden and a bachelor's degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering.



/in/bhavay-arora11/



Ranamay Saha

PhD Researcher, IIT Kanpur

Ranamay is a PhD researcher in BioMEMS, with research spanning the fields of Mechanical Engineering and Manufacturing Science, and a strong interest in Micro Electro Mechanical Systems (MEMS) to contribute to advancements in healthcare technologies. His focus lies on practical applications of MEMS, Machine learning, and MedTech. He has been awarded PMRF fellowship for his PhD work and the Gandhian Young Technological Innovation Award in 2024. Ranamay holds a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering.

/in/ranamaysaha/

Naveen Kumar

PhD Researcher, University of Leipzig

Naveen is a biophysicist fascinated by how single biomolecules find, bind, and release one another. Currently he is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie doctoral researcher at Universität Leipzig, with a visiting position at TU Delft. His work combines single-molecule fluorescence microscopy with next-generation sequencing to watch millions of interactions unfold individually and extends into DNA nanotechnology, plasmonics and protein sequencing. He is interested in applying such measurements to diagnostics, drug discovery, and AI-driven design. Coordinating work across six research groups in four countries, and through iGEM and the YETI accelerator, he has built a strong interest in interdisciplinary teamwork. Naveen holds a master's degree in chemistry from Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar.



/in/naveen-kumar/



Dr. Victor Ghosh

MedTech Innovation Fellow, IIT Kanpur

Dr. Victor is a medical doctor and MedTech Innovation Fellow at the School of International Biodesign, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) New Delhi and IIT Delhi. His work spans clinical research, evidence synthesis and healthcare innovation, with a particular interest in translating unmet clinical needs into practical medical technologies. He has contributed to systematic reviews and meta-analyses across neurology, oncology and other clinical fields, with work presented at major international scientific conferences. He is especially interested in MedTech, biomaterials, translational research and evidence-based innovation. Dr. Victor holds an MBBS from Andhra Medical College, Visakhapatnam.

/in/victor-ghosh/

Dr. Katrin Markus

Researcher and Future Founder, Fraunhofer Society

Dr. Katrin is a polymer scientist & future founder of a Fraunhofer based deep tech venture, pure additives, developing next generation stabilizer systems plastics. She completed her PhD in biobased stabilization and has since led research & transfer projects at the interface of academic chemistry & industrial application. Her work focuses on translating insights into degradation mechanisms to develop scalable additive solutions that improve material performance and enable sustainable plastics value chains. Within the start-up she is responsible for technology development, product design and working with industrial partners.



/in/katrin-markus/

Participants hosted at

KIIT-Technology Business Incubator (KIIT-TBI), Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), Bhubaneshwar



Vittal Rathod

CEO, Sorteco Innovations Pvt. Ltd., IIT Kanpur

Vittal is the Founder & CEO of Sorteco Innovations Pvt. Ltd. and an Electronics & Communication Engineer with expertise in AI, Computer Vision, Robotics, IoT, and Industrial Automation. He is passionate about building deep-tech solutions for environmental sustainability and the circular economy. Under his leadership, Sorteco developed Delta X Smart, an AI-powered robotic plastic waste sorting system, successfully completing POCs, prototype development, and pilot validation. Vittal has led patent and trademark filings, collaborated with government bodies and industry partners, and is focused on commercializing innovative AI-driven recycling technologies in India and global markets.

https://sortecoinnovations

Taleen Kannan

Co-Founder, SeyarkAI, Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt

Taleen is an engineer and AI innovator interested in transforming emerging technologies into practical solutions. Currently, he is pursuing a master's degree in Aeronautical Engineering at the Technical University of Ingolstadt. His experience spans artificial intelligence, robotics, digital twins, and space systems. He is also developing SeyarkAI, an enterprise AI assistant for technical knowledge and document workflows. A recipient of the DAAD Prize, Taleen has also supported international students, strengthening his skills in teamwork, leadership, and intercultural collaboration. Taleen holds a bachelor's degree in Physical Engineering.



/in/taleen-kannan/



Sabiha Tarafdar

PhD Researcher, KIIT Bhubaneshwar

Sabiha is a PhD candidate in Plant Molecular Biology at the School of Biotechnology, KIIT Bhubaneswar. Her doctoral research focuses on exploring the role of SlPAP19, a peroxisome-localized purple acid phosphatase in tomato, in regulating reactive oxygen species (ROS) homeostasis and phosphate signalling under abiotic stress conditions. Her lab is among the few in India dedicated to peroxisome biology in tomato, positioning her research as a pioneering effort within this niche in the Indian context.

/in/sabiha-tarafdar/



/in/pratik-acharya/

Pratik Acharya

PhD Researcher, KIIT Bhubaneshwar

Pratik is a biotechnology researcher with a keen interest in molecular diagnostics and infectious diseases, and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Biotechnology at KIIT University. His research focuses on the development of rapid, affordable, and accessible molecular diagnostic assays for infectious diseases, with a particular emphasis on isothermal amplification technologies, such as Loop-mediated Isothermal Amplification (LAMP). He is passionate about translating scientific research into innovative healthcare solutions that can improve disease diagnosis and patient outcomes. Pratik holds an M.Sc. in Biotechnology from Siksha 'O' Anusandhan University.

Victoria Utomo

Co-founder, Meridian Health, Entrepreneurial Innovation Hub, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU)

Victoria is pursuing a master's in Industrial Engineering and Mechanical Engineering at the FAU. She gained professional experience in project management at Telefónica and is currently working in growth and product development at Meridian Health, a digital platform for cross-border physician collaboration and a curated healthcare marketplace, where physicians exchange Subjective, Objective, Assessment, and Plan (SOAP) structured case data internationally. The platform also offers AI-assisted patient intake, video second-opinion consultations, and a tiered marketplace connecting patients to vetted international clinics. The startup is backed by GIZ and Pioneer Network for Telemedicine and Artificial Intelligence (PINTAI).



/in/victoria-utomo/



/in/ankitabanchhor/

Ankita Banchhor

Co-Founder, WindowWatt, KIIT Bhubaneshwar

Ankita is the Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer of WindowWatt India Pvt. Ltd., a women-led clean-tech startup developing Building Integrated Photovoltaic (BIPV) solutions for sustainable buildings. With a strong interest in renewable energy, climate action, and sustainable infrastructure, she focuses on commercializing innovative solar technologies that integrate seamlessly into modern architecture. Her work spans business strategy, partnerships, and technology commercialization, with a vision to accelerate the transition toward energy-efficient, net-zero buildings and contribute to global climate resilience. Ankita holds a master's degree in Ecology and Environmental Science from Pondicherry University and a bachelor's degree in Botany from Ravenshaw University.

Finja Lösing

Founder, AKWATECH, Ernst-Abbe-Hochschule Jena

Finja is passionate about Environmental Engineering and sustainable development, with a particular interest in innovative approaches to water treatment and resource-efficient technologies. She is currently writing her bachelor's thesis on a self-developed low-cost modular system for decentralised drinking water generation, focusing on practical and affordable solutions for Global South communities. Her experience in water purification and at AKWATECH, a technology-driven startup, has strengthened her interest in engineering and entrepreneurship. Through her international academic and practical experience in Germany, Cameroon and Namibia, she has gained skills in interdisciplinary teamwork, project development and translating technical concepts into applicable solutions.



/in/finja-l/



/in/rudra-s/

Rudra Sahu

PhD Researcher, KIIT Bhubaneshwar

Rudra is a biotechnology researcher passionate about diagnostics, immunology, and MedTech with a focus on translating innovative research into healthcare solutions. He is pursuing a PhD in Biotechnology at KIIT School of Biotechnology, and is also a Research Associate at Inflanova MedTech Pvt. Ltd., working on biomarker-based diagnostics, lateral flow assay (LFA) development, cardiovascular health, and antibody research. His interests include novel biotechnology, immunology, nanotechnology, and digital health, particularly accessible diagnostic technologies. Rudra holds a master's degree in Biotechnology.

Carlotta Tilsner

Master's Student, Technical University of Applied Sciences Rosenheim

Carlotta is a master's student in International Management, with a strong interest in entrepreneurship, and the responsible use of emerging technologies. Alongside her studies, she works at Neuramancer, a deep-tech startup developing AI-powered forensic software to detect deepfakes and digital fraud. Her interests include human-AI collaboration, the future of work and education, and responsible innovation. Carlotta holds a bachelor's degree in International Management, complemented by academic experiences in Chile and Spain.



/in/carlotta-tilsner/

Participants hosted at

Foundation for Science Innovation and Development (FSID), Indian Institute of Sciences (IISc), Bengaluru



/in/drvaishnavimohite/

Dr. Vaishnavi Mohite

Postdoctoral Researcher, IISc Bengaluru

Dr. Vaishnavi is a cognitive scientist with eight years of experience in behavioural and eye-tracking research, with a focus on human attention, learning, and decision-making. She designs and psychometrically validates novel cognitive measures from the ground up, including India's first diagnostic tool for prosopagnosia, validated across 1,500+ participants. Her work also spans educational technology, where she has developed and standardized behavioural interventions for school-age and adolescent learners, demonstrating measurable gains in academic performance. She has conducted learning and attention research with diverse populations, including illiterate and hearing-impaired cohorts. Her interests include applying AI tools to accelerate behavioural data analysis, alongside science communication.

Mona Höreth

PhD Researcher, University of Augsburg

Mona is currently pursuing her PhD, with a research focus on entrepreneurship education, particularly on how educational programmes can better support the transition from entrepreneurial intention to concrete entrepreneurial action. Alongside her academic work, she works at the innovation and start-up centre of the University of Augsburg, where she supports and advises aspiring founders and early-stage ventures. Combining research with practical experience, she is particularly interested in evidence-based approaches to entrepreneurship support and in understanding how ideas and knowledge can be translated into entrepreneurial action. Mona holds a bachelor's degree in Tourism Management and a master's degree in Global Business Management.



/in/mona-höreth/



/in/hrishita-jain/

Hrishita Jain

PhD Researcher, IISc Bengaluru

Hrishita is pursuing a PhD at the Robotics Innovation Lab, Department of Design and Manufacturing, IISc Bangalore. She has gained professional experience in industrial engineering and operations with Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Sun Pharmaceutical Industries. She has also authored research papers on supply chain optimization and has experience in robotics and engineering innovation. Her research interests include robotics, intelligent systems, automation, optimization, and interdisciplinary engineering, with a focus on developing practical solutions to real-world challenges. Hrishita is a Mechanical Engineering graduate from Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology (MANIT) Bhopal.

Sushmita Krishnan

PhD researcher, Martin Luther University of Halle -Wittenberg

Sushmita is an ecologist and sustainability enthusiast. She was selected as the only Indian among ten youth globally for the International Sustainability Academy (ISA) fellowship, Hamburg. Through the fellowship, she initiated her sustainable packaging venture using water hyacinth by collaborating with Prof. Dr. Bodo Saake from the University of Hamburg to develop a greaseproof biodegradable packaging paper from dried water hyacinth. Under the EXIST Women Founders programme, she is currently registered with the Startup office at Martin Luther University, Halle, where she is also pursuing her PhD funded by the Studienstiftung foundation. Sushmita holds a master's degree in Life Sciences from Bharathidasan University, Trichy.



/in/sushmita-krishnan/



/in/zaherfattah/

Muhammad Zaher Abdul Fattah

PhD Researcher, University Duisburg Essen

Muhammad Zaher is a PhD candidate in Medical Biology at the University of Duisburg-Essen, driving innovation in oncometabolism and DNA repair. His work explores synthetic lethality in cancer by merging molecular biology with epigenetics for precision and personalized treatment. He is also interested in AI-assisted molecular docking and bridging wet-lab expertise with computational analytics. Committed to translational science, he aims to convert complex lab findings into market-ready health solutions. Muhammad is an M.Sc. Silver Medallist from KIIT University, India.

Arshida M M

PhD researcher, IISc Bengaluru

Arshida is a cancer researcher working at the interface of cancer biology and bioengineering, with a strong interest in bed to benchside and back approach to develop more accessible, affordable, and effective healthcare solutions for cancer patients. She is pursuing a PhD in Cancer Bioengineering, focusing on developing advanced 3D cancer models for high-throughput drug screening and personalised oncomedicine. By combining experiences in cancer biology, organoid technology, 3D bioprinting, and clinical collaborations, she aims to develop physiologically relevant and scalable platforms that can help improve treatment selection and accelerate translation from research to clinical applications. Arshida holds a master's degree in Life Sciences.



/in/arshida/



https://akshaykalyan.net/

Akshay Kumar

Junior Research Fellow, Co-Founder, Mechanobiologike, IISc Bengaluru

Akshay is an engineer working at the intersection of acoustics, Micro Electro Mechanical Systems (MEMS) and mechanobiology. He is currently a Junior Research Fellow at the MEMS/NEMS Lab, Centre for Nano Science and Engineering, IISc Bangalore, where he builds ultrasound transducers, photoacoustic imaging systems and the electronics behind them. He has co-founded Mechanobiologike to build ultrasound based mechanostimulation devices for biomedical and clinical use. His work spans 14 publications and two patents, including a Penn State collaboration on portable photoacoustic imaging for vascular disease. Akshay holds a bachelor's degree in Computer Science and Engineering.

Dr. Dhananjai Pangotra

Researcher, Fraunhofer Institute for Interfacial Engineering and Biotechnology IGB

Dr. Dhananjai is a research scientist at Fraunhofer IGB in Straubing, specializing in electrocatalysis and electrochemical process development for sustainable chemical production. His research focuses on CO_2 electroreduction, hydrogen peroxide electrosynthesis, biomass valorization, and integrated electrochemical–biotechnological systems for carbon utilization. He is actively involved in national and European research projects advancing carbon capture and utilization, renewable fuels, and the circular bioeconomy. Dr. Dhananjai earned his Ph.D. in Electrochemistry from the Technical University of Munich (TUM).



/in/dhananjaipangotra/



/in/abhay-dwivedi/

Abhay Dwivedi

Founder, TanPrish Dynamics, IIT Kanpur

Abhay is a Mechanical Engineer, PhD scholar, and the Founder & Director of TanPrish Dynamics Pvt. Ltd., an AI-driven MedTech startup developing ColpAI, an AI-powered Software as a Medical Device (SaMD) for early cervical cancer screening. He brings strong expertise in engineering design, research, and technology development, contributing to the technical architecture and implementation of ColpAI. His work focuses on integrating engineering principles with AI-driven healthcare solutions, ensuring robustness, scalability, and real-world applicability of the product.

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