



## **JOSHA's Critical Review of "Tracking Success in a Fertile Start-up Ecosystem" by Nature**

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### Abstract:

The article "Tracking Success in a Fertile Start-up Ecosystem" explores the vibrant start-up culture in Germany, focusing on two successful start-ups: Clue, a Berlin-based period and ovulation tracker app, and Morpheus Space, a TU Dresden spin-off that has developed an electronic propulsion system for CubeSats. The article discusses the funding opportunities available to German startups, such as the EXIST programme, and notes the country's low percentage of female founders. Overall, the article provides insight into the promising start-up landscape in Germany, highlighting some of the successes and opportunities available. The article was first published in 'Nature' on November 26, 2020 (<https://media.nature.com/original/magazine-assets/d41586-020-03319-9/d41586-020-03319-9.pdf>).

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## Abstract

The article "Tracking Success in a Fertile Start-up Ecosystem" explores the vibrant start-up culture in Germany, focusing on two successful start-ups: Clue, a Berlin-based period and ovulation tracker app, and Morpheus Space, a TU Dresden spin-off that has developed an electronic propulsion system for CubeSats. The article discusses the funding opportunities available to German startups, such as the EXIST programme, and notes the country's low percentage of female founders. Overall, the article provides insight into the promising start-up landscape in Germany, highlighting some of the successes and opportunities available. The article was first published in 'Nature' on November 26, 2020 (<https://media.nature.com/original/magazine-assets/d41586-020-03319-9/d41586-020-03319-9.pdf>).



The article “Tracking Success in a Fertile Start-up Ecosystem” discusses the thriving start-up scene in Germany, with a particular focus on two start-ups that have been successful in raising funds and attracting research partnerships. The story highlights funding opportunities for German start-ups, such as the German government's EXIST programme, which has provided around €500 million to more than 2,000 projects since 2006. According to the Female Founders Monitor, the proportion of female founders of start-ups in Germany is only 15.7%, which is similar to the figures reported for London and Silicon Valley, California.

The first start-up discussed in the article is Clue, a Berlin-based start-up that created a period and ovulation tracker app that has attracted more than 13 million active users since its launch. Clue now maintains one of the world's largest publicly available databases on menstruation and has established research partnerships with prestigious institutions such as the Max Planck Society in Germany, the University of Oxford and Stanford University in California. The lure of working in Berlin, a city known for its affordability, quality of life and diverse expatriate communities, has contributed significantly to the company's success.

The second start-up, Morpheus Space, is a spin-off from TU Dresden that has developed a field emission electronic propulsion (FEEP) device that uses liquid gallium as a propellant for CubeSats. The company's flagship product is highly efficient and doesn't interfere with the satellite's design, which has made it popular with research institutions and companies for monitoring agricultural conditions, climate impacts and natural disasters. Morpheus Space was able to secure funding from Germany's EXIST programme, which supports start-ups founded by students and academics. Two other cases of startups are also discussed in detail. INERATEC, founded by researchers from the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), developed portable and modular chemical reactors as an alternative to expensive conventional gas-to-liquid conversion plants. PEAT, a spin-off from the Institute of Soil Science at Leibniz University Hannover, developed Plantix, a free mobile crop advisory app that analyses crop photos to diagnose diseases, pest damage and nutrient deficiencies, and advise treatments.

**JOSHA's conclusion:** Overall, the article provides an interesting insight into the start-up scene in Germany and highlights the funding opportunities for start-ups founded by students and academics. However, it does not discuss the challenges faced by start-ups in Germany. For example, it would have been useful to learn more about the regulatory environment for start-ups, success rates and the



availability of funding beyond the EXIST programme. Another issue that the article touches on but does not explore in depth is the low proportion of female start-ups in Germany. While this is not a problem unique to Germany, it would have been beneficial to learn more about the reasons behind this trend and what can be done to address it.

**JOSHA's Critical Reviews focus on recent studies and discoveries in medicine and science that may impact patient care. Our editors aim to stimulate thoughts and reflections on new developments and interventions. While our opinions are subjective, we hope this service is helpful. We welcome comments from our readers!**

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## Article Information

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