

Hotelbeds and Wayra (Telefónica) announce first start-ups to be part of the TravelTech Lab

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Madrid, June 8, 2023 - Hotelbeds and Wayra, Telefónica's open innovation initiative, have announced the winners of the first TravelTech Lab by Hotelbeds challenge. Following a competitive pitch day at the South Summit in Madrid, four start-ups rose to the challenge of finding **disruptive solutions to connect B2B global travel ecosystem stakeholders to create a frictionless travel experience**.

More than 60 proposals were submitted from companies based in 18 countries across the globe, including Spain, South Africa, Israel and Japan. Launched in February, the TravelTech Lab by Hotelbeds is powered by Wayra and is re-imagining travel by changing the way travellers move, connect and explore.

The winning start-ups are:

Botslovers: Chatbots, virtual assistants with artificial intelligence for real companies with the objective of reducing the operational costs of your company by organising the customer service section.

Grain: A unique end-to-end integrated currency exchange solution that enables travel software platforms and marketplaces to eliminate currency exchange risk for their customers. They achieve this by eliminating exchange rate volatility in hotel room accounts payable and allowing their customers to pay foreign currency bills in their local currency through local lanes.

Smartvel: Offers a complete set of solutions to solve different needs throughout the customer's journey, where the right content makes the difference. Its technology collects, categorizes, translates, enriches and validates both destination content and travel requirements (health requirements, travel documentation, visa). From museums, restaurants, city halls to official sources such as IATA, government agencies and official bodies.

Chekin: Helps owners of tourist accommodations to automate the entire check-in process, from the moment the reservation is created to the check-out. Generating up to 80% time savings and increasing revenue with each booking. Guest registration and identification, upselling, remote access to the property, sending data to the police, insurance and deposits and online payments.

"We were blown away by the response to our first challenge," said José María Pestaña, Hotelbeds' Chief Innovation Officer. "The competitive pitch process meant it wasn't easy choosing the winners but we're confident we have uncovered some game-changing solutions. We're looking forward to working with these start-ups and disrupting the travel ecosystem together."

These start-ups will now benefit from access to industry experts, Wayra's network of investors and potential access to a pilot of up to €40,000 with a Hotelbeds business area to kick-start their ideas. They will also be able to take advantage of the innovation spaces of both companies, both at Wayra's offices in Madrid and at Hotelbeds' headquarters in Palma de Mallorca.

"From Wayra it has been an exciting challenge to make available all our knowledge of the entrepreneurial ecosystem hand in hand with a reference partner in Hotelbeds to strengthen our position in the hotel and tourism sector. We would also like to congratulate all the winners. Together we will seek to create a real impact on your business and help you to climb the ladder," says Andrés Saborido, Global Director of Wayra.

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About Hotelbeds

Hotelbeds is a global leader in the TravelTech space, connecting and empowering businesses by facilitating bridges in the ever-changing and expanding travel ecosystem. Our cloud-based technology platforms offer quick and easy access to a global network of travel products, from accommodation to additional services and payments, while rich data and intelligence help generate demand. By operating exclusively in the B2B arena, we are uniquely positioned to drive growth for our partners without competing for the end customer. Our teams of more than 3,000 experts on the ground provide local expertise and support to further drive commerce, even in the hardest-to-reach spaces. Our unique combination of technology, data and passionate people serves as a catalyst for B2B travel agents who want to realize their full potential.

The [TravelTech Lab by Hotelbeds](#) is on a mission to re-imagine the world of travel. The Lab's creation was driven by a passion for innovation and finding new ways to use technology to help customers succeed, and to help business partners to exceed their goals. The Lab supports trail-blazing start-ups that are focused on collaboration and have a disruptive mindset to help Hotelbeds change the way that tomorrow's travellers move, connect and explore. Start-ups invited to join the initiative gain access to state-of-the-art working spaces in Palma de Mallorca and Madrid, as well as mentorship and potential investment from Hotelbeds to bring their ideas to life.

About Wayra

Since 2011, Wayra is the main program to connect Telefónica with the entrepreneurial ecosystem around the world, through which we invest and create our own startups. It has 7 spaces covering nine countries in Latin America and Europe, through which it invests and supports startups; Wayra Builder, a corporate venture builder to create together with other investors innovative startups born from Telefónica's internal technology projects. In addition, through the Wayra Activation Programme, it offers entrepreneurs exclusive and free access to new technologies through Telefónica's own platforms. In these eleven years, we have invested €66M in 850 startups and, currently, we have more than 400 startups in our portfolio of which more than 165 work with Telefónica.

More information available at www.wayra.es

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