

Rome is known for its rich cultural heritage, art and architecture. The city is also a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship, which I saw for myself during my visit to Roma 3 Università. I met with Andrea del Piaz and Prof. Paolo Merialdo, who are part of the Dock3 startup programme team.

Dock3 is an exciting programme that offers to 35 universities a unique opportunity to come together and develop innovative business ideas. The programme is designed to run for 4 months each year, it includes 11 meetings and 3 pitch tests to learn how to present ideas to investors. Participants have access to a network of 50 entrepreneurs, investors, startup founders and business leaders who provide continuous feedback. The programme offers workshops twice a week after lectures.

The programme starts with a selection process each February with the recruitment process and culminates in July with the presentation of a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) and a pitch to investors to conclude the programme.

Participants apply individually, they do team building exercises and after month 1 applicants post a YouTube business proposition from which teams of 3-5 members must be formed, with no more than 2 members having the same academic background. The selection criteria is based on competence, motivation, skills, disciplines and the order of application.

Once teams are formed, they work on their minimum viable product (MVP) for two months. Previous projects include smart devices to reduce water consumption, a drone to collect olives, a marketplace to rent equipments.

The Dock3 programme impressed me with its focus on team building, experimenting with ideas and building startups. The programme is modelled on Y Combinator, the famous startup accelerator in Silicon Valley. One of the most important aspects of the programme is finding the right co-founder, which is a daunting task for any startup. There is an improvisation exercise where students have to pitch in front of their classmates, this mimics the unpredictability of the startup world. The programme captures the concept of ideas, experimentation and validation that leads to the creation of a viable startup, they learn about resilience and why startups fail. Through activities, students learn about the recurring key themes of creating a start-up, including collective intelligence, error culture, proactivity, sharing and integrating ideas and meanings.

Some of Dock3's successful startups seek collaborators and co-founders to join their teams, a job board is available for students to find such opportunities.

It was interesting to see how the programme is designed to bring together students and researchers from different academic backgrounds, and the importance of building a multidisciplinary team to develop a viable business idea. I noticed some parallels with what we offer at the University of Bath, particularly our focus on fostering innovation and entrepreneurship through our Enterprise Programme and IKEEP. I hope we will find ways to work with Roma 3 Università and Dock3, perhaps by exploring opportunities for student exchanges or joint business projects.

My visit to Rome and my experience with Dock3 was inspiring and insightful, I look forward to seeing the benefits of my visit on our programme as we will start implementing 'Find a founder session'.