Program Overview

Welcome to the 5th edition of **FORWARD! (Forward!25 Fall Edition)**, a pre-acceleration program designed to take your startup from the ideation phase to a **prototype** and continue your journey toward building something that attracts investors!

For the second time, the program is open to all students and alumni from **Universidade Católica Portuguesa**, regardless of their faculty—whether you're studying Law, Medicine, Business, or any other discipline.

The program combines **hands-on workshops, expert mentorship, and intensive pitch practice**, with a strong focus on prototype development. Sessions will be a mix of **in-person** meetups at Católica and **online** sessions, ensuring flexibility while fostering strong community connections among entrepreneurs.

Key Milestones

- **Sep. 30, 2025** – Application Deadline (by midnight)
- **Oct. 3, 2025** – Selected teams will be contacted by email
- **Oct. 11, 2025** – Session 1 – In-person @Católica-Lisbon
- **Oct. 25, 2025** – Session 2 – Online
- **Nov. 8, 2025** – Session 3 – Online
- **Nov. 22, 2025** – Session 4 – Online
- **Dec. 6, 2025** – Session 5 - Online
- **Dec. 13, 2025 (tbc)** – Demo Day – In-person @Católica-Lisbon

---

Sessions Overview

The FORWARD! program consists of five 3-hour sessions where you'll roll up your sleeves and dive into the key activities to help you overcome your "First Mile."

- **Session 1 – October 11th | 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (In-person @Católica-Lisbon)**
  - Welcome & Rules of the Game
  - Present your team and pitch your idea
  - Identify top hypotheses and validation plan
  - Next steps
- **Session 2 – October 25th | 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (Online)**

- o Teams to share validation metrics
- o Identify what to focus on
- o Next steps
- **Session 3 – November 8th | 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (Online)**
  - o Why building a prototype?
  - o Tools to build you prototype
  - o Next steps and scheduling of mentoring sessions
- **Session 4 – November 22nd | 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (Online)**
  - o Why is pitching so important?
  - o How to pitch in front of a jury? Tools/Recommendations/Tricks..
  - o Next steps and scheduling of mentoring sessions
- **Session 5 – December 6th | 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (Online)**
  - o Rehearsal
- **Demo Day - December 13th (tbc) (In-person @Catolica-Lisbon)**
  - o Teams to pitch in front of a jury to identify the top teams

Throughout the program, you'll receive valuable resources, tools, and hands-on support to move your project forward. We will share documents and guides for your homework, but the focus of each session will be on working directly on your project.

Selection Process

Our team will review applications based on the depth of responses, focusing on your team's willingness, grit, and potential to bring an idea to market.

Mentors & Jury

During this program each team will have access to a pool of mentoring hours. On Demo Day, a jury composed of incubator managers will assess the final pitches.

Prizes for Selected Teams:

- o The most promising teams will be **fast-tracked into partner acceleration programs**.
- o **Mentorship hours** from the Catolica Lisbon Entrepreneurship Center (CLEC)

Program Partners (in progress)

- **BET Students Club** – Providing mentorship through their pool of students across various universities, with experience from events like BET24.
- **Build Up Labs** – Build Up Labs is a startup studio that creates, validates, and scales digital businesses while supporting founders through its venture builder and startup community.
  Follow Build Up Labs
- **Casa do Impacto** - Casa do Impacto is a Lisbon-based innovation hub that supports social and environmental impact startups through incubation, funding, and a collaborative community.
- **Unicorn Factory Lisboa** – Lisbon's leading incubator with a proven track record of growing and supporting the startup ecosystem.
- **Websummit** - Web Summit is the leading global technology conference that connects startups, investors, and industry leaders to discuss innovation and the future of tech.

Frequently Asked Questions

What language is the program in?
The program will be in English, and teams will pitch in English.

Do you invest in companies that participate in the program?
No, we don't invest directly. However, some mentors or guests may be interested in learning more.

Is there a cost to participate in the program?
No cost! The program is free of charge, and we take no equity or fees. All we ask is for your full commitment to attend all the sessions and give your best effort.

What will I get from the FORWARD program?
- Access to a supportive community and networking opportunities
- Mentorship in areas like product/market fit, prototyping and pitching
- A fast track to applying to top accelerators
- Visibility and exposure for your idea
- Hands-on experience and a lot of fun!

What is the track record of the FORWARD program?
This is our **4th edition**, and we've made some exciting changes based on feedback from previous participants. We aim to make this a smooth experience, but we welcome your feedback and suggestions to keep improving!

Who can apply?
Anyone can apply! We encourage teams with diverse backgrounds. However, at least one person on the team must be a current student or alumni of **Universidade Catolica Portuguesa**.

Do you focus on specific sectors?
Not at all! If you have a groundbreaking idea, we want to hear it—regardless of sector.

Do I need a business plan?
Nope! Just bring your idea and your passion.

Will you sign an NDA to protect my idea?
No, we don't sign NDAs at this stage. The commitment to secrecy on our application form is more than any VC would offer at this stage, and we take confidentiality seriously.

We have two ideas—should we submit two applications?
We recommend you pick your favorite idea and apply with that one. Focus on one, and make it shine!