

Alba, Tamkeen and Brinc MENA Shortlist **Three Bahraini SMEs** for Open Innovation Programme

Manama

Aluminium Bahrain (Alba), the world's largest aluminium smelter on one site, is pleased to announce its progression to the accelerator phase of the Open Innovation Program -- a strategic collaboration with the Bahrain's Labour Fund (Tamkeen) and Brinc MENA - with the selection of three Bahraini startups and SMEs to join this phase following a comprehensive evaluation process. This milestone builds on Alba's early involvement as the first company in Bahrain to join this initiative, reinforcing Alba's commitment to fostering innovation and empowering local businesses to grow and succeed.

The selected SMEs will enter a six-month accelerator phase under the Open Innovation Program, during which,

Yasin Aboudaoud,
Chief Development Officer and MP at Brinc



they will receive financial support, tailored mentoring and technical guidance from Alba and Brinc to co-develop proof-of-concept (POC) solutions leveraging cutting-edge technologies such as AI and IoT to address specific data in-

tegration and asset reliability challenges at Alba. UData was selected for the Data Management Challenge, and Dyanvate and Infinetware for the Asset Reliability Challenge.

In the fifth month, each startup/SME will present its POCs to a Steering Committee, which will select one winner per challenge for pilot implementation within Alba's operations. The shortlisted SMEs will work closely with Brinc MENA and Alba experts to refine and test their solutions, with potential for broader deployment across Alba's operations.

On this occasion, Ali Al Baqali,

CEO of Alba, stated: "Innovation underpins Alba's operational excellence. Our collaboration with Tamkeen and Brinc MENA enables us to work with Bahraini startups and SMEs to build technology-driven solutions to operational challenges, while promoting entrepreneurship and long-term economic resilience."

Yasin Aboudaoud, Chief Development Officer and MP at Brinc added: "The selection of these startups reflects the real value the Open Innovation Program offers. By matching Alba's complex operational challenges with high-potential Bahraini

SMEs, we are forging a path toward deeper collaboration and tangible economic impact."

Brinc MENA, Tamkeen's appointed innovation partner, led the end-to-end scouting and evaluation process, applying rigorous standards to ensure alignment with the program's goals. Key benchmarks included Bahraini founded - **Ali Al Baqali,** CEO of Alba

er presence, proven technical competencies, innovation readiness and the ability to operate within the program's governance structure and respond effectively to corporate challenges. The evaluation phase included interviews with shortlisted SMEs, conducted by a joint committee of representatives from Alba, Tamkeen and Brinc MENA. Startups presented their capabilities, founder backgrounds and proposed solutions, and the final evaluation was based on a structured scoring matrix, resulting in the selection of the top-performing companies for the accelerator phase.



Zain Bahrain becomes first telecommunications operator in Kingdom to achieve **ISO 37301**

● **Nadia Aqeel, Chief Legal, Regulatory & Compliance Officer at Zain Bahrain:** "Adhering to the highest compliance standards drives long-term growth, creates value and bolsters investor confidence."

● **Certification within the telecommunications regulatory-compliance scope reflects the company's commitment to sound corporate governance practices and ethical conduct.**

Manama

Zain Bahrain has been awarded the ISO 37301:2021 certification, an internationally recognized standard for Compliance Management Systems (CMS). As the first operator in the Kingdom, to achieve this significant milestone, this certification within the telecom compliance scope is testament to the operator's unwavering commitment to regulatory adherence and a culture

of integrity across all levels of the organization.

ISO 37301 provides a comprehensive framework for establishing, developing, implementing, evaluating, and improving an effective compliance management system, supporting an overall high standard regulatory compliance.

Tangible benefits to organizations that attain ISO 37301 certification include: improving business opportunities and sustainability; protecting and enhancing an organization's reputation and credibility; taking into account expectations of interested parties; demonstrating an organization's commitment to managing its compliance risks effectively and efficiently; increasing the confidence of third parties in the organization's capacity to achieve sustained success; minimizing the risk of a contravention occurring with the attendant costs and reputational damage.

Nadia Aqeel, Chief Legal, Regulatory & Compliance Officer at Zain Bahrain commented: "Adhering to the highest compliance standards drives long-term growth, creates value and bolsters investor confidence. This ISO 37301 certification reflects Zain Bahrain's commitment to global best practices, a critical driver that will support our '4WARD-Progress with Purpose' strategic and sustainable growth

aspirations."

More on ISO 37301:2021 CMS

A CMS based on the requirements and guidance of ISO 37301 equips Zain with a set of tools (policies, processes, and controls) that allows the company to establish and maintain a culture of compliance. This CMS based on ISO 37301 reflects Zain's commitment to sound norms of corporate governance, good practices, and ethical conduct as well as improving the company's ability to identify and respond to potential non-compliances.

ISO 37301 includes requirements that address competence, communication, and awareness. By complying with these requirements, Zain ensures that the vision of the top management is translated and embedded into the conduct of its managers and employees. Above all, the governing body and top management of Zain actively and visibly demonstrate their commitment to the CMS through their actions and decisions.

Zain Group's Regulatory Compliance Program (RCP)

The RCP program was launched in 2022 with the vision of enabling all Zain Groupwide Regulatory teams to establish a unified compliance framework aimed at achieving complete and



sustained adherence to directives issued by telecommunications regulatory authorities. A key focus of the program is to secure ISO certification for the operations, ensuring alignment with globally recognized leading practices.

In its initial phases, RCP equipped Zain operating companies with critical tools, including centralized repositories, documentation databases, role clarity, automated reminders, management dashboards, and digitized workflows, ensuring compliance excellence remains integral to operations.

Considerable progress in institutionalizing regulatory compliance has been made underscoring the company's commitment to governance and regulatory excellence. The RCP has now been successfully implemented in Zain operations across Kuwait and Bahrain (which are both certified), and Iraq. Furthermore, the RCP is now being rolled out in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and South Sudan, and within ZainTECH, the Group's enterprise digital services arm.

These concrete actions further strengthen Zain Group's regulatory frameworks and operational efficiency to ensure continued compliance with directives from Telecommunications Regulatory Authorities across the company's footprint.