

Ex-staff challenge Nokia with new Finnish smartphone

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A woman looks at mobile phones in 2010. A group of ex-Nokia employees who quit over the company's decision to abandon the planned MeeGo operating system in favour of Windows plan to launch their own smartphone next year, their start-up said on Wednesday.

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The [company](#) Jolla, which counts four former Nokia engineers and directors among its five founders, presented its new operating system Sailfish in Helsinki and co-founder and chairman of the board Antti Saarnio promised to deliver "the world's best smartphone" by mid-2013.

"Jolla's own phone will be a high-end premium product," Saarnio told AFP.

In addition, the company will offer Sailfish products to retailer and operator partners for the medium-price range.

Jolla's target and key market is China "because this is the most dynamic market at the moment in the smartphone industry and the industry there is looking for different alternatives to make smartphones."

The US market is not part of Jolla's business plan, but Europe and North Africa are, Saarnio said.

Jolla—which in Finnish means both a small sailboat and a life boat—was started a little over a year ago, shortly after Nokia decided to go with the [Windows OS](#).

"Most of our team was at that time working in the [MeeGo](#) unit and we were so passionate about MeeGo and felt it was so competitive that we wanted to continue the development and start a company," Saarnio explained.

Today the company employs 50 people and is hiring each month.

Jolla has already received financing of more than 10 million euros (\$12.8 million) from private Finnish and international investors and Finnish state funding.

"This is enough for developing and commercialising the product, both hardware and software," said Saarnio, who himself still uses a Nokia N9 mobile phone.

"In the spring we intend to raise about 20 million euros for growth financing," he said.

Two distribution deals are already in place, with the largest smartphone retailer in China, D.Phone, and the Finnish operator DNA.

The phone's physical design will be revealed early next year.

Saarnio said the Jolla phones would offer "multi-tasking and true user interface differentiation ... freeing people from opening and closing applications, making the use of the smartphones much more efficient and letting them tailor their screens much more than others."

The Sailfish OS will also run on tablets, he said.

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