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INTRODUCTION

EMPLOYOUTH project aims to implement a comprehensive package of actions that will have as final result the entering to employment of highly educated people and the emergence of prospects based on competitiveness, productivity and innovation.

The intervention includes a holistic package of measures which will utilize the valuable human capital of the two countries in the labor market with ultimate objective of exchanging qualified personnel, improving the competitiveness of the two economies and strengthening regional cohesion in the border region.

Project Objectives

- Creation of a dynamic entrepreneurship culture
- Investment on human capital as one of the most valuable resources of the cross border area for promoting economic activities
- Development of entrepreneurship and conditions facilitating job creation
- Enhancement of skills and boost of human potential

Expected results

- Build on existing potential of the region
- Focus on educated youth to create jobs
- Limit the brain drain phenomena the two countries are facing
- Enhance the attractiveness of the region for young entrepreneurs

Target groups

Potential entrepreneurs will be supported to develop a viable business plan based on their own innovative idea.

Existing entrepreneurs with different backgrounds and with long experience in the business world will present their company, highlight success stories and difficulties encountered in their entrepreneurial route.

Project Factsheet

Duration: 2018-2020

Budget: €850.200,00

6 partners

During the project duration both in Greece and North Macedonia, project partners have established Start up Accelerators (known as Entrepreneurial Nests) in Serres, Kilkis, Edessa and Bitola. The Entrepreneurship Nests provided with the framework to support young graduates to implement their business plans. The support consisted of:

- Organization of regular meetings with mentors
- Organization of training seminars
- Networking events

Project Beneficiaries (target of 60 in Greece and 60 in North Macedonia) have emerged following a call for expression of interest in the "New Innovative Business Idea" competition¹ and after being evaluated on the basis of specific (formal and substantive) criteria.

Within this frame project partners have achieved to:

- Establish startup accelerator management and implementation team to set the right internal mechanisms and external ecosystems for young graduates to develop their business ideas
- Develop and set up the Accelerator Programme, and provide the right conditions where young graduates can learn and practice with essential communication, presentation, and relevant soft skills.

Mentoring programme framework

The mentoring programme:

- It is oriented towards developing interpersonal relationships
- It is a lasting relationship that can be maintained for a long time
- It mainly revolves around the development of the (beneficiary) process participant as a professional

The agenda is set by the participants (beneficiaries), while the mentor provides support and guidance to prepare them for future roles.

¹ The Call for expression of interest for participation in the project in Greece was launched on 15.11.2018 and the deadline for submission of business ideas was set to 20.12.2018 (and was then extended until 20.1.2019).

Methodology

The methodology that mentors have followed during the implementation of the 3-month program in Greece consists of eight steps as follows:

The first step is to mature the business idea and define the goals and initial parameters that determine it (target market segment, typically).

The second step is to conduct market research in order to gather all the data needed to determine its demand, competition, consumer characteristics, etc. Market research has a crucial role and importance in the success (or not) of the project idea as it gives all the necessary market data.

The third step is to reject the unsustainable scenarios. The fourth step is to develop the most sustainable idea and formulate all the strategies related to its implementation.

The fifth step is identifying the target group, defining the needs of the purchasing audience, differentiating them from the competition - comparative advantage, defining a strategy and marketing mix.

The sixth step is to finalize the business plan and map out all the strategic as well as practical issues (spaces, media, resources).

The seventh step is to evaluate the business plan, to fix all the issues involved, to ensure its effectiveness and to make any corrective action.

The eighth step is to complete the business plan

Techniques / tools

The techniques / tools that can be used include all those activities that help the mentor achieve the goals of the program. Indicatively - and not restrictively - the techniques used by the mentors are the following:

- Brain Storming
- Working in groups
- Role Play
- Simulation
- Case studies
- Presentations (including videos)
- Business Canvas Model (Business Model Canvas)

 is a methodology to capture in one page all the nine key elements (building blocks) that make up a business. This tool is particularly useful for tracking the progress of the project idea, comparing the two stages, first at the start and then at the completion of the program.

Training Programme framework

The training programme aims to guard the beneficiaries with skills and knowledge that will assist them in their efforts. Moreover the training content was such as to assist the beneficiaries mature their business idea and expand their business plan a step forward.

The development of the training programme has been tailored to the needs of potential startups and covered a wide range of topics, which support the capacity building and skills of participating beneficiaries. The training has been provided by a network of trainers comprised of people with business and / or academic background with the relevant expertise knowledge.

Start up Accelerator in Serres

Start up Accelerator in Serres

- Official programme start: 16th of May 2019
- Official programme end: 16th of August 2019

Training services

25 beneficiaries with project ideas in agribusiness, energy and IT sector have received 40 hour of training in the following topics:

- Introduction to start up entrepreneurship
- Story Telling (startups case studies)

- Marketing (Basic Principles and framework)
- Basic principles of Intellectual Property Rights for startups
- Planning and development of business plans –
 Best practices for a successful elevator pitch
- Philosophy and process of sales
- Basic principles of human resource management
- NSRF funded programmes
- Basic principles of team building
- Funding methods for startups





Start up Accelerator in Serres

Mentoring services

The participants in Serres have received 220h of specialized support and mentoring services, in order to develop their individual skills and their business plans.



Networking events

 $1^{\underline{st}}$ networking event

A networking event was organised by the Chamber of Serres on Friday, 12.07.2019, with the honor of inviting Dr. Paris Kokorotsikos, Chairman & CEO of EUROCONSULTANTS SA, and Member of the Board of the Greek Exporters Association.

Dr. Kokorotsikos talked about the innovation and entrepreneurship system and how it will evolve in the future with the creation of

incubators in every capital of the Prefecture of Central Macedonia in collaboration with universities / research institutes, chambers and other business organizations.

Start up Accelerator in Serres

Successful examples of entrepreneurial endeavors were then presented and discussed by young people who had the vision and the desire to make their plans a reality (such as the HeySuccess online program that offers scholarships and job opportunities internationally) and other large companies in the region of Central Macedonia where in collaboration with Regional Research Organisations, produce innovative world-class products.

Participants also had the opportunity to learn about the

technological megatrends that shape the future, reshape markets and societies, and thus the global order, as well as the forms of digital revolution that will create the need for new products and services, based on the social changes taking place globally.





Start up Accelerator in Serres

2nd networking event

Another networking event was organised by the Chamber of Serres on Wednesday, 17.07.2019 with the honorable guest Mr. Kaggelidis Kostis (Founder, President and CEO of Gnomon S.A, President of BoD of the Association of Information Technology Companies of Northern Greece (SEPVE).

Mr. Kaggelidis presented the philosophy of digital coins (bitcoins) and related technologies (blockchain) and presented the framework for implementation and the perspectives that shape the future.

Subsequently, trends in the IT sector were discussed, and the participants had the opportunity to be informed of GNOMON SA. a company with emblematic IT projects in the field of interoperability of electronic systems, electronic supplies in Health but also in innovative applications of artificial intelligence and active in Greece and abroad.





Demo Day in Serres

The programme ended with the so-called "Demo Day", where the beneficiaries presented their innovative idea to the public. The Demo Day took place on Saturday 28.9.2019, at the multipurpose area "Athena" inside Kolokotronis camp in Serres in the framework of the 5th SEREXPO organised by the Chamber of Serres.

Each business idea was evaluated by a committee composed of Mrs. Maria Anastasiadou - Managing Director of FIBRAN SA, Mr. Panagiotis Tsinavos - President of KRI-KRI SA., Mr. George Tairis – Vice President of ECO TECHNICAL, Mrs. Thomai Boziou (Chamber of Serres), Mr. Athanasios Mpantis (Mentor) and Mr. Pavlos Kilintzis (University of Western Macedonia). Also beneficiaries evaluated the business ideas other than their own.

Start up Accelerator in Kilkis



Start up Accelerator in Kilkis

- Official programme start: 6th of May 2019
- Official programme end: 6th of August 2019

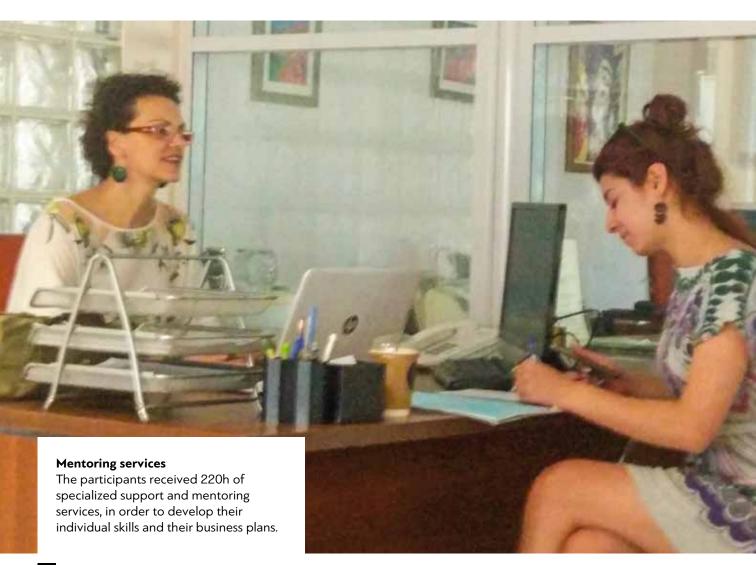
Training services

20 beneficiaries with project ideas have received 40 hour of training in the following topics:

- Introduction start up entrepreneurship
- Story Telling (startups case studies)
- Marketing (Basic Principles and framework)
- Basic principles of Intellectual Property Rights for startups

- Planning and development of business plans – Best practices for a successful elevator pitch
- Philosophy and process of sales
- Basic principles of human resource management
- NSRF funded programmes
- Basic principles of team building
- Funding methods for startups

Start up Accelerator in Kilkis



Start up Accelerator in Kilkis



1st networking event

Beneficiaries in Kilkis had the opportunity to discuss the achievements of EMBIoTS and other successful cases in the frame of the 1st networking event organised by the Chamber of Kilkis (former ETEAK) on Wednesday, 10.7.2019.

It turned out to be a very inspiring and motivating event and a great opportunity for networking as the invited speaker (Mr. Foroglou Yiorgos) talked about his own experience from the beginning of his entrepreneurship journey, about the problems that he and his teammates had to face, the support and awards received. Participants also talked about the services provided on the i4G pro where Embiots is hosted.

2nd networking event

Another networking event was organised by the Chamber of Kilkis (former ETEAK) on Tuesday, 16.7.2019 with special guests Mr. Angelos Arabatzis and Mr. Dimitris Dimitrakopoulos (software development experts).

The purpose of the networking event - which has been achieved - was to act as a catalyst and a hub for beneficiaries with young scientists and experts in the field of their innovative idea to enable them to exchange experiences and reflections, giving directions that will give a boost to business synergies.

Beneficiaries had the opportunity to communicate their ideas with the two expert scientists, exchange views and discuss practical issues in the development of their business ideas.





Start up Accelerator in Kilkis



Demo Day in Kilkis

The programme ended with the so-called "Demo Day", where the beneficiaries presented their innovative idea to the public. The Demo Day was organised by the Chamber of Kilkis (former ETEAK) on Tuesday 1.10.2019 in the Chamber of Kilkis (V. Sergiannidis Hall).

Each business idea was evaluated by a committee composed of Mr Christos Hadjimladis - President of the Kilkis Chamber, Mr. Konstantinos Violitzis - 2nd Vice-President of the Kilkis Chamber, Mr. Stergios Stratelis - Owner of HELLASDUCT, Maria Kalogeridou (Chamber of Kilkis (former ETEAK)), Mr. George Vlachos and Mrs Maria Mouzouri (Mentors) and Mr. Pavlos Kilintzis (University of Western Macedonia). Also beneficiaries evaluated the business ideas other than their own.

Start up Accelerator in Edessa

Start up Accelerator in Edessa

- Official programme start: 30th of September 2019
- Official programme end: 30th of December 2019



Start up Accelerator in Edessa

Training services

15 beneficiaries with project ideas have received 40 hours of training in the following topics:

- Introduction start up entrepreneurship
- Story Telling (startups case studies)
- Marketing (Basic Principles and framework)
- Basic principles of Intellectual Property Rights for startups
- Planning and development of business plans – Best practices for a successful elevator pitch
- Philosophy and process of sales



- Basic principles of human resource management
- NSRF funded programmes
- Basic principles of team building
- Funding methods for startups



Start up Accelerator in Edessa

Networking events 1st networking event

A networking event was organised by the Chamber of Pella on Tuesday, 5.11.2019, with the main speaker be Mrs. Natasha Chatziaggeli (Product and System Design Engineer).

Mrs Chatziaggeli shared with the beneficiaries her personal experience, talked about her decision to start her own business, the difficulties she has encountered and the international recognition she gained through participation in relevant competitions.



Another networking event was organised by the Chamber of Pella on Wednesday, 11.12.2019 with invited speaker Mr. Foroglou Yiorgos (EMBIoTS). During the event, Mr. Foroglou talked to the beneficiaries about his own experience, the problems he encountered, the support, distinctions and funds he received etc. The beneficiaries got in contact with a startup company which in times of crisis has managed to stand on its own and developed a successful business model. Moreover, beneficiaries had the opportunity to be informed on the services provided by the i4G pro that hosts the Embiots.

Start up Accelerator in Edessa

Demo Day in Edessa

The programme ended with the so-called "Demo Day", where the beneficiaries presented their innovative idea to the public. The Demo Day was organised by the Chamber of Pella on Friday, 20.12.2019 in the City Hall of City of Edessa.

Each business idea was evaluated by a committee composed of Mr Ioannis Soupiadis - Accountant - President of the Pella Tax Association, Mr. Georgios Glavakis - Nursery plants - Photovoltaics -General Secretary of the Aridaia Trade Association, Mr. Ioannis Slamkas - Building Materials, Member of BoD of Edessa Trade Association, Mr. Georgios Vladikas (Chamber of Pella), Dr. Elpida Samara, Postdoctoral Fellow (University of Western Macedonia, Department of Regional and Cross-Border Development), Mr. Christos Mpimpitsos and Mr. Vaggelis Loggos (Mentors). Also beneficiaries evaluated the business ideas other than their



Start up Accelerator in Bitola

Start up Accelerator in Bitola

Startup Accelerator in Bitola started with two promotional events on 13th December 2018, organized by Preda plus & on 27th of December 2018, organized by Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies

Bitola, launching the call for enrolment for participation in the programme.

The application process for all interested participants remained open until the 31th of January 2019 and was managed through two google application forms,

each one administered by Preda plus and Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies Bitola respectively.

Programme duration: January
 April 2019 with participation of 80 beneficiaries



Start up Accelerator in Bitola



Start up Accelerator in Bitola

Training services

The training programme was organized as a group of training sessions (Intensive 4 day BOOT CAMP) and individual consultations. The beneficiaries received 80 hours of training in the following topics:

- PR &Marketing
- Graphic design
- Business strategy and implementation
- Branding for startups
- FITR Funding possibilities
- VC funding & investment
- Project Management
- Corporate investment & innovation

- How to run a business in Macedonia
- Startup Law (how to open a company)
- Export/internationalization
- Storytelling
- IP Rights
- Human resources



Start up Accelerator in Bitola

Mentoring services

The participants received 800 hours of specialized support and mentoring services at Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies Bitola (360 hours from external consultants in business ideas development, plus 440 hours in product development from staff of Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies Bitola) and 220hours of specialized support and mentoring services at Preda plus, in order to develop their individual skills and their business plans.

The Coaching/mentoring sessions were organized upon the mentorship program, specially designed for the project:

- Module 1: Quantitative business model canvas
- Module 2: Finance for nonfinance
- Module3: Sales and Growth Hacking
- Module 4: Pitching

A manual for developing business ideas presentation and pitching was developed and distributed electronically to every mentored candidate.





Networking events

1st networking event (by Preda plus)

A networking event was organised on Thursday 28.2.2019 with the main topic be "BRANDING - How to implement the idea and business strategy". The event had provided significant experience, exchange of ideas and networking for all participants of Employouth

program, business sector and all interested stakeholders.

The main speaker at the event was Mr. ROLAND SIMON – Brand strategist and marketing communications specialist who introduced the secrets of brand strategy and how to implement the idea in business. The event provided with the opportunity for participants to:

- Share contacts and experiences with representatives of the business community
- Network with potential investors
- Educate on a relevant topic for doing business



Start up Accelerator in Bitola

<u>2nd networking event</u> (by Preda plus)

Another networking event was organised on Wednesday 20.3.2019, in an inspiring and motivating atmosphere for presentation of business ideas from the Employouth accelerator program for startups in hotel Millenium in Bitola.

EMPLOYOUTH beneficiaries had the opportunity to present their business ideas in front of special created Commission composed by relevant representatives of business sector, academia and media in order to enhance the presentation skills of presenting their business to investors and the public, thus preparing for the upcoming Demo Day.

The event was designed and realized in 3 parts:

- Presentation of ideas (short presentation of 9 business ideas from Start up Accelerator in Bitola)
- Evaluation of presentations (evaluation of presentations according to predefined criteria, sharing of recommendations, experiences and opinions by the evaluators to improve presentations)



Start up Accelerator in Bitola



<u>3rd networking event (by Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies Bitola</u>

A Networking event was organized with local industry on Friday 19.04.2019 in Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies Bitola according to World Café method (teams received valued inputs from experienced local business persons about their business idea).

Start up Accelerator in Bitola



Accelerator programme

Cocktail party with DJ set

investors and executives.



Coworking programme in Thessaloniki

Coworking programme in Thessaloniki

- Official programme start: 3rd of February 2020
- Official programme end: 3rd of May 2020

Training services

15 beneficiaries / 40 hour of training in the following topics:

- Agile and Scrum Methodology / How to work with complexity
- Sales Technics
- Sales Analysis
- Digital Marketing
- Logistics
- Lean Methodology
- UI/UX
- Design Thinking

Mentoring services

 15 beneficiaries / 120h of specialized support and mentoring services, in in-depth analysis of business ideas and development of business model canyas







Parallel events

Two networking events and four study visits will be organised until the end of the 3-month coworking programme.

Coworking programme in Bitola

Programme duration: April – October 2019 with participation of 20 beneficiaries (who successfully finished the programme and managed to develop their business ideas to full scale business plans - target was 15).

Training services

The beneficiaries have received 40 hours of training in the following topics:

- Digital marketing
- Practical realization of Business plan
- Finance for non-finance (advanced level)
- Crowdfunding



Coworking programme in Bitola

During the pre-incubation period, the teams selected

on demo day had on their disposal shared workspace

to develop their business ideas into business plans and

Mentoring services

The participants in Bitola have received 120h of mentoring/coaching services in order to provide an indepth analysis of business ideas and coach the process

of creation of Business canvases in total. The expert team provided with mentorship/coaching services to 13 business ideas (individually and in groups), helping them to improve their draft canvases by adding value to the ideas and the sections included in the document as a first step towards the creation of business

the process initial/ draft versions of their products.

Beside and m service candic manual plan delever members.

Beside the coaching and mentoring services every candidate received a manual for business plan development. Eleven teams with 42 members managed to develop their business ideas into full scale business plans.



Coworking programme in Bitola

Networking events

Womenpreneurs stories (Preda plus)

A networking event was organized on Wednesday 19.6.2019 for sharing inspiring stories for greater involvement of women in entrepreneurship.

Networking event (Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies – Bitola)

A networking event was held on Wednesday 9.10.2019 at Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies – Bitola. During the event the teams who managed to develop their business ideas into business plans had the opportunity to network with local investors and the industry. Besides local speakers, in the event has also participated a team from the University of Western Macedonia in Kozani.





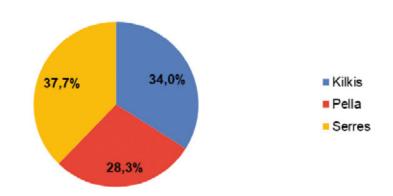
The event has attracted around 80 participants and huge attention in the public - it was promoted on more than 10 national web news and 3 national TVs.

Seven teams with 20 participants presented their business plans and professional jury ranked them. Best ranked teams started preparations for presentation of their business ideas in the final innovative ideas competition in Greece.



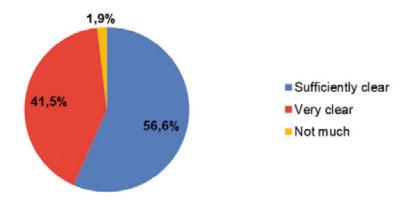
The startup accelerator programme in Greece was evaluated by the beneficiaries with the use of an online questionnaire sent to them at the initiative of Greek partners in order to analyze the participation of the beneficiaries in practice, as well as to draw useful conclusions.

In which Start up Accelerator programme did you participate in?



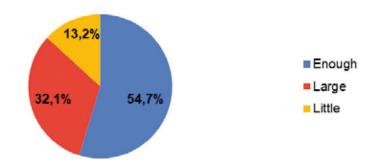
According to beneficiaries' responses, nearly 98% of them stated that the programme's objectives have been clear to them.

Have the programme's objectives been clear to you?



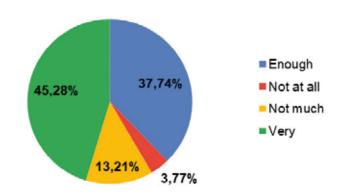
Nearly one third of the participants stated that the content of the training material meets their needs for knowledge and skills upgrade to a large extent, while for more than half of them training content has addressed their needs.

To what extent did the content of the training meet your needs for knowledge and skills upgrade?



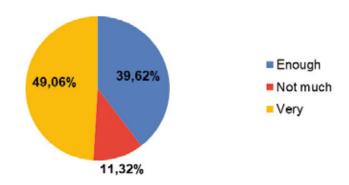
How satisfied are you with the mentoring services you received?

45,28% of the participants were very satisfied with the mentoring services they've received contrary to a limited part of participants that were not satisfied at all (3,77%).



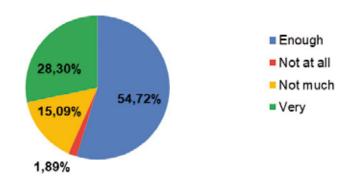
The quality of trainers / speakers/ mentors engaged in the startup accelerator in Greece is depicted in the following chart where nearly 90% of the participants were enough to very satisfied with the experts implementing the programme. This is an indicator that the experts provided concrete and actionable feedback.

Overall, how satisfied are you with the trainers / speakers/ mentors of the start up accelerator programme?



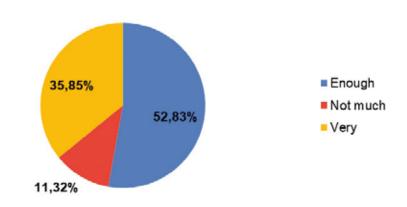
Nearly 17% of the participants feel that they cannot use the knowledge gained to a large extent. This is probably interrelated with the business culture and mentality of the youth trying to recover from the long lasting crisis that hit the country.

To what extent do you think you can use the knowledge you gained from the start up accelerator programme?



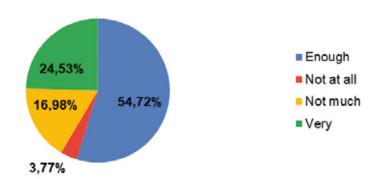
For nearly 90% of the participants the startup accelerator programme's duration was sufficient. For those that stated that the duration was not that much sufficient, they would prefer to allocate more hours to mentoring. Of course, this is something that the project partners will take into consideration for relevant projects' development in the future.

Was the duration of the startup accelerator programme sufficient?



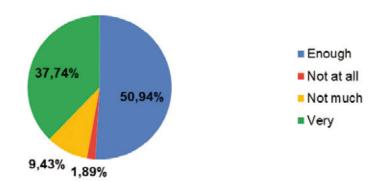
79,25% of the participants claimed that their expectations were met with respect to the services provided by the startup accelerator programme

Has the startup accelerator programme meet your initial expectations?



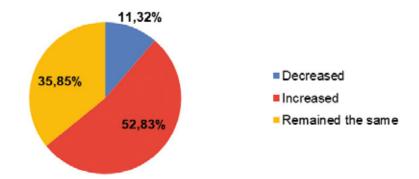
How satisfied are you with the organization and coordination of the start up accelerator programme?

Organization and coordination of startup accelerator programmes has been satisfactory for the majority of the participants (88,68%).



Participation in the startup accelerator programme has increased the desire to further develop their business idea and launch a business for more than half of the participants

After attending the startup accelerator programme your desire to implement your business idea and start a business:



TESTIMONIALS

"Mentoring and networking events were both very useful as business plan development tools"

Project beneficiary from Kilkis

"Everything I heard and learned was all-embracing and even helped to refine and make my idea more realistic with real data and of course to be proved profitable through financial data"

Project beneficiary from Edessa

"The program was excellent and the knowledge I gained is valuable"

Project beneficiary from Edessa

"A great and very well organized idea. Well done and good luck"

Project beneficiary from Serres

"Through the process of developing of the business idea my mentors and coaches from Preda plus helped me to fill my gaps in knowledge and skills and motivate me to be more confident and to succeed. In addition, they have helped to anticipate the risk, showing me the realistic market situation and encourage me to make a solid market research before establishing my business idea. Whole program was awakening moment to me, and through me, to lot of people who are looking for a healthy lifestyle. I am very grateful for this program that changes my life.

Project beneficiary from Bitola

Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies, University "St. Kliment Ohridski" – Bitola as leading IT educational institution in the region, with EMPLOYOUTH project provided us added value. How to realize our ideas that we had during the studies into real business

Project beneficiary from Bitola

Preda plus Foundation was an eye-opener that you can start individual project without having secured the real financial resources from the first start. Their mentorship canalized my thoughts. Up to that moment, I had a chaos in my head where and how to start. The feeling is real if you are from the IT sector and your intellectual potential is focused on problem solution from that topic, instead of accommodating it in a business model.

Project beneficiary from Bitola



PROJECT PARTNERS



Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serres (LP)



Research Committee - University of Western Macedonia



Chamber of Kilkis



Chamber of Pella



St. Kliment Ohridski University – Bitola, Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies – Bitola



Foundation for Sustainable Economic Development Preda plus





