

Creative Entrepreneurship Network, Bulgaria

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- **Scale of activity:** regional
- **Actor/s:** youth, entrepreneurship
- **State of the activity:** ongoing, started in October 2016
- **Keywords:** creativity, youth, community, culture, entrepreneurship, network



Summary

The project aims to increase the competitiveness through stimulating creativity among young people and cultural and community centres, to build capacity of creative entrepreneurs for development of creative products and services and to equip them with entrepreneurial mind-set and skills and encouraging development of network for creative industries promotion.

Description of activities

The project provides an environment to unlock creativity, in particular of young people, develops tools such as mobile creative ateliers/workshops in local communities, encourages entrepreneurial skills for development of creative industries, intensifies cross-border cooperation between the people and institutions of the BG-MK cross-border region in order to jointly address common challenges and exploit untapped potentials.

Project partners are Business Incubator-Gotse Delchev, Entrepreneurship Promotion Centre, Bulgarian and Fondation for Development of SMEs, Strumica, Macedonia which involved cultural & community centres, students from high schools and universities.

The main activities implemented:

- Establishment of 6 mobile ateliers/workshops;
- Creative Forum in Strumica, Mk with 40 participants for creative ideas and creative networking and cooperation;
- Capacity Building for creative ideas and entrepreneurship : training for trainers "Development of creative products" and Creative workshops trainings and mentoring on Film and clip making, on Music workshop,

on Arts and crafts mobile workshop, on Mask and costumes and Creative Entrepreneurship training and Opportunity to finance a creative business;

- Cross-border Creative Fair in Gotse Delchev for the 40 most active participants from all 6 creative workshops to make creative products prototypes;
- Intensive learning in Barcelona, Spain – study visit and good practice exchange for 20 active participants;
- Cross - border Exhibition "Creativity and Entrepreneurship in Strumica where young people and community and cultural centres presented the products, results & lessons learnt.

The process:

The partners made an intensive campaign to identify creative youth and local people in rural areas and their abilities and skills and willing to use the creativity in entrepreneurial way such as social media, meeting in high schools, meetings in villages, personal contacts, talks with representatives of local authorities and identified first group of 40 people to start the process, most of them young people. The decision about the kind of ateliers and equipment for them was on the base of previous survey and implemented projects.



Then involved experts with proven expertise to train the local people and mentoring them: initially 10 BG and 10 MK people identified as local leaders/drivers of initiatives who became the core of the creative ateliers; after that there were variety of specific trainings: video and music creation, fashion design and creative reuse of old cloths and accessories, jewellery with natural components inspired by the nature, products inspired by the nature, cultural heritage and imagination but fancy, functional and marketable.

So experts and partners facilitated the capacity building process which is as a coble in a lake making waves going larger and further – growing the generation of ideas, involving new people, selection of the best ones, organizing the prototyping, discussions, creation of final creative products, interaction among the ateliers/workshops, combining their skills and including institutions and organizations in the creative network such as mayors, members of the parliaments to participate actively, principals of the schools, local businesses, local and regional media to use each knowledge, skills, enthusiasm and willing to contribute.

Results achieved:

- 10 MK and 10 BG trained local trainers, project developed their capacity and now they are the local leaders and drivers of the mobile creative ateliers/workshops.
- 10 MK and 10 BG creative young people acquired knowledge and developed skills in film and clips making which developed their own films and video to express their opinion, emotions, feeling and vision about school life, how they identify and promote youth talent, sports, local nature and natural resources, culture both heritage and modern, kids, entertainment, cross border action.
- 10 BG creative people acquired skills and knowledge in music product making - using cultural heritage and presenting it in a modern way, combining musical styles to express youth emotions and view of the world
- 20 MK and 20 BG creative people acquired skills and

knowledge in creative products making such as “new life for non-used or old-fashion cloths” using imagination and inspiration and making of new fancy personalized youth collection, new cloths with smart components; jewellery made of natural flowers, plants, stones and a lot of inspiration; unique souvenirs and gifts made of out-use glass, bottles, yarn, natural material and fabrics etc.

- 10 MK creative people acquired and knowledge in mask and costumes making - they designed and produce mask and costumes to take part in the famous local annual carnival
- 15 MK and 15 BG people with knowledge for creative entrepreneurship and opportunity for creative business idea funding, a joint film about the cross-border region and 8 short films/clips; 8 music products;
- 95 designed and produced creative products of arts and crafts and mask and costumes (planned 40); 17 videos (planned 8); 10 musical products (planned 8)
- 8 simple business plans how the creative ateliers will continue to work and make profit;
- 6 good EU practices selected by 20 participants in the intensive learning, 20 reports by participants with lessons learnt about the creative business and creative approaches they would like to adapt in the region and community,
- Exhibition “Creativity and Entrepreneurship” promoted all the products and results by the participants for inspiring local communities

Outlook

Challenges. Lessons learnt: to actively involve youth from rural areas & small cities the approach should be very practical, the subject must be interesting and engaging, the exchange of the ideas and experience is very dynamic, they learn by doing how to turn their creativity into a creative business, how to unite efforts to succeed by networking and contribute to the communities development.

Making business out of youth creativity is the big challenge.



Young people are starting to realize their skills.

Bulgaria and Macedonia have common roots and pass, similar culture, long, controversial and complicated history but not well developed political governmental level of communication and cooperation. During the implementation of the project people from the both sides of the border forgot their suspicious and prejudice toward the neighbour; the creation, design and making products together encouraged what unite and make youth better rather than compare and competed which culture or country is better. They share ideas and expertise and make friends.

Participants highly evaluated the process of learning-by-doing and applying knowledge in practice, creating their products by their own heads, hearts and hands and inspiration to include their friends, classmates and families. **Youth feel the strong connection with the place they live and people they know during the action** and the perspective that their skills and creativity could be a creative business and they could earn money and image is inspiring.

Side effects: most of the participants in the project did not know each other before and the common work make them think and create together, work together and have common vision.

Next steps

- Enlargement of the creative entrepreneurship network involving new countries, areas and partners
- The study visit in Barcelona, born the idea of cooperation with Spanish creative organization, organizing youth exchange and mobility in creative entrepreneurship
- Plans for a stronger support by local authorities
- Plans for business cooperation for e-commerce oriented businesses
- Plans for multiplication of the mobile ateliers towards other rural areas.



Questions/comments raised during the Market of Initiatives: How did the idea appear, what is the process of involvement of young people and their motivation and keeping them on board, what are the benefits for the community? People have also shown interest to enlarge the project and involve new partners from Macedonia and EU countries such as Lithuania, Germany, potentially Iceland.

Source and contact

Information gathered at: the European Rural Parliament 2017 Market of initiatives (20 Oct. 2017)

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Available on Forum Synergies' website: http://forum-synergies.eu/bdf_fiche-experience-166_en.html

