

The Secret of Success 2010

The Many Faces of
European Entrepreneurship

Welcome to the 2010 edition of 'The Secret of Success'!



The 36 portraits of entrepreneurs presented in this Brochure show us the different routes that women and men from 36 European countries took to create their own business, as well as the enormous diversity of their creativity.

Together, these portraits provide a broad view of the many facets of human activity, ranging from the use of the most sophisticated science in Croatia, Denmark, Ireland or Sweden for the manufacture of cutting-edge products, through the development of services to help the most disadvantaged sections of society in response to social challenges in Greece, Italy, Spain or the United Kingdom, to the creation, among others, of environmentally-friendly traditional or innovative products in Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro or Romania. I am confident that these SMEs will be a source of endless inspiration for those men and women, whatever their age, who dream of setting up their own business.

In this brochure, 36 SME managers show us that there is no single correct route, but a variety of paths that any enquiring, entrepreneurial, adventurous spirit should contemplate.

One of the fundamental effects of the financial crisis has been the rediscovery of the central role that SMEs, which create 80% of new jobs and account for 99% of all European businesses, and entrepreneurship play in the European economy.

To stay competitive, Europe must mobilise its full available human potential and stimulate entrepreneurship in our societies. This Brochure, proposed as part of the 'European SME Week 2010', offers an ideal opportunity to do this.

These 36 portraits show us that people can succeed with very different styles and talents!

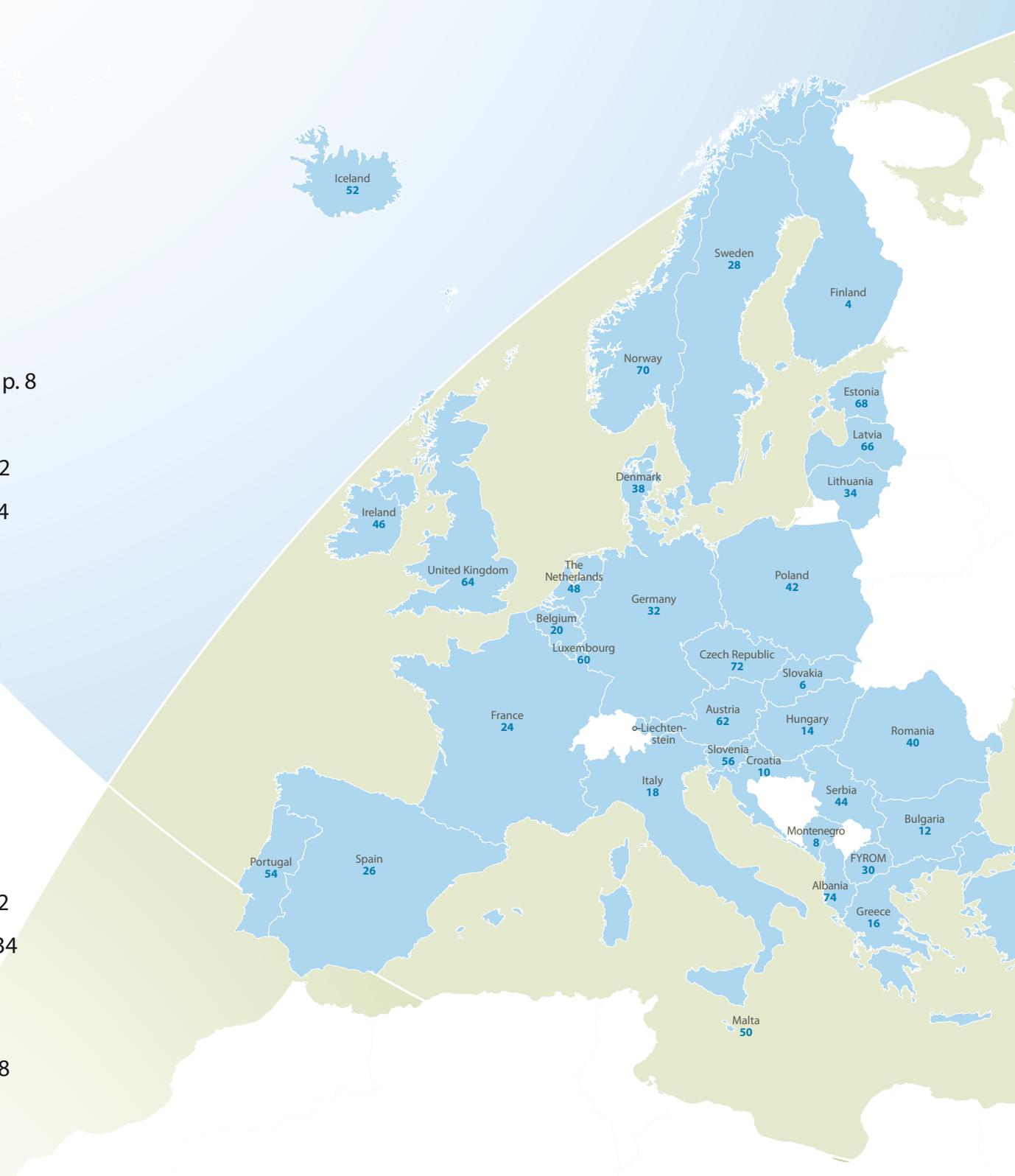
Antonio Tajani

*Vice-President of the European Commission,
responsible for Industry and Entrepreneurship*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Antonio Tajani". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Table of Content

Tuula ANTOLA	•	FINLAND p. 4
Olga APOLENÍKOVÁ	•	SLOVAKIA p. 6
Mirjana BABIĆ	•	MONTENEGRO p. 8
Zvonko BILJECKI	•	CROATIA p. 10
Genoveva CHRISTOVA	•	BULGARIA p. 12
László CSONKA	•	HUNGARY p. 14
Anna DARZENTA	•	GREECE p. 16
Luciana DELLE DONNE	•	ITALY p. 18
Patrick DEUMER	•	BELGIUM p. 20
George FANTAROS	•	CYPRUS p. 22
Ségolène FINET	•	FRANCE p. 24
Antonio GARCÍA ALLUT	•	SPAIN p. 26
Cecilia HERTZ	•	SWEDEN p. 28
Shefki IDRIZI	•	FYROM p. 30
Umut KARAKAŞ	•	GERMANY p. 32
Audrius KAVOLIS	•	LITHUANIA p. 34
Sedat KILIÇ	•	TURKEY p. 36
Jacob KROGSGAARD , Mikael SLOTH , Thomas LUCKMANN , Jesper BOISEN	•	DENMARK p. 38



Company Dimensions

Ethical 

Social 

Sustainable 

Environmental 

Appealing Design 

Unorthodox Solution
to a Problem 

Lifestyle Product 

Diversity it brings
to the Workforce 

Others 

p. 40 **ROMANIA** — Eugeniu **LISNIC**

p. 42 **POLAND** — Magdalena **LUBIŃSKA**

p. 44 **SERBIA** — Sava **MARINKOVIČ**

p. 46 **IRELAND** — Dr Barry **McCLEARY**

p. 48 **THE NETHERLANDS** — Gerrino **MULDER**, Mike **BROERS**

p. 50 **MALTA** — Lorenzo **MULÈ STAGNO**

p. 52 **ICELAND** — Kolbrún Eydís **OTTÓSDÓTTIR**

p. 54 **PORTUGAL** — Miguel **PINA MARTINS**

p. 56 **SLOVENIA** — Nataša **RATEJ**

p. 58 **ISRAEL** — Tzony **SIEGAL**

p. 60 **LUXEMBOURG** — Guy **STAMET**

p. 62 **AUSTRIA** — Heini **STAUDINGER**

p. 64 **UNITED KINGDOM** — Kath **SUTHERLAND**

p. 66 **LATVIA** — Lotte **TISENKOPFA-ILTNERE**

p. 68 **ESTONIA** — Igor **TJURIN**

p. 70 **NORWAY** — Silje **VALLESTAD**

p. 72 **CZECH REPUBLIC** — Linda **VAVŘÍKOVÁ**

p. 74 **ALBANIA** — Mimoza **VOJKA EMANUELS**



Tuula Antola

Finland

Name of Company

Kaipaus Finland Oy Ltd

Business Sector

Designing, manufacturing and marketing of nanotechnology-based scent products

Year of Business Launch

2006

SME Support Scheme used

Tekes (Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation) & TEKEL (Finnish Science Park Association)

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.kaipaus.com

Email Address

tuula.antola@kaipaus.com

Postal Address

Iltaruskontie 3 D 27
02120 Espoo



“Dare to dare more; learn to unlearn!”

Kaipaus Finland is a scent technology company best known for its nanotechnology-based, scented jewellery collection. The jewellery, which is designed by renowned Finnish designers with Finnish materials, is the first product application that utilises the Nanofrago® scent pods developed by the CEO of the company, Tuula Antola.

The company creates lifestyle products with a strong ethical, social, sustainable and environmental dimension. The company is involved in several charity campaigns, and its products are made out of a ceramic mass and precious metals in Finland.

Kaipaus scented jewellery had its premier in Paris at the main event of the Paris Fashion Week 2008, and in 2009 the company was recognised by the internationally acclaimed design competition “Fennia Prize – Good design grows global”.

The person who inspired me to start my own business ...

... was my six-year-old daughter, Hanna. I was returning from a business trip with a gift for her. The toy bunny had been my travelling companion and had collected my scent. Hanna’s delighted cry, “Mummy, this bunny smells just like you!” – that was the igniting spark.

Entrepreneurs are important to society because ...

... they see opportunities and act where established corporations and institutions fear to tread.

What would you consider to be the best preparation for becoming an entrepreneur?

Have a passion for innovation. Be fearless and trust in your skills. Respect others and their abilities.

What should an entrepreneur do to overcome a crisis?

Stay determined, but study the crisis thoroughly and impartially. Trust yourself.



Ol'ga Apoleníková

Slovakia

Name of Company

Ol'ga Apoleníková Sheep farm

Business Sector

Agriculture

Year of Business Launch

1991

SME Support Scheme used

None

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.farmapruzina.sk

Email Address

farmapruzina@farmapruzina.sk

Postal Address

Farma Pružina
018 22 Pružina



“Fear binds hands and ideas.”

In 1991, Oľga Apoleníková became a farmer when she rented a farm with 180 cows that was on the verge of bankruptcy. In two years, she had managed to increase the amount of rented land, cows and machinery. Moreover, the living conditions of the animals improved. She changed their closed stable into a free one, which, together with enhanced feeding rations, caused their yield to triple by 2005.

Market conditions forced Oľga to swap the herd of cows for sheep. She started producing sheep's milk and cheese using traditional methods and sold it directly to customers, eventually opening her own shop. The company has received certification for organic production, gained the “Slovak Quality Mark” and was awarded the best producer of fresh cheese and Slovak “bryndza”.

She also plans to reconstruct some of the remaining premises and turn them into a guesthouse with a wellness centre for those longing to return back to nature.

What were your biggest obstacles when starting your own business?

The creation of business partnerships, since entrepreneurship was something new in Slovakia at the time. Also some business partners did not believe that a woman could do business in this field.

Has the recent economic crisis affected your business strategy in any way?

The crisis decreased the purchasing power of the people in our region, so we had to start placing our products in other regions of Slovakia. In February, we participated in a world exhibition on ecology, which I hope will help us to expand into the EU market and beyond.

What would be your advice to aspiring entrepreneurs?

As long as you are sure about your ideas and believe in yourself, go ahead and do not push them aside.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

To make my many dreams come true, I am able to use creativity whilst developing myself all the time.



Mirjana Babić

Montenegro

Name of Company

Mira Soaps

Business Sector

Agrofood and healthcare

Year of Business Launch

2009

SME Support Scheme used

Business Start Up Center in Bar

Age Range

-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50+
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Number of Employees in 2009

2-50	50-100	100-150	150-200	200-250
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Company Website

None

Email Address

cubi@t-com.me

Postal Address

Bulevar Revolucije b.b. Kula A
30000 Bar



“Live with nature, use its goods and keep them for the next generations.”

Mirjana Babić, the founder of Mira Soaps, recognised a growing tendency of consumers to turn to natural products, especially with regards to food and cosmetics. She decided to produce a natural soap made from olive oil, just as her grandmother and generations of Montenegrins had done in the past. This traditional product had almost completely disappeared from the region, but Mirjana Babić believed she could produce a natural, ecologically-clean product, which could also renew a national tradition.

The basic raw material used to produce the soap is from an olive tree called “žutica”. The material has proven medicinal properties, which are retained using the cold process production method. The result is a high-quality, environmentally-friendly, aromatherapy soap, which can be used on skin and hair.

The person who inspired me to start my own business ...

My grandmother used to make olive oil soaps and always wanted to share the power of olive oil with everyone. The Start-Up Business Centre Bar helped to make my idea into a reality.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

... realising your idea and being your own boss. Also, being able to employ people makes you a useful member of society.

What would be your advice to aspiring entrepreneurs?

Be sure about your idea and don't give up quickly. The target should be your business and not the money.

What would you tell an entrepreneur who is faced with a crisis?

Set your mind to a smaller number of goals, and solve the problems one by one. Try to avoid borrowing too much money.



Zvonko Biljecki

Croatia

Name of Company

Geofoto

Business Sector

Geodesy and Geo-information

Year of Business Launch

1993

SME Support Scheme used

None

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.geofoto.hr

Email Address

geofoto@geofoto.hr

Postal Address

Buzinski prilaz 28
10010 Zagreb



“Knowledge, knowledge and only knowledge.”

Zvonko Biljecki is a self-made man who has proven that a company from an emerging country can become an international leader in its market and produce high-tech services. Using cutting-edge technology for aerial survey and data processing, Geofoto produces geodetic and geographic databases that can be used in a variety of ways: to update land registers, manage and plan infrastructure projects, monitor agricultural activities, de-mine former war zones, environmental protection, etc. Geofoto also provides the necessary software for exploiting the data and generating maps.

In 1988, Mr. Biljecki moved to Switzerland and worked for ten years at a geodetic company where he soon became director and co-owner. He later returned to Croatia to set up his present company. As it grew, Geofoto took over several competitors and became Europe's second largest company in the field of geo-informatics and works in more than ten countries in Europe, Latin America and the Middle East.

Has the recent economic crisis affected your business strategy in any way?

We made a considerable effort to improve the efficiency of our procedures and the quality of our products. We also chose to enter foreign markets where we had previously not been active, and to develop new products and services.

Entrepreneurs are important to society because ...

... they are creating new value and are socially responsible.

My advice to those who are considering starting their own business is ...

... to focus on preparation and analysis and surround yourself with people who have more experience than you do.

What should an entrepreneur do to overcome a crisis?

Work twice as hard and be innovative.



Genoveva Christova

Bulgaria

Name of Company

Ligna Group Ltd

Business Sector

Furniture logistics

Year of Business Launch

2006

SME Support Scheme used

SME Agency sponsored Trade Events in Western Europe

Age Range

<20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.ligna-group.com

Email Address

g.christova@ligna-consult.com

Postal Address

82, Khan Omurtag Street
1124 Sofia



"We design your success."

Genoveva Christova and her business partner didn't have an easy task ahead of them when they decided to produce and export furniture in a 'macho Bulgarian society,' yet their sales are now reaching close to €2m. The Ligna Group exports hotel furniture made in Bulgaria to be fitted into new or refurbished hotels, primarily in France and Germany. Despite the financial crisis, their business went up by 28 per cent whilst the Bulgarian furniture sector went down by 37 per cent. Their next goal is to break into the UK and Italian markets.

Mrs Christova and her business partner met in 1989 and set up the first Aerobics Studio in Varna. It was old Communist Bulgaria and they were young girls braving the world of business.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

... having control over my own destiny as well as the opportunity to lead a team of staff.

What should an entrepreneur do to overcome a crisis?

Be resilient and redouble your efforts because 90 per cent of the business is still out there.

My advice to those who are considering starting their own business ...

Make sure your market research is honest and accurate in order to find a niche market to cater to.

What would you consider the best preparation to become an entrepreneur?

Being a Sportswoman or man ... it gives you the will to win. It's all about the strength of your motivation.



László Csonka

Hungary

Name of Company

Csonka és Fiai Kft (Csonka & Sons Ltd.)

Business Sector

Production, trade

Year of Business Launch

1982

SME Support Scheme used

None

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.csonkaglas.com

www.trendglas.com

Email Address

laszlo.csonka@csnkaglas.com

Postal Address

Baross u. 24

9400 Sopron



“Help your partners. If they are successful, you might be too.”

Since 1982, Csonka és Fiai Kft has evolved from a family business producing laboratory and gift glassware, to an internationally successful business focused on Trendglas, a unique brand of heat-resistant glassware. With certified quality, continuously improving technology and long-standing experience with heat resistant glass, the company is able to guarantee high-quality products for its customers.

In 1994, the family began to trade with the Schott Group. After Schott stopped the production for domestic glass in Jena, they bought some of their machines, moulding forms ... and created their new brand, produced in Sopron (Hungary). A new company has been established in Jena (Germany) for the trading business.

Trendglas is now sold in more than 44 countries worldwide (from Japan, Korea, Russia to Germany and the USA), with over 700 retailers in Germany alone.

What is the specific quality that distinguishes your product from its competitors?

As far as quality is concerned, I make no compromises, regardless of the cost.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

... that I get to do what I am good at and what I enjoy 24/7.

What would you tell another entrepreneur who is faced with a crisis?

Be strong, and don't give up. Be prepared to take some steps that you may have considered unnecessary before.

Entrepreneurs are important to society, because ...

... they walk down new and unknown paths, which others can then follow.



Anna Darzenta

Greece

Name of Company

TO KASTRI Women's Agro-Tourist Cooperative

Business Sector

Catering, cooking, restaurant, agro-tourist delicacies

Year of Business Launch

2000

SME Support Scheme used

EQUAL programme for women entrepreneurship
(funded by European Social Fund)

Age Range

-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50+
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Number of Employees in 2009

2-50	50-100	100-150	150-200	200-250
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Company Website

www.agroshop.gr

Email Address

tokastri@otenet.gr

Postal Address

Agiou Sevastianou Street 41
84100 Ano Syros



“Never stop, always continue or start again.”

Twenty-eight women from Syros, a Greek island suffering from endemic unemployment, decided to create a workers' cooperative in 2000. Most of them were housewives without any specific skills or education, yet with the assistance of EU funding they have taken control of their present and future.

The cooperative produces sweets and provides catering for parties locally and on other islands. They have opened a successful restaurant selling traditional Greek food at low prices, which is possible due to the cooperative nature of the workers.

Their activity permitted also to restore part of the old deserted catholic monastery of St Sebastian, the abandoned cells and warehouses of which were used to store ovens, kitchens, refrigerators and other electrical devices ...

What were your biggest obstacles when starting your own business?

People's prejudice towards us as women. We had to overcome the mistrust of the local market operators and the closed-minded attitude of suppliers in working with female entrepreneurs who lacked qualifications, education and training.

In developing your product/service (s), have you been using any national/regional support schemes/programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises?

We were luckily involved in the EQUAL programme for the promotion of women entrepreneurship (“initiative NOW” for the start up of social enterprises, “Emigrants’ agro jobs” for the training of foreign ladies and project EXADA for the publication of a book with local recipes in English and Greek).

Entrepreneurs are important to society because ...

They create growth and employment. Being a cooperative we offer security to employees who are at the same time members. Being a non-profit enterprise we also have the status of offering proximity services to people in need.

My advice to an entrepreneur – how to overcome a crisis ...

To start again immediately after a failure and to always offer high quality goods or services.



Luciana Delle Donne

Italy

Name of Company

Officina Creativa Soc. Coop Sociale

Business Sector

Wearable accessories made of recycled waste materials/Renewable energy

Year of Business Launch

2006

SME Support Scheme used

Start-up support by the City of Lecce,
Regional contributions for transportation means
and technological devices

Age Range

-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50+
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Number of Employees in 2009

2-50	50-100	100-150	150-200	200-250
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Company Website

www.o-c.it; www.madeincarcere.it;
www.er-re.it

Email Address

luciana724@gmail.com

Postal Address

Via 95 Reggimento Fanteria, 64
73100 Lecce (LE)



“Innovation is creativity applied to good common sense.”

Officina Creativa's new brand, "Made in Carcere" ("Made in Jail"), gives a 'second chance' to both the materials used to make their products as well as to the people who make them. The non-profit social cooperative contributes to the training and rehabilitation of female prisoners, who are engaged in the production of fabric shopping bags made out of refined and recycled materials. This gives the women the chance to build their job skills while improving their chances of re-integrating into the social and working worlds once they return to their communities.

A further initiative of Officina Creativa is the ER-RE, the "Desk for Easy Renewable Energy". This desk is dedicated to raising awareness about saving energy and the use of renewable energy sources. To reach its goals, the ER-RE uses social communication activities and provides assistance to people who must make technical and financial choices in planning and implementing energy-using systems.

The event that inspired me to start my own business ...

... was spending one month volunteering in a nursing home in Brazil after 20 years as a bank director. I realised how helpful I could have been if I had been working and helping marginalised people at the same time!

What is the specific quality that distinguishes your products and services from its competitors?

Our products and services tell the story of marginalised people who have gained a second chance! Our products are 'handmade with values' and transmit the significance of female prisoners using recycled waste materials to create accessories with passion and creativity.

Has the recent economic crisis affected your business strategy in any way?

Our strategy was born out of the crisis: the economic crisis and the crisis of values. We focus on the need to 'save' by using existing, renewable sources of energy (the sun), recycled waste materials (bags and other materials) and 'marginalised' human resources (female prisoners).

Entrepreneurs are important to society because ...

... of their capacity to innovate and for being the drivers of development.



Patrick Deumer

Belgium

Name of Company

Vetedy Belgium

Business Sector

Parquets and Wooden Terraces

Year of Business Launch

2001

SME Support Scheme used

Awex (the Belgian Walloon Export Agency)

Age Range

<input type="checkbox"/> -20	<input type="checkbox"/> 20-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 30-40	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 40-50	<input type="checkbox"/> 50+
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Number of Employees in 2009

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2-50	<input type="checkbox"/> 50-100	<input type="checkbox"/> 100-150	<input type="checkbox"/> 150-200	<input type="checkbox"/> 200-250
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Company Website

www.vetedy.com

Email Address

info@vetedy.com

Postal Address

Weyler, Zone Artisanale 50
6700 Autelbas (Arlon)



“Believe in yourself and your abilities.”

Starting out by laying parquet flooring on his own for ten years, Patrick Deumer was presented with the new challenge of building a terrace in 1999. Although everything went well at first, three months later many of the planks shifted, breaking the screws. This inspired him to design a system for securing wood that was both durable and aesthetically pleasing. Riding on the success of his now world-wide innovation, which he patented in 2001 and again in 2003, Mr Deumer started Vetedy Belgium, made the rounds of international trade fairs with Awex and developed a network of distributors. By investing in a completely automated production line, he is able to respond quickly to the demand with only a handful of employees.

In 2009, Mr Deumer was awarded the Great Prize of Walloon Entrepreneurship, in the “Enterprise starter” category.

What was your biggest obstacle or fear when starting your own business?

Finding a bank that believed in and accepted my idea and investment.

Has the recent economic crisis affected your business strategy in any way?

Our turn-over has decreased by 20%. Our solution is to attend more fairs to look for more customers who will little by little replace the bigger ones who are stalling ...

Why are entrepreneurs important to society?

Entrepreneurs are the motors of the economy and the creators of tomorrow’s world.

My advice to those who are considering starting their own business is ...

... to prepare a realistic business plan and respect your commitments.



George Fantaros

Cyprus

Name of Company

Advance Medical Waste Management LTD

Business Sector

Hazardous Waste Management

Year of Business Launch

2004

SME Support Scheme used

None

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.advancewhs.com

Email Address

info@advancewhs.com

Postal Address

3rd Industrial Area Syllas
Ypsonas
P.O. BOX 50144
3601 Limassol



“Follow your vision, set your goals and stick to them.”

George Fantaros' company started as a medical (clinical) waste sterilisation service and quickly evolved into a hazardous waste management service. The operation is a typical case of “small is beautiful and feasible” providing a solution to the island-state's problem and practically putting a stop to the hassle and cost of exporting small quantities of waste to larger countries for disposal.

It has provided much needed employment for scientific personnel and is further developing know-how suitable for other isolated locations facing a similar situation.

The enterprise has won the Cyprus Government Environmental Award for 2008 by demonstrating a water saving of 85% and an approach for the triple reuse of water in association with its sister company (a laundry for towels and carpets).

The event that inspired me to start my own business ...

... was the entry of Cyprus into the European Union and the need to comply with European legislation that deals with hazardous waste.

Why are entrepreneurs important for society?

In my opinion entrepreneurs are an energetic component of society, which can contribute the most to its development.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

The challenge of creating something new and converting business ideas into successful products or services.

What would you consider to be the best preparation for becoming an entrepreneur?

A good educational background, a free spirit, open-mindedness and the readiness to take risks.



Ségolène Finet

France

Name of Company

mamaNANA

Business Sector

eCommerce and Fashion

Year of Business Launch

2005

SME Support Scheme used

OSEO (French public agency supporting SMEs)

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.mamanana.com

Email Address

segolene.finet@mamanana.com

Postal Address

1 bis, rue du Val Joyeux
78100 Saint-Germain-en-Laye





“You don’t have to give up who you are to be a good mother.”

When Ségolène Finet started mamaNANA, an e-Boutique devoted to the fashion needs of breastfeeding mothers, many people were doubtful: Why start a breastfeeding clothing company in a country that has one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in Europe?

Ms Finet believed that many women wanted to breastfeed their babies for the health and emotional benefits, but often felt nervous about showing “too much skin” in public. With mamaNANA’s tops and dresses, women can dress as fashionably as they want, while breastfeeding discreetly and comfortably. All of the items look like regular clothing except for a detail in the cut that enables the baby to easily access the breast.

What inspired you to start your own business?

In California, breastfeeding was the norm in my circle, and I happily breastfed my first child. Then back in France, I saw that chic women did not breastfeed! By providing fashionable nursing lingerie and clothes, I wanted to break cultural barriers and enable women to nurse in style.

What is the specific quality that distinguishes your product from its competitors?

You would never guess that our tops and dresses are nursing clothes, because they are as fashionable as regular clothes.

Has the recent economic crisis affected your business strategy in any way?

When the recession hit, we were worried, but surprisingly, that’s when our business started growing really fast, so who knows where we would be if there hadn’t been a recession!

My advice to those who are considering starting their own business ...

... is not to pick a business opportunity just for the money. Select something you deeply care about.

Antonio García Allut

Spain

Name of Company

Lonxanet

Business Sector

Fishing, environmental protection
and empowering traditional fishing communities

Year of Business Launch

2001

SME Support Scheme used

None

Age Range

20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50+
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Number of Employees in 2009

2-50	50-100	100-150	150-200	200-250
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Company Website

www.lonxanet.com;
www.fundacionlonxanet.org

Email Address

antonio.garcia.allut@fundacionlonxanet.org

Postal Address

C/Juan de la Cierva 26
15008 A Coruña





“Once you have started there is no way back. It gives meaning to your life and to the world we live in.”

Lonxanet is transforming the inadequate social, economic and environmental conditions in which traditional fishing communities operate. Lonxanet creates a more efficient link between supply and demand by selling directly to individuals and restaurants all over Spain. Fishermen who participate in Lonxanet are shareholders, who not only increase their income, but are encouraged to transform from being “fish gatherers” to stewards of the marine environment, managing their resources and guaranteeing sustainability for future generations. This has led to the establishment of a “Protected Maritime Area of Fishing Interest”, which was founded, defined and regulated by the fishermen themselves.

Antonio García Allut is sharing his model worldwide through RECOPEDES, a network of similar traditional fishing communities in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay.

What inspired me to start my own business ...

When I was a child, I used to go with my father, who was a doctor, to visit the houses of the fishermen on the Galician coast. I could see the poor conditions in which they lived. After carrying out a deep analysis of the economic model of our society, I came up with a model that could provide solutions to some of the problems in the traditional fishing sector.

What were your biggest fears when starting your own business?

My main fear was that the key actors in the project, the fishermen, would not get involved. Secondly, I feared that the project could be boycotted by key people in the fishing industry. Finally, I was afraid that the administration would not be in favour of the initiative.

What is the specific quality that distinguishes your product and service from its competitors?

The whole model is different as its main aim is not about business, but about social transformation.

Entrepreneurs are important to society because ...

... in the case of social entrepreneurs, like me, we involve people to solve local and regional problems and seek a social rather than a financial benefit for our actions. Our aim is to humanise the economy.

Cecilia Hertz

Sweden

Name of Company

Umbilical Design

Business Sector

Space technology transfer and outer space design

Year of Business Launch

2001

SME Support Scheme used

Support from Almi, Innovationsbron and the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket)

Age Range

-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50+
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Number of Employees in 2009

2-50	50-100	100-150	150-200	200-250
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Company Website

www.umbilicaldesign.se

Email Address

cecilia.hertz@umbilicaldesign.se

Postal Address

Floragatan 13
114 31 Stockholm



“Start small, think big and do it with passion!”

One of Umbilical Design's goals is to facilitate human life by integrating space materials and technologies into commercial, everyday products such as a ski helmet, protective clothing for smelters and equipment for extreme sports. They aim to create interesting synergies between industries that generate innovative design solutions. The company is also involved in a project with university students as part of an effort to bring space technology and business development together to create exciting jobs.

Umbilical Design is one of ten companies in Europe that were chosen to participate in a technology transfer initiative coordinated by the European Space Agency.

What inspired me to start my own business ...

When I was a student working with outer space design projects, I was inspired by the “everything is possible mentality” in the space sector.

What were your biggest obstacles or fears when starting your own business?

Other people's mindsets. People told me I couldn't start a space design company in Sweden. Even if I am a strong advocate of listening to other people, I am glad that I didn't listen on this occasion!

In developing your product/service (s), have you been using any national/regional support schemes/programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises?

Yes, over the years Umbilical Design has got support for different innovation projects from Almi and Innovationsbron. For our major project called “**Down to Earth – Commercializing Space Technologies for a Sustainable Earth**”, we are working together with Jönköping International Business School (JIBS) and have received support from the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket). We plan to showcase the first sustainable ideas and concepts based on space technology and materials at World Expo 2010 in Shanghai.

What would you tell another entrepreneur who is faced with a crisis?

I once heard an artist say, “Change is always positive”. I have adopted that quote as it helps me to keep things in perspective, even in a crisis.



Shefki Idrizi

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Name of Company

Renova

Business Sector

Materials for the building industry

Year of Business Launch

1997

SME Support Scheme used

None

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.renova.com.mk

Email Address

info@renova.com.mk

Postal Address

s. Dzepciste
1200 Tetovo



“Nothing is unreachable.”

Renova produces plasters, paints and varnishes of exceptional quality. All products are naturally based, ecologically-friendly and do not contain chemicals that pollute the environment. The products also contribute to energy efficiency and remain durable in most extreme climate conditions.

The company uses lime rock from nearby Sharr Mountain as the base for many of its products. Used for building and painting walls since ancient times, this rock is characterised by its unique whiteness as compared with other types of lime in the region.

Renova not only invests in its factories, it also invests in the future of the population. In 2005, Renova established a foundation, which has awarded 94 university students and 65 secondary school students with scholarships.

The persons who inspired me to start my own business ...

After years of working in Switzerland, I decided to start my own business. My parents didn't want me to stay in Switzerland any longer, so thanks to them, my final decision was to return home at the end of 1991 and to start my business in my native country.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

... that entrepreneurs with quality business ideas are essentially the instigators of society's overall growth.

My advice to those people who are considering starting their own business ...

... is to be determined and to believe in their goals, because they will face many obstacles from the authorities. With persistence, though, they will achieve their goals.

What would you consider to be the best preparation for becoming an entrepreneur?

The best teacher is practice – especially in taking risks and clearly setting goals. Entrepreneurs should have a clear vision as they strive to reach their goals.



Umut Karakaş

Germany

Name of Company

DATA 4U – Marketing and Media Research Institute

Business Sector

Marketing / Research / Communication

Year of Business Launch

1997

SME Support Scheme used

None

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.data4u-online.de

Email Address

u.karakas@data4u-online.de

Postal Address

Schwedter Str. 1
10119 Berlin



“I view setbacks as chances, not as defeats.”

Umut Karakaş is the daughter of a working-class Turkish family who migrated to Germany. She first began working at Data4u as a research assistant to support herself through university. Being a female from an ethnic minority in a male-dominated sector meant that her rise in the company was not easy, yet today she owns 50 per cent of the company and is one of its directors.

Since 1991, Data4u Marketing and Media Research Institute have provided businesses with the expertise and execution they require to gain a competitive advantage. With a team of specialised and diverse staff, Data4u also connects businesses in Germany with markets in Turkey and vice versa. The service that Data4u provides to businesses is unique, as the company has the data that businesses need to reach their target markets among ethnic minorities across Europe and Turkey.

What is the specific quality that distinguishes your service from its competitors?

Data4u is the only market and opinion research institute in Europe that focuses exclusively on the ethnic minority markets (especially Turkish, Russian and Polish ones). The work of Data4u builds bridges between cultures, countries and clients.

What were your biggest fears when starting your own business?

My business was built with a lot of caution and vision, and with our work on ethnic minorities we found the right niche.

My advice to those who are considering starting their own business ...

Achieving success in business is like a menu with a lot of ingredients: creativity, effort, fun, knowledge and the courage to believe in your own ideas.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

... the joy I have while working and the freedom to make my own decisions.



Audrius Kavolis

Lithuania

Name of Company

A. Kavolis Individual Enterprise

Business Sector

Wood processing

Year of Business Launch

1991

SME Support Scheme used

EU Structural Funds

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.drozle.lt

Email Address

kavolis@zebra.lt

Postal Address

A. Kavolio IJ, Daržinių k.
28420 Utenos raj.





“If you dare to dream about something, you are able to make it come true.”

Audrius Kavolis made and exported furniture until orders dried up in 2009 due to the financial crisis. He decided to look for a new market, which led him to design a new style of rabbit hutch, which is superior to the hutches typically used in Europe. The hutches allow rabbits to breed in a more spacious, humane and sanitary environment. They have an energy-efficient heating system for northern climates, which encourages baby rabbits to grow faster, thus making rabbit meat production a viable business for those who use the hutches.

The company is making its contribution to sustainable development by providing employment to local residents in the rural community where its operations are based, as well as supplying locally-grown rabbit meat, which is a healthier alternative to shop-bought, mass-produced beef or pork.

What inspired me to start my own business ...

After Lithuania regained its independence in 1990, the economy collapsed. I had to find a way to survive, and starting my own business was the solution.

What were your biggest fears when starting your own business?

My greatest fear was the investment risk associated with buying equipment and facilities for the new business. I had to invest all of my life savings, because in those days, banking was quite primitive.

In developing your product/service(s), have you been using any national/regional support schemes/programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises?

In 2008, my company participated in the Local Employment Initiative, using EU Structural Funds administered by the Lithuanian Labour Exchange. As a result, 8 employees work with safe, modern wood-working equipment.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

... the complete absence of monotony. There is always something new to learn, to see and to discover. Each day is different.

Sedat Kiliç

Turkey

Name of Company

ALSE Makine Pet. Tur. Ins. Ltd. Sti.

Business Sector

Gas Saving Systems for Welding Machines

Year of Business Launch

2007

SME Support Scheme used

Young Entrepreneur Development Programme of the SME Development Organisation of Turkey

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.alsemakine.com

Email Address

sedat@alsemakine.com

Postal Address

Cevat Dundar Caddesi 17/C
06370 Ostim-Yenimahalle
(Province Ankara)



“The future has to pass the past; no innovation will be the last!”

In his second year at TOBB University of Economics and Technology (Ankara), Sedat Kiliç established his own company to distribute the energy efficient, gas-saving system for welding machines which he had developed. With the support of university staff, he was able to upgrade the system to provide gas savings of up to 90 per cent. The system also reduces the amount of harmful gases that workers inhale while operating the machinery and protects the environment by stopping harmful gas flows.

The media attention Sedat Kiliç received for his invention created huge demand on an international scale. His system is now being used by firms such as FIAT, Hyundai, Mercedes, Renault, Aygaz, Beko and hundreds of other companies with welding operations. By 2009, the system had spread to more than 18 countries across Europe, America and Asia.

What were your biggest obstacles when starting your own business?

The main obstacle was my age. Because I was so young, most of the companies I approached did not have confidence in me or my ideas.

Why is entrepreneurship important for society?

Technological progress and labour force are inversely proportional. For instance, whereas a robot was being produced by 100 workers in 1 month in the past, today it can be produced in 1 day without any worker. The increase in the unemployment rate, especially in the young population, is the main indicator of this situation. Entrepreneurs are important because individuals must contribute to society by creating new labour opportunities through new businesses, which can thus balance the drawbacks of technology.

What would be your advice to aspiring entrepreneurs?

Do not be humble when you are thinking. Do not give up on an idea that you have faith in. Do not lose your amateur spirit.

What would you consider to be the best preparation for becoming an entrepreneur?

Motivation and belief. We have to realise that the only thing that we have to lose, is the faith in ourselves.



Jacob Krogsgaard, Mikael Sloth, Thomas Luckmann, Jesper Boisen

Denmark

Name of Company

H2 Logic

Business Sector

Fuel cell engines and hydrogen refueling stations

Year of Business Launch

2003

SME Support Scheme used

European and national support schemes, mainly focusing on energy technology

Age Range

-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50+
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Number of Employees in 2009

2-50	50-100	100-150	150-200	200-250
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Company Website

www.h2logic.dk

Email Address

info@h2logic.dk

Postal Address

Industriparken 34 B
7400 Herning



“We see no limits, only opportunities!”

Since 2003, H2 Logic has positioned itself as a world leader in system and market integration of complete hydrogen fuel cell motive power solutions. It is a unique product developed by young engineers that tackles one of the major problems of today and tomorrow: the emission of greenhouse gases.

The basic value proposition is that hydrogen fuel cell systems can deliver silent, zero-emission motive power delivery, like batteries, while still having the operational range and short refueling time of a vehicle with a gasoline-fueled combustion engine.

H2 Logic has just entered a clean-tech partnership with Shell on the development of hydrogen refueling infrastructure and stations.

What inspired us to start our own business ...

We started the company during our studies for Business Development Engineering at Aarhus University Herning in Denmark. The huge success of wind turbines in Denmark was very motivating, and the natural next step for us was to look towards hydrogen.

What is the specific quality that distinguishes your product from its competitors?

Overall, our products are sustainable and enable future independence from fossil fuels. As we are a small company, we are also focused on developing and marketing our products very efficiently due to our limited resources. This gives us a cost advantage compared to larger companies that may be less efficient.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

... the freedom, and that work really does not feel like work. It is like having a day where you do what you love.

My advice to those who are considering starting their own business ...

You should start dreaming about what kind of future business you would want to create. Dreams are the best fuel you can get.



Eugeniu Lisnic

Romania

Name of Company

SC JirmaN Engineering SRL

Business Sector

Civil engineering, renewable sources of energy

Year of Business Launch

2007

SME Support Scheme used

None

Age Range

<input type="checkbox"/> -20	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 30-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 40-50	<input type="checkbox"/> 50+
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Number of Employees in 2009

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2-50	<input type="checkbox"/> 50-100	<input type="checkbox"/> 100-150	<input type="checkbox"/> 150-200	<input type="checkbox"/> 200-250
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Company Website

www.woodengine.ro

Email Address

Lisnic_eugeniu@yahoo.com

james@woodengine.com

Postal Address

Victory Avenue 3, no. 39, ap. 40

500222 Brasov



“The real good human being is the one who could be bad, but wasn’t.” (Nicolae Iorga)

Armed with a civil engineering degree (“Gheorghe Asachi” University, Iasi) and a Master’s in Renewable Energy Sources and Environmental Management (“Transilvania” University, Brasov), Eugeniu Lisnic was still studying when he started his company that focuses on the construction of wooden houses. With only one part time employee for secretary and without office, he met his first clients in restaurants.

The benefits of wood-framed houses go beyond aesthetics. The amount of thermal energy required for a wooden house is significantly less than what is required for brick or concrete houses. The materials used are renewable and no toxic waste is produced throughout the process. Wood-framed houses also require less time and money to construct. Eugeniu Lisnic’s goal is to construct a building that is exclusively powered by renewable sources of energy.

What were your biggest fears when starting your own business?

My age. I thought that people wouldn’t believe in me because I was so young.

Has the recent economic crisis affected your business strategy in any way?

The recent economic crisis affected my business, but not my strategy. My strategy is to move forward through any problems and solve them.

What would you tell another entrepreneur who is faced with a crisis?

Try to learn as much as you can from more experienced entrepreneurs.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

... putting my thoughts into practice, pleasing my employees and being pleased with the growth of my business.



Magdalena Lubińska

Poland

Name of Company

Moho Design Co. Ltd

Business Sector

Interior design

Year of Business Launch

2004

SME Support Scheme used

European Regional Development Fund (Regional Operational Programme 2007–2013 for Silesian Region)

Age Range

-20 20–30 30–40 40–50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2–50 50–100 100–150 150–200 200–250

Company Website

www.mohodesign.com

Email Address

magda@mohodesign.com

Postal Address

ul. 3-go Maja 24/7
40-095 Katowice



“The only limit is in your mind.”

Magdalena Lubińska was destined to become a lawyer until her passion for design led her to leave university during her fourth year in order to found her own company. Moho Design's made-to-order rugs and carpets are made with wool from New Zealand and are woven using a traditional Polish method. Woven felt is a highly durable material which retains its resiliency much longer than other traditional materials. The fibres absorb very little dust and are resistant to distortion. Moho Design can customize a woven felt product to the client's exact specifications according to thickness, density, colour, size and blended materials.

*The company has representation in the UK, Poland, Norway, Germany, Austria and the US. Its unique work was recognised by **Wallpaper*** with the Design Award in 2006 in the category of Best Textiles as well as by the Red Dot Award in 2008 in the category of Product Design.*

What were your biggest obstacles or fears when starting your own business?

It is difficult for any new brand to succeed, but more so for an unknown brand from Poland because our country is not yet an established design centre.

Has the recent economic crisis affected your business strategy in any way?

We haven't felt the impact of the crisis. Design is the most important element of our company's business strategy. Using an integrated approach to design, Moho doesn't need to compete based on price like other companies.

Entrepreneurs are important to society because ...

They play a crucial role in the economy, offering new technologies, solutions and jobs.

What would be your advice to aspiring entrepreneurs?

Follow your intuition, take up the challenges, develop your passions and be determined in pursuing them.



Sava Marinković

Serbia

Name of Company

TeleSkin

Business Sector

Medical Imaging and Diagnostics

Year of Business Launch

2007

SME Support Scheme used

Business-Technology Incubator – Innovation grant
(Ministry of Science)

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

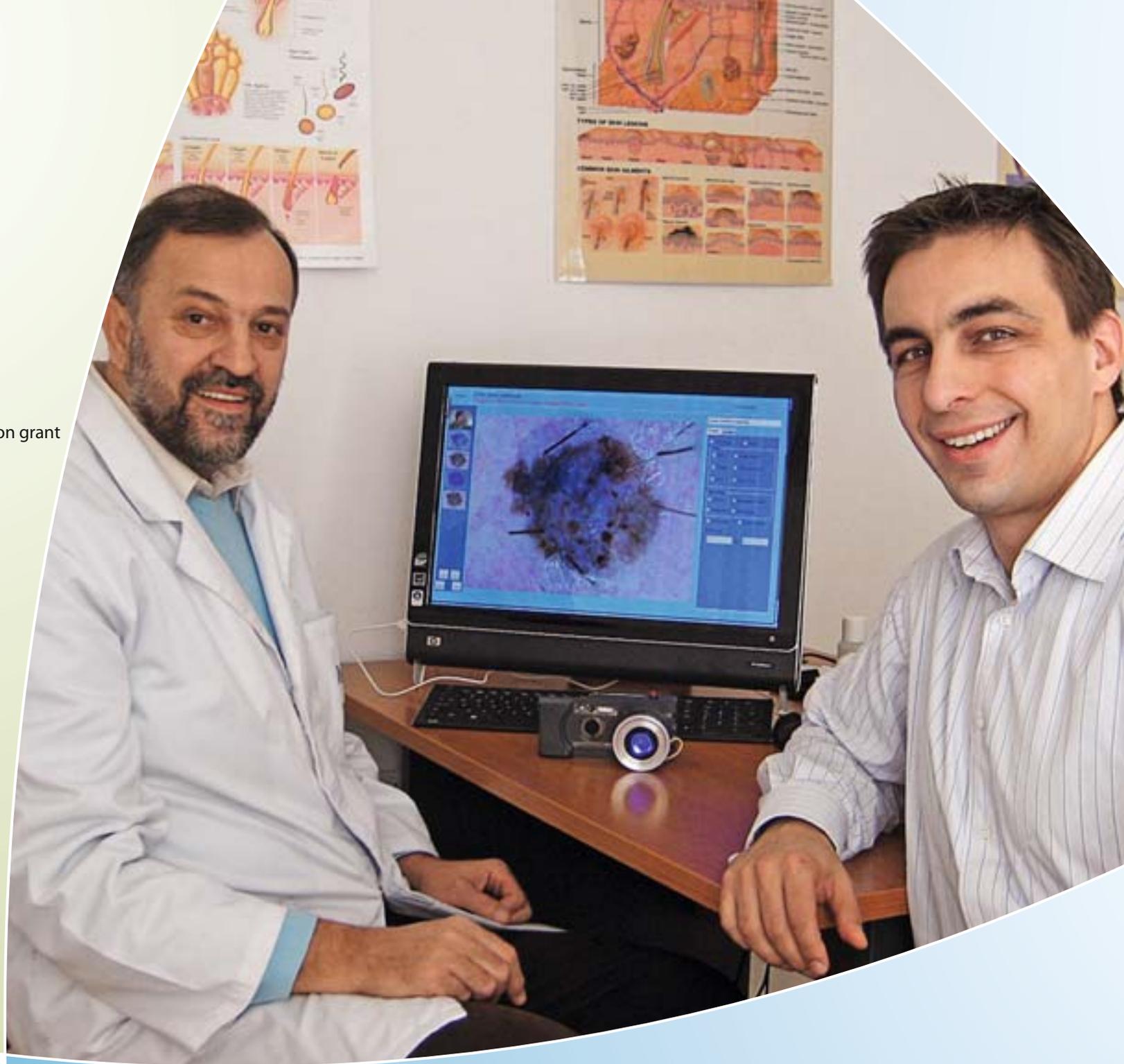
www.teleskin.org

Email Address

info@teleskin.org

Postal Address

Ruzveltova str. 1a
11000 Belgrade





“If you’re not waking up each day trying to change the world, then find something else to do.”

Using a simple, low-cost procedure, Teleskin helps medical practitioners to detect skin cancers and melanoma in its early stages. In the labs and universities of Belgrade, there was promising research being carried out in this field, but due to events in the recent history of the country (sanctions, war, turmoil) it was difficult to turn visions into realities.

Teleskin was developed in Serbia with a team of researchers, doctors and leading minds in skin analysis and cancer assessment. It is a completely non-invasive procedure, which is as simple as taking a digital photo of the skin. Teleskin is part of a project supported by the Ministry of Science, which is being run in seven clinics across Serbia with the goal of validating the system. Teleskin combines western-style entrepreneurship and experience with local Serbian talent.

The person who inspired me to start my own business ...

... was my boss and mentor, who said, “Do it, because if you don’t, you’ll always ask yourself, ‘What if?’”.

What were your biggest obstacles/fears when starting your own business?

Deciding to start – it was a trade-off between giving up an exciting corporate career and trying to realize a vision of something completely new. It was a long road to raising investment capital, full of doubts at times, but at end, we had a firestorm of investor interest that really started us off.

In developing your products and services, have you been using any national or regional support programmes?

Yes, we’ve been part of the Business-Technology Incubator (www.bitf.rs), for new, high-tech start-ups, which is one of the first of its kind in Serbia. We also received an innovation grant from the Serbian Ministry of Science to help with the development and validation of our results.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

... the excitement around a vision and being part of a great team that can make that vision into a reality.

Dr Barry McCleary

Ireland

Name of Company

Megazyme International

Business Sector

Technology

Year of Business Launch

1988

SME Support Scheme used

Two grants through Enterprise Ireland

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.megazyme.com

Email Address

barry@megazyme.com

Postal Address

Bray Business Park
Southern Cross Road
Bray Co Wicklow



“I love the independence. I get to make my own decisions and to live with the consequences. My job is my hobby.”

Megazyme International is a global leader in the manufacture and supply of high quality and innovative test technology for the cereals, food, feed, fermentation, dairy and wine industries. Megazyme has set new standards in Test Technology and now supplies a comprehensive list of over 70 diagnostic test kits and over 300 other reagents and substrates. Major enzyme manufacturers turn to Megazyme for reagents for the standardisation of their commercial products and for enzyme discovery.

In 1988, Barry McCleary started the business in the garage of his family home. Today, as CEO and technical director of Megazyme, he competes with multinational companies and has an export rate of 97%. Megazyme International was named Irish “Innovator of the Year” at the Small Firms Association National Small Business Awards 2009.

What were your biggest fears when starting your own business?

When I left a secure position as the Principle Research Scientist with the government, it did cause some concerns. But I knew that hard work, tied in with a few good ideas and a focus on developing products that customers actually need, would lead to success.

In developing your products and services, have you been using any national or regional support programmes?

Over the past seven years we have been fortunate to obtain two grants through Enterprise Ireland. The first one was a Research Technology Innovation grant, which supported the development and implementation of a molecular biology division within the company. The second grant, a National Development Programme grant, allowed Megazyme to extend its molecular biology capabilities.

What would you tell an entrepreneur who is faced with a crisis?

Minimise the possibility of a crisis by taking calculated risks. Stay calm. Analyse the situation: there is always a solution. Be honest.

My advice to those who are considering starting their own business is ...

Have a business plan. Focus on cash flow. Minimise loans. Be prepared to work hard. Be willing to take a risk – and have the time of your life.



Gerrino Mulder, Mike Broers

The Netherlands

Name of Company

Atalanta Sports

Business Sector

Organisation and consultancy in sports; health and active leisure industries

Year of Business Launch

2006

SME Support Scheme used

Partly (approx. 30–40% of total revenues) funded by local and regional government subsidies

Age Range

<input type="checkbox"/> -20	<input type="checkbox"/> 20–30	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 30–40	<input type="checkbox"/> 40–50	<input type="checkbox"/> 50+
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Number of Employees in 2009

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2–50	<input type="checkbox"/> 50–100	<input type="checkbox"/> 100–150	<input type="checkbox"/> 150–200	<input type="checkbox"/> 200–250
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Company Website

www.atalantasports.nl

Email Address

gerrino@atalantasports.nl

Postal Address

Lage Kanaaldijk 112d 9
6212 NA Maastricht



“Heaven starts on earth.”

Just as Jamie Oliver promotes healthy food as sine qua non for a healthy society, Gerrino Mulder and Mike Broers do the same with physical exercise. The goal of Atalanta Sports is to get the inhabitants of Maastricht to exercise in order to curb obesity and other diseases related to a sedentary lifestyle. Their aim is to create fun and accessible events that people want to be a part of.

Starting in their own region, they coordinated policy-makers, companies and stakeholders from a diverse range of fields to make structured and long-term investments in large community projects that go further than good intentions. Atalanta Sports also wants to reach its goal in a socially responsible way: believing that sports must be financially accessible for all, it has a strong focus on the lower socio-economic groups and migrants.

What is the specific quality that distinguishes your product and service from its competitors?

Without a doubt, it's the ethical dimension. In our hearts, we really want to help people become active and healthy in a structured way, so they can enjoy life more. And we are willing to work incredibly hard for that.

What were your biggest obstacles/fears when starting your own business?

Lots of people doubt entrepreneurs for their pure, good intentions. For a long time, I have struggled with that. Now that's finished: I'm proud of who I am and what I do.

Entrepreneurs are important to society because ...

We are dare-devils! Where others get frightened or depressed by a situation, we are challenged.

What would you tell another entrepreneur who is faced with a crisis?

Have faith in yourself. A crisis is a very good source of creativity.



“You are what you make of yourself.”

Lorenzo Mulè Stagno started his career as a mathematics teacher in governmental secondary schools, yet today he is the director of the communications firm Business Marketing Services (BMS).

After living in Germany for a year in the early 1990s, he returned to Malta to join some friends in opening a publishing and advertising agency. Almost a decade later, the company formed a strategic alliance with a business consulting and market research firm called Allied Consultants (AC). BMS is now a successful niche communications firm, which applies marketing theory as well as its know-how for the market.

Lorenzo's entrepreneurial experience involved building the management training unit within AC and launching the Malta Business School. Being a teacher at heart, he uses both academic and practical knowledge to give real-life lessons to would-be entrepreneurs and start-up companies.

What was the event that inspired you to start your own business?

In 1990, I migrated from a sheltered life in Malta to a large city in Germany. This adventure lasted for one year, but I learnt many lessons from it: not to take things for granted, to feel ok about quitting and failure, not to give up at the first hurdle and to be proactive.

In developing your products and services, have you been using any national or regional support programmes?

Being strong believers in consultancy, we obtained free consultancy through European Social Fund (ESF) for the advertising and publishing units. We are also in the process of applying for some European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grants for the creation of an e-business portal for our business and management training, and our market research and business consulting units.

How to overcome a crisis:

Do not panic, keep your brain working, be creative and try to find opportunities even in a crisis.

What would be your advice to aspiring entrepreneurs?

You need equal doses of passion and reason. Do not be afraid to fail and take the plunge.



Kolbrún Eydís Ottósdóttir

Iceland

Name of Company

Nox Medical

Business Sector

Health technology

Year of Business Launch

2006

SME Support Scheme used

2006–2008: Government grant of excellence to work on paediatric sleep diagnostic solutions

2006–2009: Location in Innovation Centre Iceland

2009: Further governmental grants for marketing and spin-off product development

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.noxmedical.com

Email Address

keo@noxmedical.com

Postal Address

Kim Medical Park Vatnagarðar 18
104 Reykjavík





“It will be tough and require a lot of work and dedication, but if it is your dream ... go for it!”

Nox Medical was founded in Iceland in 2006 by a group of engineers, medical professionals and investors with extensive experience in the field of sleep diagnostics. The mission of the company is to develop the next generation of sleep diagnostic systems based on the latest advancements in the fields of electronics, wireless technology and software architecture. Nox Medical's innovations in improved sleep diagnostics contribute to better health by making it more simple, efficient and comfortable to diagnose sleep disorder breathing in all types of patients, especially children.

The team used to work for another company, but was fired when the company was relocated to another country. The team then decided to start up its own company, the mission statement of which is described with the words „Sleep for all“.

The event that inspired me to start my own business ...

... was when the company I had worked at for a decade ceased its operations in Iceland. I regarded this as an opportunity to challenge myself and to start a business based on my own skills and vision.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

... the opportunity to improve the quality of life for some of the millions of people suffering from sleep disorders.

What would you consider to be the best preparation for becoming an entrepreneur?

Have a clear goal, a good business plan and a good market overview, and learn how to run your business.

Entrepreneurs are important to society because ...

... they plant the seeds of the future.

Miguel Pina Martins

Portugal

Name of Company

Science4you

Business Sector

Production of scientific toys; organisation of animation events

Year of Business Launch

2008

SME Support Scheme used

FINICIA (a start-up programme run by IAPMEI – Portuguese Institute for SME and Innovation)

Age Range

-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50+
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Number of Employees in 2009

2-50	50-100	100-150	150-200	200-250
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Company Website

www.science4you.pt

www.science4you.es

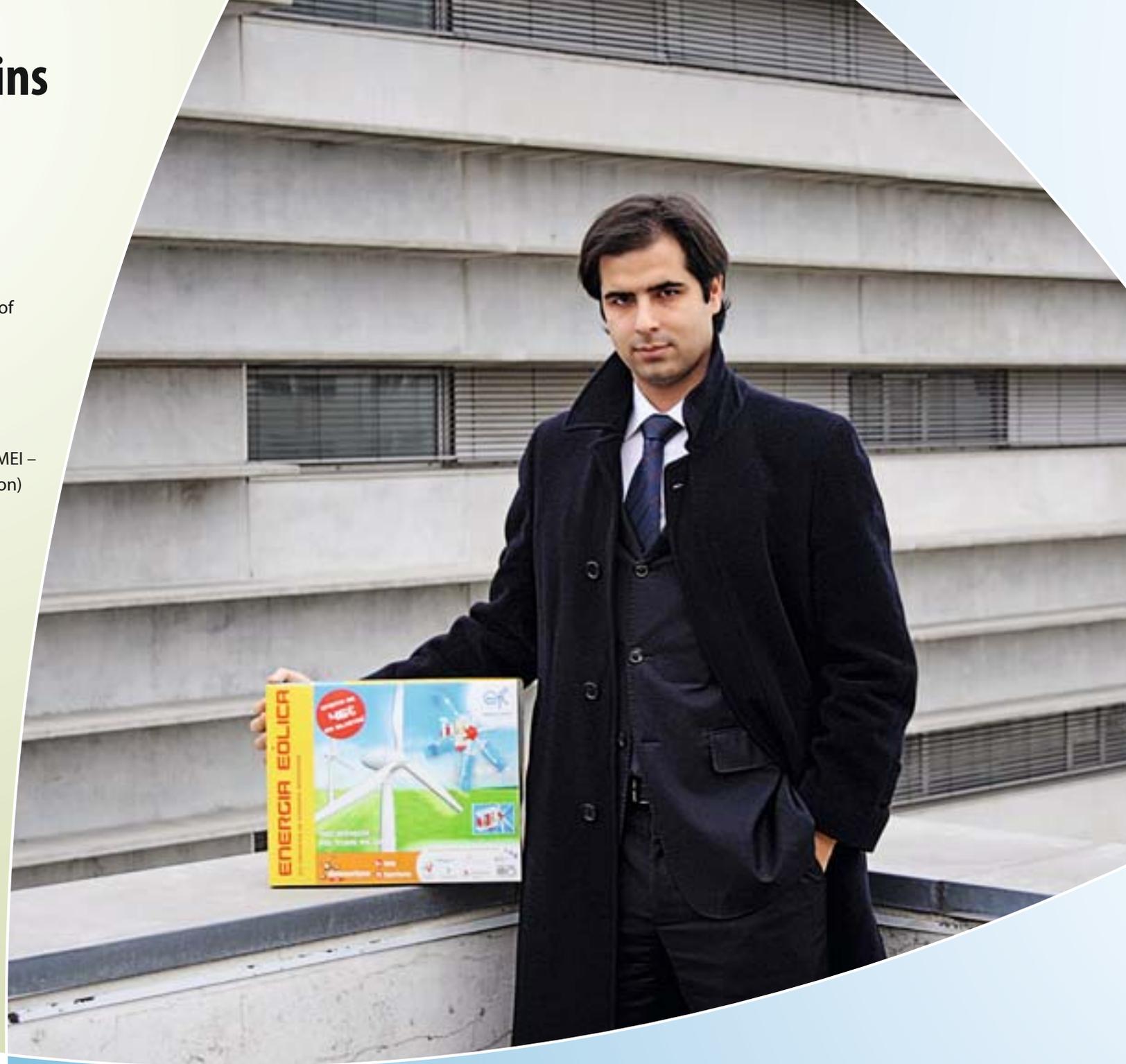
Email Address

info@science4you.pt

Postal Address

Edifício ICAT – Faculdade de Ciências da
Universidade de Lisboa

1749-016 Campo Grande, Lisbon



“Man is what he makes of himself.”

Science4you is a successful venture between a public university and entrepreneurs, which combines social responsibility with business goals. It began as an initiative by the University of Lisbon to attract young children to science through the development of scientific toys. A partnership with ISCTE business school (University Institute of Lisbon) was formed and a group of students proposed to create a business out of the activities and products designed.

The toys and activities offered by Science4You are innovative, didactic and appreciated by parents, teachers and the children. The partners believe that the products will foster new scientists and technology entrepreneurs. All of the nine employees currently working at Science4You are under 30 and the president of the board is 25 years old.

In developing your product/service(s), have you been using any national/regional support schemes/programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises?

About a dozen financing partners (between students from both schools and some teachers) joined efforts to make it happen, and they got the final impulse by a start-up programme called FINICIA run by IAPMEI, that encourages micro venture capital operations.

Entrepreneurs are important to society because ...

... they contribute essential values to society – values that encourage work and values that encourage a better world.

Has the recent economic crisis affected your business strategy in any way?

Science4you started selling in the middle of the crisis, so we only know how to thrive in a crisis.

What would be your advice to aspiring entrepreneurs?

Despite the difficulties, never lose your courage, hope and desire for success.



Nataša Ratej

Slovenia

Name of Company

Rima LLC

Business Sector

Construction, pre-fabricated houses

Year of Business Launch

1990

SME Support Scheme used

None

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.rima.si

Email Address

natasa.ratej@rima.si

Postal Address

Cesta 30.avgusta 4
1260 Ljubljana Polje



“Be true to yourself.”

RIMA LLC offers quality, pre-fabricated houses tailored to the desires of the customer. Starting in the 1990s, RIMA was one of the first companies in Slovenia to use pre-fabricated construction, with lowered ceilings and pre-fabricated dry walls. Eventually, RIMA offered a complete portfolio of construction services.

Its innovation has brought the company significant success in Slovenia. One example is RIMA Mobile homes, which are mobile units for both leisure and business purposes. Another innovation is Flexsys, a system of pre-fabricated facilities which can be constructed and enlarged according to the changing needs of the owner.

RIMA LLC strives to continue to develop new products based on the real needs of customers.

The person and event that inspired me to start my own business ...

My husband and I started the business in 1990 because of our desire to have our own business and to succeed. After my husband's death in 2004 I took over the business.

What were your biggest fears when starting your own business?

Initially that there will not be enough work. Then that I would not be able to succeed in a male-dominated industry and have to deal with non-ethical partners.

What would be your advice to aspiring entrepreneurs?

Be persistent, set realistic goals and follow through with a plan.

What would you tell an entrepreneur who is faced with a crisis?

Be critical about your own business and be prepared to make tough decisions in order to keep the company healthy. Adjust quickly to new circumstances.



Tzony Siegal

Israel

Name of Company

Non Linear Technology

Business Sector

Medical Devices

Year of Business Launch

2006

SME Support Scheme used

The Israel incubator system

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.nonlinear-tech.com

Email Address

tzony.s@nlt.co.il

Postal Address

6 Yoni Netanyahu Street
60376 Or Yehuda



“Keep it simple.”

Non Linear Technology (NLT) makes it possible to use a truly minimally-invasive approach to treating a wide range of lumbar spine degenerative conditions. Their unique design allows for the insertion of the various tools and implants into the areas being treated and curving them once inside.

NLT is an excellent example of the market-driving role of technological innovators. Beginning with their raw idea, a doctor and an entrepreneur put together a professional team, built a company and created a suite of products that stands at the technological forefront of the world's medical device industry.

In developing your products and services, have you been using any national or regional support programmes?

The Israel Incubator System.

What would you consider to be the best preparation for becoming an entrepreneur?

Learn to market your ideas well and to the right investors.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

... the thrill of research and development in all its stages.

Entrepreneurs are important to society because ...

... they are ahead of their time and if successful, bring about changes which result in both social and financial improvements.



Guy Stamet

Luxembourg

Name of Company

AirFlowControl SA

Business Sector

Ecotechnologies

Year of Business Launch

2006

SME Support Scheme used

None

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.afc.lu

Email Address

guy.stamet@afc.lu

Postal Address

2A, rue de l'Ecole
4394 Pontpierre



“A crisis is just a situation not an ending!”

AirFlowControl is a thermal energy-saving system based on the management of the required ventilation and smoke ejection openings in elevator shafts. The advantages of this system include savings in heating costs and a reduction of CO₂ emissions. There are also positive effects regarding comfort, cleanliness and improved air quality in the rooms adjacent to the elevator levels.

The investment costs per elevator shaft amounts to €2,500, with an average return on investment coming in under two years. Field tests have shown that annual savings may exceed €5,000 per elevator shaft, depending on the dimensions of the shaft and the architecture of the buildings. 5,000 to 10,000 units are expected to be sold in 2010.

The person and event that inspired me to start my own business ...

In 2004, the first time in my career, proud to work for my multinational employer, I had serious differences on ethical values with my General Manager. Luckily I took part in self-development training on “Decide for yourself – before others do it for you”. I went home – and so I did!

In developing your products and services, have you been using any national or regional support programmes?

In the beginning, we were scared to share our business idea with anyone to prevent our business model from being copied. This was a mistake. Our research and development could have been more efficient and cost-effective if we had sought official support from existing programmes, which are generally driven by experienced and available professionals!

What would be your advice to aspiring entrepreneurs?

A good business idea can be the trigger for starting a business. But the humility, the ongoing internal reflection, as well as the capacity of the general manager to involve and assist his employees – that is the key to an ongoing and profitable business!

Has the recent economic crisis affected your business strategy in any way?

Meeting a crisis immediately after our first company’s kickoff was not a gift. We enforced our strategic orientation to services & products even stronger linked to energy efficiency. Thus another three recently created companies are born thanks to opportunities offered by the crisis.



Heini Staudinger

Austria

Name of Company

GEA

Business Sector

Footwear and furniture

Year of Business Launch

1980

SME Support Scheme used

None

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.gea.at

Email Address

heini@gea.at

Postal Address

Niederschremserstraße 4
3943 Schrems



“Ever tried, ever failed, does not matter. Try again, fail again, fail better.” (Samuel Beckett)

GEA was founded at a time when the footwear sector in Europe was already in a crisis. In the last ten years the company has been able to grow each year, from 12 employees at the beginning to 120 now. This was made possible through fair cooperation, authenticity in marketing and the establishment of the company's own distribution channels, i.e. setting-up shoe shops in a number of bigger cities. Paying special attention to customers' needs and offering a fully flexible service (e.g. special shoe fits) has led to the company's reputation for high quality products, customers' trust in their philosophy and recognition of GEA's commitment to add value to the Waldviertel (Forest Quarter) region.

Beyond his core business, Heini Staudinger's interests expand to the environment with a production site driven 100% from solar energy (100kW). Financed through participative capital from customers; it incorporates social responsibility with equitable salaries for his employees and an initiative for hospitals in Africa (for which he was able to raise €500.000).

What were your biggest fears when starting your own business?

I was naive. I was simply convinced it would work. There was no fear at all.

Has the recent economic crisis affected your business strategy in any way?

Since this crisis arose, our business has actually grown by 30%. Our strategy is still the same. But since the crisis, more and more people don't trust in the global economy – they understand and love our messages more and more.

Why are entrepreneurs important for society?

Entrepreneurs are only important for society as long as they stay human. If they do not, then you can see the inhuman results.

What would be your advice to aspiring entrepreneurs?

Be conscious of your abilities, and even more important is to know WHO you are.



Kath Sutherland

United Kingdom

Name of Company

START (Ability)

Business Sector

Service Provision

Year of Business Launch

1999

SME Support Scheme used

None

Age Range

-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50+
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Number of Employees in 2009

2-50	50-100	100-150	150-200	200-250
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Company Website

www.startability.org.uk

Email Address

start.ability@ntlworld.com

Postal Address

21 Shrewsbury Road, Heaton, Bolton
Lancashire BL1 4NW





“We are, each of us, angels with only one wing; and we can only fly by embracing one another.” (Luciano de Crescenzo)

START (Ability) enables individuals who were previously socially excluded to access statutory services, employment, leisure facilities, and in some cases, to start their own businesses. The company helps these individuals make informed decisions by providing appropriate and accessible information and advice.

The founder of START (Ability), Kath Sutherland, has a particularly insightful knowledge of the issues that affect disabled people, as she herself is disabled. She works with many other organisations to find practical solutions to often very difficult issues.

Among her successful ventures is an Easy Read version of “Setting up in Business? A Resource Guide for disabled people and their advisors”, business consulting and providing training materials and support to disabled people who are organising or managing groups.

The event that inspired me to start my own business ...

... was a conversation with my wonderful husband! I was ranting about how unjust it was that disabled people and the people who provide day-to-day support for them were not receiving quality services and practical support. He told me that I had better get out there and fix it!

In developing your product/service (s), have you been using any national/regional support schemes/programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises?

I sought the advice of the Disabled Entrepreneurs’ Network, who provided me with invaluable information about setting up a business as a disabled person. They told me about ways in which I could receive financial help to pay for my support worker and the assistive technology that I needed to use a computer.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

Knowing that I don’t have to compromise on standards or principles as START (Ability) is my vision.

What would you tell an entrepreneur who is faced with a crisis?

Don’t give up! Every business goes through rough patches. Success is finding alternative ways of overcoming the crisis.

Lotte Tisenkopfa-Iltnerē

Latvia

Name of Company

MADARA Cosmetics Ltd.

Business Sector

Cosmetics

Year of Business Launch

2006

SME Support Scheme used

European Social Fund (ESF)

Age Range

<input type="checkbox"/> -20	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 30-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 40-50	<input type="checkbox"/> 50+
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Number of Employees in 2009

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2-50	<input type="checkbox"/> 50-100	<input type="checkbox"/> 100-150	<input type="checkbox"/> 150-200	<input type="checkbox"/> 200-250
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Company Website

www.madara-cosmetics.com

Email Address

info@madara-cosmetics.lv

Postal Address

2 Sampetera street
1046, Riga



“Do something passionately and it will bring good results.”

MADARA produces a range of natural and organic cosmetics using raw materials found in Latvia. The brand has been certified according to the international ECOCERT standard, which is more rigorous than the conventional regulations governing cosmetics. This guarantees that there has been a genuine practice of environmental respect throughout the production process and that natural substances of a superior ecological quality have been sourced. Energy-efficient production equipment is used and the packaging is also environmentally friendly. MADARA has been recognised as the greenest enterprise in Latvia.

Just three years after launching, the products are being sold in 23 countries worldwide (not only EU countries, but also Mexico, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Ukraine, etc.). And in 2010 MADARA plans to also start co-operation with USA, Russia and China.

What inspired you to start your own business?

My passion for a natural lifestyle and my hobby of making organic cosmetics at home led me to start MADARA cosmetics.

In developing your products and services, have you been using any national or regional support programmes?

Yes, we received a small grant from an ESF programme that supports female entrepreneurs. It helped us to buy some laboratory equipment needed for product development.

What would you tell an entrepreneur who is faced with a crisis?

Evaluate what the needs in the market are. Talk to people and monitor the situation carefully.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

... being a creative and positive person.



Igor Tjurin

Estonia

Name of Company

Audes LLC

Business Sector

Electronic devices

Year of Business Launch

1992 (predecessor from 1935)

SME Support Scheme used

Product development programme by EAS
(Enterprise Estonia)

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.audes.ee

Email Address

audes@estpak.ee

Postal Address

Pae street 3a,
41533 Jõhvi





“The first half of your life you work for reputation; the second half of your life, reputation works for you.”

Audes LLC produces high-quality electronic devices, with a focus on speakers in all shapes and sizes. The company's approach goes beyond quality, by striving to capture the very essence and importance of sound and the thoughts it provokes. Ultimately Audes' goal is to recreate the sounds of nature and, in just one listen, to deliver the harmony of life through the richness of sounds. The company does not just aim to improve sound, it aims to improve listeners.

Although it is a quite small company by EU standards, with 63 employees and 25 million Estonian kroons (ca. €1.6million) turnover in 2009 (previously, it has been higher), the company has found many “exotic” markets for export. For example they sell speakers in Bahrain, Egypt, Oman, Norway, Kuwait, Russia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Yemen, the USA, Ukraine and most of the EU countries.

The event that inspired me to start my own business ...

... was the collapse of the Soviet Union and the declaration of Estonian independence. At the same time, the lack of knowledge of how the rules of sales and marketing worked in a capitalist system was quite a challenge.

What is the specific quality that distinguishes your product and service from its competitors?

If a customer has a quality issue, we fix it as fast as possible and do it at our own expense. We prefer to lose money rather than our reputation.

What would you tell another entrepreneur who is faced with a crisis?

You should believe in yourself, and reinforce that with more persistent work.

What is your advice to those who are considering starting their own business?

You should understand that once you start your own business, you will have the cruellest employer – yourself.

Silje Vallestad

Norway

Name of Company

Bipper Communication

Business Sector

Mobile Communication

Year of Business Launch

2007

SME Support Scheme used

Innovation Norway and Incubator programme

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.bipper.com

Email Address

post@bipper.no

Postal Address

Thormøhlensgate 51
5006 Bergen



“Of course I can do it!”

When Silje Vallestad realised that her young children would soon be using mobile phones, she wanted to find a way to ensure that they would be safe while using them. The lack of existing options led her to establish Bipper Communication, which develops software solutions for making mobile phones safer and better adapted for use by children. Its services are web-based and target parents. Through an easy-to-use online administration portal, parents can define and set limits on how their young children use their mobile phones. Parents can also equip phones with a safety alarm and locate the phone (and their child) through online mapping.

Through its Do Good Foundation, Bipper Communication is also willing to involve, empower and enable children and young people to participate in creating a safer and better world.

What inspired me to start my own business ...

One day my six-year-old neighbour showed me her mobile phone. I was shocked that kids at this age were mobile phone users. Realising that my daughter would soon want her own, I looked for a solution to ensure that she would be safe when using one. When I couldn't find a solution that I liked, I had to make it myself – so I started Bipper!

What were your biggest obstacles or fears when starting your own business?

When founding Bipper, I had no knowledge of either technology or telecommunications. All I had was a vision of the product I wanted for my young family and myself, but I did not know whether it would be possible to make it. I really started from scratch and needed to fight my way forward. Giving up a secure and well-paid job was tough, but I had to go for it 100 per cent.

In developing your product and service(s), have you been using any support schemes for small- and medium-sized enterprises?

Yes. Innovation Norway has been a great support. In addition, our company has been located in an incubator for the first two years, providing a great network and advisory services right next door.

Has the recent economic crisis affected your business strategy in any way?

The recent recession forced Bipper to turn away from the capital-intensive development of its own Bipper-Mobile to instead focus on developing an innovative software solution. This change of focus turned out to be positive as it minimized our capital binding. We were however close to bankruptcy several times. It was really tough!



Linda Vavříková

Czech Republic

Name of Company

Allegria – Company for experiences

Business Sector

Services

Year of Business Launch

2004

SME Support Scheme used

None

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.darky-jsou-zazitky.cz

Email Address

kontakt@firmanazazitky.cz

lv@firmanazazitky.cz

Postal Address

Nad Petruskou 63/1

120 00, Prague 2



“Be stubborn and believe in your product.”

The Allegria company arranges various kinds of unconventional experiences – such as cultural or sport events, gastronomic or wellness services, or even adrenalin kicks – which can be presented as gifts to individuals and corporate clients.

While still at University, Linda Vavříková started her business at the end of 2004, after realising that choosing gifts for relatives and friends was often quite difficult. She realised that similar business models already existed in western countries and decided to develop this idea in Czech and Slovak Republics. It can be said that she and her staff have actually created this market segment in both countries. Later she was awarded as the Czech Starting-up Businessperson of the Year 2008.

The best publicity for Allegria is having satisfied clients talk about their adventures to others, and the company is now able to offer a large range of experiences based on the client's expectations.

What were your biggest obstacles when starting your own business?

Bureaucracy. I hate papers ...

In developing your services, have you been using any support programmes for SMEs?

The Czech Chamber of Commerce helped us to gain ISO 9001:2001.

Has the recent economic crisis affected your business strategy in any way?

Yes, people started to buy cheaper experiences and we had less B2B clients last year. It changed at the end of the year, Christmas was a real success.

For me, the best thing about being an entrepreneur is ...

... my liberty to decide.



Mimoza Vojka Emanuels

Albania

Name of Company

SAM Ltd.

Business Sector

Custom Sportswear Manufacturer

Year of Business Launch

1993

SME Support Scheme used

USAID (United State Agency for International Development),
Albinvest (Albanian Agency for Business and Investment)
ANE (previous Agency for Export Promotion),
GTZ (Agency for Technical Cooperation),
BAS (Business Advisory Services)

Age Range

-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Number of Employees in 2009

2-50 50-100 100-150 150-200 200-250

Company Website

www.samwear.eu

Email Address

info@samwear.eu

Postal Address

Rruga siri kodra
Ish blloku magazinave
0000 Tirana



“Know how to do and know how to serve.”

After working for the same client for 15 years, Sam Ltd. was forced to make 50 workers redundant as the client was hit by the financial crisis and could no longer order sufficient quantities to keep our personnel fully occupied. The company had started a customised sportswear line some five years ago and had invested in all the necessary new machinery, while buying and stocking all the fabrics, accessories and other consumables.

It has now established this line to a capacity of ca. 400 pieces per day with a workforce of 30 operators. All the garments can be different, there are no minimum quantities for any order, and the clients have no restrictions in the design and use of colours. Despite having made two-thirds of her workforce redundant, Mimoza Vojka Emanuels expects their turnover to increase by ca. 30% this year, and for next year to see a further increase of 50%.

What were your biggest obstacles when starting your own business?

As one of the first private businesses in Albania, we always had – and occasionally still have – to travel unknown roads filled with obstacles big and small. But, never fear – it’s just a road!

How has the recent economic crisis affected your business strategy?

After 15 years, we had to make redundancies in our business because of insufficient orders. The workforce was therefore decreased in February 2009 and focus was put on investing and selling ready-made garments, which resulted in a 10% increase in turnover for that year.

My advice to other entrepreneurs ...

Keep things simple, focus, and keep going.

Entrepreneurs are important to society, because ...

Along with creating work, we also support personal and social development.



For more information:

EUROPEAN SME WEEK 2010:

<http://ec.europa.eu/sme-week>

EUROPEAN SMALL BUSINESS PORTAL:

<http://ec.europa.eu/small-business>

FUNDING FOR SMEs:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/finance/index_en.htm

More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://europa.eu>).

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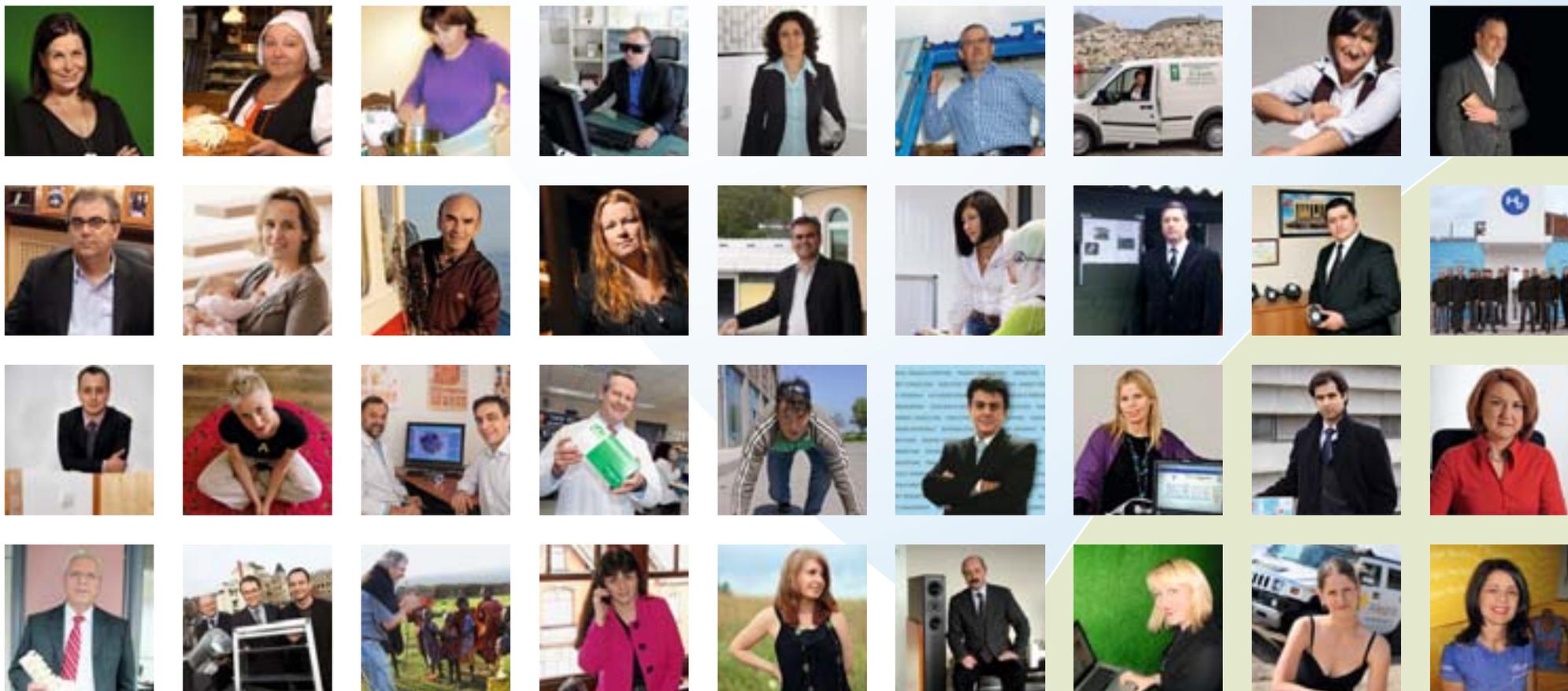
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