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The pilot project intervention in Duga Resa was focused on the implementation of selected instruments developed within the Toolbox, an online collection of tools and instruments, in order to develop recommendations for better support for the promotion of social entrepreneurship in rural or disadvantaged areas.

Through key activities, a nine-month pilot support program for social entrepreneurs and their business ideas and projects with a positive social and / or environmental impact was implemented. It covered the period from June 2020 to March 2021. The DelFin project through the support program sought to strengthen their capacities and the capacities of the local community and provided professional, technical and mentoring support and education tailored to the specifics of social entrepreneurship, rural business and business management during and after the crisis caused by COVID-19.

The pilot project program was implemented in two phases. In the first phase of the pilot program, six-month support was provided for ten social entrepreneurs who wanted to improve their business that has or will have a positive social and / or environmental impact on the local community. Our mentors and lecturers worked hard to develop and improve their business ideas, and they also participated in networking activities organized as business meetings, so-called. Business Meetup with guest lecturers and key stakeholders in the social entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The result of the activities of the first phase of the pilot project program is the creation of a unique document, or powerpoint presentation of each participant as a combination of business plan and sales pitch. The second phase of the pilot program for social entrepreneurs included 1 on 1 mentoring in the field of business finance, which relied on the developed business models of the first phase. A mentoring plan was developed for each participant, on the basis of which they were provided with professional assistance in defining and drafting a plan on what is necessary for the realization of their business venture, that is what they must invest and what are the costs of obtaining these funds and planned sources of investment funds.

One of our participants is the Association "Classroom of Tradition and Creativity" from Plaški, which brings together young people, enthusiasts and was founded with the aim of developing the local community through the promotion of traditional, artistic and environmental awareness and knowledge.

They deal with the improvement and promotion of the Plaščanska Valley as a tourist destination, care for cultural and natural assets, protection of cultural, humanitarian, health and environmental interests, promotion of cultural, sports, recreational and educational-research activities.

Their work also includes the purchase of local and domestic resources, the production of herbal products and cosmetics. With care and love for the people of this area, especially those who need support in the placement of handicrafts, tourist services and products work to connect and achieve cooperation with civil and other organizations in Croatia, Europe and the world, and seek to improve the quality of life of children, youth and adults in the local community.

Isidora Ralić, President of the Classroom Association, participated in professional lectures for social entrepreneurs as part of the implementation of the CE 1374 DelFin project, "Development of financial ecosystems for the promotion of social entrepreneurship in rural regions."

The business model that was developed as part of the DelFin pilot project is related to the realization of a plant manufactory in the Plaščanska valley. The association wanted to develop an educational-research manufactory of herbal products in Plaščanska valley, which would be a self-sustaining platform for the education of young people and adults, employment opportunities, and the promotion of Plaščanska valley as a tourist destination.

The idea and concept of the project is to support social entrepreneurship initiatives that change the social picture and develop the individual, society and community as a whole and which will be developed to the extent suitable for presentation to future investors.

Their concrete results during the project are:

- Two new hires
- Development of a project plan and financial model for a new product line
- Arrangement of business space in the center of Plaški
- Landscaping for permanent plant plantations
- Connecting with a natural cosmetics laboratory
- Post fundraising campaigns on GoGetFunding

The commendable entrepreneurial competence acquired in the pilot. their Classroom Association will be a plus in future project applications and the development of entrepreneurial models in the community.

"It is time to implement the acquired knowledge even more and achieve something good and high quality in our community." Isidora Ralić, president of the association "Classroom of Tradition and Creativity" from Plaški.



photo source: Classroom of Tradition and Creativity

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The aim of the pilot project was to provide the participants - organizations/individuals planning or already operating a social enterprise - with skills development and knowledge-enhancing training that will help them to create and operate a sustainable, long-term successful social enterprise. To this end, the training aimed to implement knowledge transfer, business and entrepreneurial skills development, and aimed to strengthen the motivations and commitment of the participants by helping them build relationships between the participants, sharing good practices and successful models of social enterprises.

With the help of the overlapping modules, by the end of the workshop, the participants were able to have their own realistic business plan that also takes into account the specifics of social enterprises.

An important element of the workshops were the financial topic ones: Pricing, pricing strategy, financial funds, Cash flow management, Financial assets, liabilities, bank lending. The latter was held by UNICREDIT Bank who was a partner throughout the project.

Following the call for applicants in 2nd half of 2020 and selection of participants, the Fenntartható Vállalkozások Alapítvány (who was the partner of Hajdú-Bihar County Government in implementing the pilot project) developed the final theme based on the situation and needs of the participating organizations/individuals. An important element in the development of the topic was the use of the experiences of trainers and experts during the training of previous social enterprises. The workshops were held with the help of Zoom, taking advantage of all the technical possibilities of this. The methodology was based on interactivity, in addition to presenting the presentations, it included small group problem solutions and discussions. Participants were given homework based on what they had learned each time.

The training was complemented by individual mentoring from 01.2021 until 31.03.2021 and a pitch event on 14.04.2021.

The participants started from different levels in terms of knowledge and experience, as well as business ideas and activities, but they soon managed to create group cohesion, the participants often shared their knowledge and experience “they were the role model for me” said the Fecskefészek Association on the President of the Towards Light Foundation.

The pitch event was a hybrid event. Some pitchers were personally present and the others made their pitch online via ZOOM. It was a great opportunity for the pilot participants to present themselves in front of a jury and a wider audience. The three best pitches were awarded. The pilot participants utilized what they learned during the six months during their presentation and the audience was introduced to their future plans. The pitch event was a good opportunity for networking as well.

You can find the pitch event here:

<https://www.facebook.com/702641033190162/videos/272698004504861>



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