



2008 European Enterprise Awards short list

A short list of 13 nominees has been selected for the 2008 European Enterprise Awards (EEA). The competition recognises and rewards public initiatives supporting entrepreneurship across Europe. Final results will be announced on 13 May 2009 at a ceremony marking the end of the European SME week in Prague, to which all nominees are invited. The winners of this annual event act as role models across the regions of Europe and provide excellent examples how to create environments where entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship can flourish.

The following 13 candidates were short listed for the 2008 awards covering entrepreneurship promotion, red tape reduction, enterprise support, investment in skills, and responsible and inclusive entrepreneurship:

Belgium

A team of entrepreneurship awareness-raising workers, Agence de Stimulation Economique [Economic Stimulation Agency], Liège

Engaging the entrepreneurs of tomorrow

Promoting entrepreneurship is one of the main missions that the Walloon Government has given the Agence de stimulation économique (ASE). To stimulate the growth of business start-ups, an entrepreneurship 'sales force' targets educational institutions in the region. This entrepreneurship awareness-raising team, made up of teachers on secondment, is bringing its experience and its conviction to the service of entrepreneurship throughout Wallonia.

In the past two years, ASE has enabled experts in entrepreneurship, players in the Walloon economy and representatives of education and training to speak to numerous schools. By 2009, all 650 of Wallonia's secondary and higher education institutions will have a relationship with the ASE team.

Teachers wanting to join this movement are clearly identified and kept informed of all initiatives related to entrepreneurship organised in Wallonia. A widespread information campaign – 'tous des as' ('everyone is an ace') – was carried out at the start of the 2008 school year with posters in staffrooms, leaflets, educational handouts, inserts in the specialist press and a radio advert.

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Finland

Knowledge, skills, support – from entrepreneur to entrepreneur, The Women's Enterprise Agency, Helsinki

Entrepreneur-to-entrepreneur support levels the playing field for women

Since 1996, the Women's Enterprise Agency in Helsinki has encouraged and supported women to become entrepreneurs. The agency recognised the threshold to become an entrepreneur is higher for women than for men. Adopting the 'one entrepreneur supporting another' operational model, the project has given expert mentoring to rising small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Cost-free advice has been provided for more than 400 women. Some 250 women planning to start a company participated in 16 'introduction to entrepreneurship' information events; nearly 200 participated in 15 practical information sessions; and 60 took part in four three-month courses on entrepreneurship. The project has also had success with group mentoring, particularly to migrant workers and to those preparing for the Further Qualification for Entrepreneurs exam.

In addition, the agency has worked in co-operation with groups in several other countries – including Lithuania, Latvia and Mozambique.

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France

Gers Soho Solo project, Gers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Gers

Providing a perfect welcome for neo-rural 'solos'

The Soho Solo project offers a range of support services, including assistance in mounting projects and seeking funding, support and advice on the development and promotion of activities, and assistance in seeking accommodation, to independent entrepreneurs, teleworkers, home-based employees and freelances – known as 'solos' – wishing to settle and work in Gers. This department in the Midi-Pyrénées region in the southwest of France is particularly rural and isolated.

Piloted by the Gers Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), the programme has made it possible to develop a genuine welcome policy for Gers by mobilising both private and public partners, which assist 'neo-rurals' to establish themselves in the area and integrate.

Since the launch of a marketing website in February 2008, about a dozen families have already established themselves in the department and about 50 contacts are currently being followed up by the Gers CCI team and the Gers Gascony business and innovation centre team.

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Germany

Unternehmergeymnasium Bayern: Unternehmertum mit Abitur (Entrepreneurial Grammar School Bavaria: Entrepreneurship Education and School Graduation in one Go) Unternehmergeymnasium Bayern, Pfarrkirchen

Specialist secondary school fosters entrepreneurial talents

Founded in 2005, Unternehmergeymnasium Bayern (UG Bavaria) helps students to develop their own independent businesses and leadership skills, while helping

them to graduate. It is part of the Gymnasium Pfarrkirchen, a grammar school with some 1 100 students located 120 km east of Munich, near the borders with Austria and the Czech Republic.

Students benefit from workshops with experienced entrepreneurs, as well as a network of 80 companies and educational institutions. Practical projects such as managing the school canteen offer experience to participants, and students are given an appreciation of the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – merging school and business without giving up an ethical, high level general education.

The basic one-year education in the 2006/7 school year was completed successfully by 42 out of 44 students. In 2007/8, 22 of the 44 continued their entrepreneurial education up to a successful start-up. The aim to motivate students from all over Bavaria seems also to be working as little by little all Bavarian grammar schools are beginning to offer entrepreneurial education.

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Getting people into work, Waldkirch Employment and Qualification Company (WABE), Waldkirch

Achieving real success in the fight against unemployment

Founded in 2004, WABE is a non-profit public-private partnership fighting unemployment in Waldkirch in Baden-Württemberg in south-west Germany. It employs 50 people; 40 of whom were previously unemployed, but benefited from success in the organisation's training programmes.

WABE is a local network of citizens, private enterprises and government authorities helping integrate the unemployed with special placement problems. A holistic approach of practical training, socio-pedagogical coaching and temporary placements has integrated 300 unemployed people in local businesses. At any time, some 165 unemployed persons are being trained.

Participating companies have good experience with the well-tailored, custom-fit placement of motivated and qualified employees by WABE. By recruiting employees through the organisation, transaction costs in employee selection are kept low for the companies.

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Hungary

ANTI-BUREAU, Miskolc Holding Zrt., Miskolc

Eliminating bureaucracy in the interests of efficiency

Miskolc Holding Zrt was established in 2006 as a simpler, centralised operation to manage the property of the local government in Miskolc – the third-largest city in Hungary, in the north-east of the country. Responsibilities range from operating heating, sewage and water services, to refuse treatment, and even public transport and parking.

The objective is to operate as a true service organisation, meeting everyday needs and dealing with everyday issues, while making the administration related to the work and services of the whole group of companies clearer for the local residents.

As a result, previous often bureaucratic systems have been eliminated, and the group's operations have become more cost effective. This is assisted by centralised customer services, where issues relating to half of the member companies can be dealt with in one place, in a concentrated way.

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Lithuania

Reduction of statistical reporting burden to respondents, Department of Statistics to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (Lithuanian Statistics), Vilnius

Reducing the statistical reporting burden on businesses

To reduce the statistical reporting burden, Lithuanian Statistics has established a permanent inter-institutional commission to monitor and assist in this area. In the last five years, it has managed to reduce markedly the time and number of statistical reports for businesses.

In 2008, the organisation launched a section on its website where it promoted its burden-reduction policy, and published information on the implementation of burden-reduction measures. A specialised website *e-formos.stat.gov.lt* offers an opportunity for registered respondents to find electronic forms, their submission schedules and information about data transfer.

The number of statistical reports for business was reduced from 171 in 2003 to 125 in 2008. Statistical report forms are now tested before issue. And the average time required to prepare statistical reports in 2007 was 12.9 hours, compared with 13.3 hours in 2006. This should be brought down to 10.5 hours by 2011.

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Poland

Commune of Bieliny – Our Power Spot, Commune of Bieliny, Bieliny

Return to cultural and folklore heritage offers new tourism opportunities

Bieliny in south-central Poland is a rural area with high unemployment that has forced young people to move to the city or go abroad. However, it is now using the cultural and folklore heritage of the local Świętokrzyskie mountains to produce a unique tourism experience.

Through field games, similar to role-play computer games, tourists can live out scenarios based on local legends and interact with characters from the region's past. Not only does this enterprise represent a new source of income for the community, but it has also resulted in a return to roots of the region's cultural heritage.

The project has led to a substantial increase in tourist business in the commune; contributed to animation of the young and of the whole community, and to growth of tourism based on local tradition. More tourist farms have also been set up in the area – in 2006 there were six such farms and now there are nineteen.

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Pottery Village, the Nidzica Development Foundation (NIDA), Nidzica

Fostering new enterprises while protecting old traditions

The Pottery Village in Kamionka near Nidzica in north-east Poland is an innovative social enterprise which promotes and develops entrepreneurship among the socially excluded and marginalised unemployed rural population. It was established by the Nidzica Development Foundation (NIDA) in 2005, as part of the 'Towards the Polish model of social economy – building new Lisków' project under the EU EQUAL Programme.

Pottery Village offers ideas for economic activities outside agriculture, based on vanishing traditional crafts and customs. The result is the development of products and services, under one trade mark, ranging from pottery, tailoring and handmade paper production, to agro and eco tourism and the restoration of antique houses. Out of 108 unemployed who took part in the project and completed vocational training, 45 have found employment. The enterprise itself now has nine employees. An additional result of the project is that it has been replicated in other regions.

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Spain

Home support programme for entrepreneurs (PAED), Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism of the Aragón Regional Government, Zaragoza

On-call entrepreneurial advice offered by home-support service

The Aragón Government's Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism created the 'Home support programme for entrepreneurs' (PAED) with the goal of creating an enterprise network in a rural area with a particularly low population density.

The objective was to promote business start-ups that are well embedded in the region, with lower business risk and higher survival rates. The programme gave entrepreneurs access to tailored professional advice in their town or even their place of residence via a network of agents working throughout the region.

A total of 1,478 companies have been created through the programme employing 2 972 people, with a further 253 companies and 858 jobs in the pipeline. PAED enterprises have above-average survival rates; 75% after six years' operation compared with a national average of 45%.

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Instituto IDEAS, Universidad Politécnica de Valencia (UPV), Valencia

Supporting innovative ideas through co-operation

The Instituto IDEAS helps generate new business opportunities and innovative technology-based companies in Valencia. It focuses on helping young entrepreneurs get their own business projects off the ground.

It works towards its aim by: building networks between stakeholders in the Valencian Innovation System; co-operating with centres and institutions to foster an entrepreneurial spirit; promoting and developing new research and educational projects to do with entrepreneurship and business start-ups; and creating a mindset in the university community for enterprise creation.

The project has had significant economic impact as well as providing training and support for e-commerce through an innovative virtual shopping mall 'Parque Innova'. Since 1992, the Instituto IDEAS has helped create 400 innovative companies and enabled the creation of 4 000 jobs in the Valencia Region.

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Sweden

Gothia Science Park, Enterprise and Community Building Sector, Municipality of Skövde

Science park provides fertile setting for growth of innovative businesses

The Enterprise and Community Building Sector of Skövde (NSE) is the driving force behind the Gothia Science Park (GSP). This is an important element in diversification in a region heavily dependent on just two large automotive engineering plants. The goal was to attract companies developing IT services and products and create employment for graduates from the University of Skövde.

To support business development in the region the project introduced three activities. The GSP Inkubator ensures newly formed enterprises establish themselves on the market as quickly as possible. The GSP Teknikpark offers a creative environment close to researchers, students and other enterprises, making it the perfect setting for businesses to grow. The GSP Projektarena is a meeting place for researchers, companies and the community, and provides support for developing new projects.

This innovative environment has resulted in considerable success, particularly in computer gaming. It now consists of 50 businesses and 300 employees.

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United Kingdom

Scarborough Renaissance Partnership, Scarborough Renaissance Partnership, North Yorkshire, United Kingdom

Seaside renaissance brought about through creative and cultural enterprises

Formed in 2002, the Scarborough Renaissance Partnership has transformed the north-east England seaside town of Scarborough by pioneering renaissance – turning a seasonal economy with unemployment in the winter months 50% higher than in the summer into a year-round economy with only a 10% difference between summer and winter employment. Some 100 jobs have been created through public investment, facilitating the creation of another 100 jobs in the private sector in the past two years. And the new entrepreneurial climate is set to boost employment in the next five years.

The project won the 2008 Enterprising Britain award, due to its success in changing the fortunes of the town and making it synonymous with enterprise. This success was based on the active involvement of the community in the decision-making process; and the development of a creative and cultural sector in the town. Development of the Woodend Creative Workspace, a state-of-the-art centre for the creative and cultural industries, and a 40-ha business park offering 100 000 m² of new business space with room for 2,000 jobs is enabling new business and enterprise development to take place in the town.

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For more information on the European Enterprise Awards, please consult:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/smes/awards/index_en.htm