

Brussels, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2006

## The Winners of the 2006 European Enterprise Awards

*Today's Awards were handed out for excellence in six categories: Entrepreneurial Trailblazer for promoting an entrepreneurial culture, Enterprise Support for supporting business, Red Tape Reduction for measures to simplify administrative procedures, Investment in People for entrepreneurship education and Responsible Entrepreneurship for sustainable business practices. Finally, a Grand Jury Prize has been awarded to the entry considered the most creative and inspiring entrepreneurship initiative in Europe.*

### Grand Jury Prize

#### **Y4 Committee: Making Central Finland the most entrepreneur-friendly region in the world**

A cultural change by spreading entrepreneurial thinking in all layers of society was triggered by the Y4 committee in Central Finland, the winner of the Grand Jury Prize of the European Enterprise Awards.

In 2003, the Central Finland Chamber of Commerce and the Entrepreneurs of Central Finland initiated a process to strengthen operational support for business. Key to the strategy was to appreciate, motivate and encourage people to be innovative and become entrepreneurs, whilst also adopting ethically sustainable values. The process was named Y4 after four Finnish words, each starting with the letter Y and carrying the meaning 'Promote Entrepreneurship in Society by Co-operation'.

The Y4 ideology aims to increase the extent to which the business perspective is taken into account in decision making. The project has triggered a cultural change in Central Finland, raising the proportion of entrepreneurs in a region that previously had a well-established culture of paid employment.

Today, Y4 involves a wide range of stakeholders, including local enterprises, elected officials, civil servants, educational institutions, students' development companies, parishes and various other supporting organisations. The region also has an entrepreneurial delegate of its own that coordinates the Y4 project. Altogether, 36 public organizations from around Central Finland have joined the process, each formulating its own promises and stating its commitment to the promotion of entrepreneurship. The process is an outstanding example of how to encourage the flywheel of entrepreneurial change at the regional level.

Web: <http://www.y4.fi/>

## Entrepreneurial Trailblazer Award

### **Ifex: Initiative for start-ups and Business Transfers, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Germany**

*The initiative for start-ups and Business Transfers, IFEX, (Baden-Württemberg Germany) is a wide-ranging regional initiative to **support business start-ups and transfers** with special focus on women and youth.*

Via its online portal, ifex is a **one-stop agency for information on start-up and business transfer policies**, giving access to a large network of more than 1,400 support service providers. Central to the success of this project, however, is its commitment to providing tailor-made educational and support services to specific target groups, including schools, universities, women, ethnic and minority groups. Its specialised network of 1.400 public and private actors helped to safe-guard 25.000 jobs in the last two years by supporting 2.100 business transfers.

Ifex (Initiative für Existenzgründungen und Unternehmensnachfolge) was first established in 1994 as a short-term pilot project, aimed at supporting start-ups and creating a more positive entrepreneurial climate. Today, due to the success of the project, ifex is a permanent Unit within the State Ministry of Economic Affairs and also manages the nation-wide “German Agency for Women’s Start-ups” on behalf of three federal ministries.

Ifex has demonstrated over the past 12 years how to build an innovative and successful regional support infrastructure, in close cooperation with all regional support service providers and in spite of shrinking public budgets. Its support measures have already been successfully transferred to other German and European regions with impressive results.

Web: [www.newcome.de](http://www.newcome.de)

## Enterprise Support Award

### **Upper old Town Lienz Stadtgemeinde, Lienz, Austria**

The Lienz Marketing Department (*Stadtgemeinde Lienz, Austria*) has **revitalised the city of 12.000 inhabitants** and created a cooperative town vision between local residents and entrepreneurs. This has brought back visitors, tourists and clients regenerating the town’s economy and image.

The town of Lienz in Austria exemplifies a new kind of district development programme in which ownership of the process is felt by local citizens and entrepreneurs alike. At the heart of this process, Stadtgemeinde Lienz Marketing Department – “Stadtmarketing” – stands as both the promoter of the district’s development vision and an active link between a range of stakeholders, from political and administrative representatives to local citizens.

Results from this collaborative initiative, involving 42 house owners, 27 entrepreneurs and 34 public services, already include the development of a new shopping centre “without artificial roof” and a marketing initiative for the businesses in the ‘Upper Old Town.’ This has positioned them successfully against the out-of-town competition, raising turnover by 7.5% and increasing by 15% the frequency and length of visitors’ stay in the centre of town.

Named ‘Obere Altstadt Lienz’, the project is a model of co-operative, long-term district development, rooted in good urban governance, public-private partnership, commitment from local citizens and target- oriented administration

Web: [www.stadt-lienz.at](http://www.stadt-lienz.at)

## **Red Tape Reduction Award**

### **On-the-Spot-Firm initiative, Coimbra, Portugal**

The *On-the-Spot Firm* in Coimbra (Portugal) is a special new regime that makes it possible to create a company in less than an hour. The On-the-Spot Firm initiative, offered by the Centro Entrepreneurial Council (CEC) in partnership with the UMCA (Unidata de Coordinaçã de Modernizaçã Administrativa), has developed a way of supporting new enterprise initiatives by making it possible to set up a commercial company in less than an hour, at reasonable cost to the entrepreneur and in a single office.

Until July 2005, the experience of setting up a company in Portugal meant having to trail around several government offices and was almost impossible to achieve in less than 4-6 weeks. The challenge faced by the Centro Entrepreneurial Council was therefore to pilot a new system that reduced the time to register a company, reduced the level of complexity for entrepreneurs and simplified procedures within the administration.

The On-the-Spot Firm pilot initiative was developed in only four months in cooperation with four Ministries. After successfully bringing down the set-up time to one hour, the initiative was extended to the entire country with impressive results: over 900 000 Euros and 150 000 days were saved by new companies, as well as 10 000 new jobs created. Following the success of the project, new initiatives are now planned including 'On-the-Spot membership of an Arbitration Centre' and 'On-the-Spot trademark'.

Web: [www.cec.org.pt](http://www.cec.org.pt)

## **Investment in People Award**

### **Foundation for Research and Training in the Spirit of Entrepreneurship, Wallonia, Belgium**

The Foundation for Research and Training in the Spirit of Entrepreneurship (FREE) is a non-profit association that works with the Walloon region (Belgium) to spread the "**spirit of entrepreneurship**" among school children, students, teachers and the general public. It has produced educational toolkits to stimulate entrepreneurial qualities and helps organise mini-companies at schools, awareness-raising events and clubs for student entrepreneurs. At university level it initiates forums, meetings of students and entrepreneurs as well as clubs for student entrepreneurs.

FREE (Foundation pour la Recherche et l'Enseignement de l'Esprit d'Entreprendre) is a non-profit organisation that uses educational and communication actions to encourage young people to launch innovative projects in a range of business fields. In the context of the Walloon region's Marshall Plan, FREE has been entrusted with coordinating a programme to spread a 'spirit of entrepreneurship' among the francophone population of Belgium and, specifically, to increase the number of companies created in Wallonia.

FREE works with various educational networks to launch a wide range of actions in schools as well as to raise awareness about entrepreneurship through the media. At school level, it promoted mini-companies in schools, organised company visits and helped more than 20,000 primary students realise a personal project.

To promote a greater entrepreneurial spirit among the population, it is necessary to convince political decision makers of the need and value of these actions. FREE has made specific proposals in these areas and has worked with the media to publicise a number of communication tools as well as a TV programme on entrepreneurship.

Web: [www.freefondation.be](http://www.freefondation.be)

## **Responsible Entrepreneurship Award**

### **Autopromozione Sociale, Municipality of Rome, Italy**

Autopromozione Sociale is an inspiring project set up by the Municipality of Rome (Italy) to **promote alternative economic activities**. It has created a permanent space in the suburbs of Rome where 750 companies work in social and environmental areas such as fair trade, biodynamic agriculture, ethical finance, recycling, energy savings, responsible tourism and free software.

The challenge of modern business innovation is to ensure that local development occurs in harmony with the social and physical environment. Since its establishment in 2004 by the Municipality of Rome, Autopromozione Sociale (Social Self-Promotion) has provided support to more than 750 start-up companies, where priority is given to the key principles of sustainable development.

Whilst this support has led to the creation of more than 3,500 jobs, the project's starting point has typically been a coordinated group of enterprises and resourceful individuals with good ideas about how to improve the quality of life in the city's suburbs. It is based on the principle that economic growth flows from a positive 'cultural atmosphere' and a set of new enterprises interacting with the complexities of sustainable development, rather than isolated individual initiatives.

Via the direct participation of all stakeholders through public calls for proposals, the project has led to a range of general business activities, targeted initiatives towards crafts, bookshops, the immigrant population and 'green' projects. It has also guaranteed funds for loans and established a number of entrepreneurial service centres and support facilities for local businesses.

Web: [www.autopromozionesociale.it](http://www.autopromozionesociale.it)

## **Special Mentions**

**Municipality of Slovensky Grob, in Slovakia** for its revival of the traditional dish of roast goose that has turned the town into a celebrated tourist destination. Although the gastronomic tradition has been known to gourmets for over 100 years, it took a trade license and the systematic support of the Municipality to make it the basis of the town's development. Today, 70.000 people come every year to taste the delicacy at one of Slovensky Grob's 23 restaurants, each of which celebrates local history and traditions, folk music and food.

Web: [www.slovensky-grob.sk](http://www.slovensky-grob.sk)

**Rock City, Hultsfred, AB Sweden**, for its vibrant initiative that promotes creative entrepreneurship where music meets business. Describing itself as a "creative meeting place for music, media and tourism," Rock City provides an opportunity for talented individuals to learn and be supported in the task of turning their talent and creativity into a successful business enterprise. Today, more than 5000 people visit the centre daily, which includes a Start Studio for new enterprises, the Swedish Rock Archive, a Video Lab and opportunities for networking at a local, regional and national level.

Web: [www.rockcity.se](http://www.rockcity.se)

For more information, please consult:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/smes/awards/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/smes/awards/index_en.htm)