



**Project “Teaming Up” overall evaluation**

## 1. Evaluation method in a nutshell.

The leading partner of the "Teaming UP" project carried out the project's evaluation process at the partners' last face-to-face meeting. As part of the evaluation, the partners gave their assessment in writing, evaluating three aspects of the project - the project idea, the project implementation process and the project results as a whole. The written evaluation was followed by an oral discussion during which the partners commented on the written assessment, shared opinions and provided mutual feedback.

This document further describes all three aspects of evaluation - project idea, project implementation process, and project results in general - including both positive and negative evaluation, quotes and defining recommendations for programme implementation and continuation.

## 2. Project idea.

The partners evaluated the project idea very positively. They recognized the project concept as valuable, important, inspiring, ambitious, beneficial and remarkable.

The most frequently mentioned positive aspects in the evaluation in priority order that justify the idea's value are as follows:

- Such projects and programmes allow students to acquire new knowledge and skills;
- Cross-border cooperation and a cross-border approach allow to promote the exchange of culture and experiences;
- Promoting student companies and their activities is a topical issue in the Central Baltic region and the European Union as a whole;
- Young people need support in many areas, and learning basic business skills and encouraging young people as individuals is one of them.

Couple negative opinions received when evaluating the project idea were that the:

- Project partners could not implement the project idea in its original format due to the pandemic.
- At the beginning of the project, there was no plan B for pandemic conditions; the partnership was forced to change the project several times and adapt it to the current situation and Covid requirements (different in each country).

*“Idea of the project is perfect and necessary for the students.  
Such programmes should be part of the national curriculums in  
all countries.”*

*“A great way to encourage and support young people who have  
thought about entrepreneurship, however, do not have means  
to act on it.”*

*"I love the idea. These young students were given a crash course in business and development. The info and knowledge shared by mentors were invaluable. The experience that has been acquired would normally take years to gather and cost tens of thousands."*

Recommendations related to the project idea are as follows:

- Student company programmes should be a mandatory part of every educational programme and curriculum, especially in professional and secondary education institutions, colleges, and universities;
- Considering the risk of pandemics and other global events, such projects must define an online (remote) implementation plan in advance.

### **3. Project implementation process.**

Evaluating the project processes, the project partners are generally satisfied with the work done and the results achieved, taking into account the difficult conditions in which they had to work throughout the project. According to the partners, the project team did the best that they could do.

The positive aspects of the project process mentioned in the evaluation are as follows:

- Overall, the programme sequence (workshops, meetings, motivation events etc.) or running order was well thought out;
- The programmes of events were creative and interesting;
- The motivational programme was essential to keep the students' motivation at an appropriate level to achieve results. It did just that;
- The stories of experts and mentors based on personal experience were very inspiring for everyone involved in the project;
- Incorporating prototyping into such programme is a precious element of the programme. Product prototyping could have taken place even earlier in the programme;
- Communication, flexibility, and constant ability to adapt to the situation due to Covid was the strength of the partnership;
- The project meetings and overall organisations were clear and structured by the lead partner;
- The project partners acquired lots of new contacts and potential future partners.

The partners also mentioned several challenges, and they are neither positive nor negative:

- With its constant changes, the project was a problem-solving lesson for the partners;
- Changing students and keeping their motivation was a challenge;
- It was challenging to bring together and actively engage students from different countries with different backgrounds, curriculums, and work schedules.

The most frequently mentioned negative aspect affecting the project was Covid-19. Thus, several harmful elements mentioned by the partners were directly related to the pandemic. The negative aspects of the project process mentioned in the evaluation are as follows:

- Programme implementation online negatively affected communication within the project team, as well as the communication between the project team and students. Due to the specifics of the online environment, students did not always communicate actively in the workshops. By default, such programmes should only take place in person;
- The ban on meeting in person forced the partnership to significantly and repeatedly change the programme, which meant much more work for those involved in the project, e.g., partners could not realize already planned events;
- Changing project team members introduced specific difficulties during the project implementation;
- The programme, which was created for the Covid conditions and was held online, was a little too stretched out. It created difficulties in maintaining the motivation of students and some teachers who were tired of working online. The programme could be even more dynamic online;
- The number of students participating simultaneously in the programme was too large.
- A partner mentioned that there were quite significant issues in management at the local level;
- The partners' involvement, effort, interest in the project and approach to work differed. Sometimes the partnership lacked team motivation and a sense of ownership.

*“The running order of the programme was well thought out. Due to Covid and the extended nature of the course, the students did well to remain and stay inspired. The organisers did well to keep them motivated.”*

*“The project process plan was good but needed changes due to external factors. Such processes are difficult to implement online, especially with such a big group of students. It wasn't ideal, but we managed.”*

*“Due to Covid, the project and programme processes were complex and challenging. The opportunity to hold the final phase events face-to-face was a game-changer. The last project events were highly inspiring, motivating and unifying to everyone.”*

Recommendations in regards to the project process are as follows:

- Motivational programmes - both for students and teachers - should be integral to such business skills enhancement programmes. The partner meetings should include the aspect of motivating the project team;
- Prototyping should be a mandatory part of such programmes, and the partnership recommends including prototyping activities earlier in the programme;
- It is necessary to define the target group in more detail so that students who form teams are united and find a joint team spirit as soon as possible. Partners recommend including a smaller number of students in similar programme calls;
- Partners' programme for Covid conditions could be shorter, i.e., more dynamic and focused. Students would be more motivated to get involved and reach the results;
- Each team needs its individual trainer. The team trainers could be both teachers and coaches or business support experts - most likely, this would depend on the capabilities of each particular school and the specifics of the team's business idea. It is highly recommended to include "train-the-trainers" events in such programmes. The "train-the-trainers" events would motivate team trainers and provide common principles for managing teamwork.

#### **4. Project overall results.**

Evaluating the overall results of the project and the Teaming UP programme, the partners concluded that the results were excellent, taking into account the conditions of Covid-19 and the challenges it created. Driven by circumstances, the partners did and achieved much more than initially planned.

*“Huge experience, connections made and tangible proof of completing the programme.”*

*“At the end of the day, we were able to create international student businesses and reach the biggest goals. That is a success after all the difficulties.”*

*“ We exceeded the initial results. We did so much more than was planned. A new and valuable project approach was created.”*

The main conclusions regarding the project results are as follows:

- Prototypes were tangible proof of the project results and one of the aspects that genuinely motivated students and others involved in the programme;
- The partnership managed to create truly international student company teams. The students finished the programme being motivated and inspired;
- The experience, knowledge and skills acquired by students are irreplaceable and invaluable:

- Students and other programme participants made bonds and connections that will likely grow into friendships, new collaborations and projects;
- Due to the pandemic, the partnership created a fundamentally new programme approach that can be useful to other educational institutions and business support organizations in the Central Baltic region and the European Union;
- Students created great business ideas, some of which seem to be long-lasting and have high potential.
- An exciting result of the Teaming UP programme is the availability of student company products in the Mercuria online store, thus encouraging students to continue developing their business ideas after the programme (<https://shop.mercuria.fi/c/tuotteet/teaming-up-products>).