

1,2,3 GO

Les start-ups innovantes du parcours 1,2,3 GO : **Sportunity**

Amongst the prizewinners of the 1,2,3 GO-contest in September 2013, Sportunity is a global initiative that promotes social inclusion in sports providing support to high potential young athletes from underprivileged communities. The traditional model of sport talent development is amended by being structured around long-term social impact where individual success stories of disadvantaged children are transformed into sustainable source of economic development for whole communities.

Created in 2013 by Irina Aleksandrova, Sportunity is now in its proof-of-concept phase. In December 2013, the fundraising appeal was announced for the pilot project in equestrian sports.

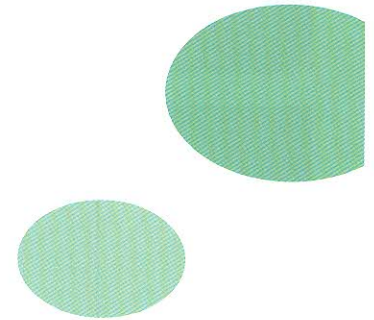
Interview with Irina Aleksandrova (IA), founder of Sportunity.

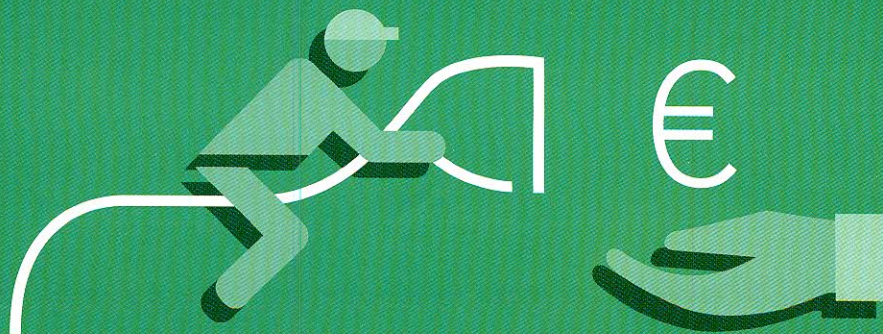
1,2,3 GO: Since your participation in the 1,2,3 GO Business Plan Contest, how has your company evolved in terms of...
...number of employees?

IA: On the operational level, at this stage we are leveraging the diverse expertise and skills of the founding team as well as the members of our advisory board, planning to recruit 2-3 people over the next months to support scaling up from the concept proof phase.

...product range or service range?

IA: Our business model is multi-sided. On one side, our target group is athletically gifted children from the world's most underprivileged areas, to whom we provide comprehensive talent development programs at absolutely no cost. The only 'charge' we apply to our athletes is an obligation to 'give back' part of future revenues, in case of successful career, to support educational and youth sports infrastructure projects in their countries of origin. Creating these life-changing opportunities for talented children becomes possible due to our corporate offering where we provide companies with





innovative integrated marketing tools and tailor-made solutions that build long-lasting social impact in the world's most underprivileged communities.

... positioning towards the concurrence: How do you maintain your competitive advantages? What is the role of research & development in your company?

IA: Sportunity is a social venture, and in that sense it is very much different from the traditional sport talent management model. Ultimately aiming at creating sustainable internal sources of economic development in disadvantaged communities, we build projects that go well beyond what a traditional sport manager would do. We cover all possible aspects of sport talent development: from equipment, physical training and mental coaching to marketing support and financing. Our projects may last several years in order to ensure that our graduates are fully prepared for their professional career in sports. This comprehensive offering is quite unique and would be hard to beat by competition, but actually in our case, the word 'competition' rarely applies. Social entrepreneurship changes your business perspective: instead of the traditional 'war' attitude where you have to win over, you seek fruitful collaboration, so that a competitor becomes a partner and everyone benefits.

... financing: How did you obtain your first financing? Are you still looking for financing today?

IA: All project-related expenses (i.e. expenses related to athletes' talent development programs) are financed via donations. Our projects' budgets are very transparent and we keep our donors informed on the use of raised funds over the course of a project and we do not charge any management fee on donations we receive on behalf of our athletes. In order to support Nastya (the young talented equestrian selected to be the first Sportunity athlete) with the ultimate goal to help her participate in the European Junior Championship in Eventing this year, we currently seek financing and encourage everyone to contribute to helping this truly outstanding young girl.

1,2,3 GO: Does your company adopt a CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) attitude? If yes, how?

IA: Not only our model is built around the idea of corporate social responsibility, our modus operandi implies promoting wider use of CSR in the corporate world by offering companies an easy and highly customizable way to adopt this practice.

1,2,3 GO: What are your objectives for the following 5 years to come?

IA: Grow to the target annual capacity of up to 15 young talented athletes supported and start working on 'giving back' projects together with our first graduates, bringing positive change in their home communities.

1,2,3 GO: How did 1,2,3 GO contribute in concretizing your business project?

IA: It gave us a great opportunity to reach out to the local community and obtain professional expert advice which was critical at the early stage of the project development. It is a great starting point for any Luxembourg-based entrepreneur willing to do a sanity check on the business model and to establish a sound network for further build-up of the business.

1,2,3 GO: What is your philosophy as an entrepreneur?

IA: For a creative mind, all challenges prove to be blessings, and nothing is impossible. Entrepreneurs are people who are given the power to change the world, so my advice for those who feel this power inside would be - just go and do it. Wake up every day with intention to get at least one step closer to your goal. Ask yourself at the end of the day whether you have managed to take that step. You will have to work harder than you ever thought you could, but you can certainly make it happen.

1,2,3 GO: Thank you for your answers!