



sustainable young entrepreneurs

**Sustainable and Social Entrepreneurship for Youth
(SUSE) Programme**

Pitching handbook for Youth Workers



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Project nr: 2022-2-RO01-KA220-YOU-000102027

Document Identity

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Recipients | Sustainable and Social Entrepreneurship for Youth partners |
| Confidentiality Status | Public |

Document Versioning

| Version | Date | Authors |
|---------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| V1 | June 2024 | Sofia Tsiortou and Dimitrios Mylonas |
| V2 | 16 th September 2024 | Sofia Tsiortou and Dimitrios Mylonas |
| V3 | | |
| V4 | | |

This document may change without notice.

All rights reserved. [COPYRIGHT](#)

© Copyright 2023 Sustainable and Social Entrepreneurship for Youth

Partner Members:



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction..... | 4 |
| Objectives..... | 5 |
| Experience in organising skills and pitching events..... | 5 |
| Setting up a pitch..... | 7 |
| Skills needed to organise a pitching event..... | 7 |
| Three step process – the methodology..... | 8 |
| The SUSE Pitching methodology – setting up your pitching event..... | 8 |
| Selecting the participants..... | 9 |
| SUSE Participants..... | 9 |
| Organising the event..... | 10 |
| Event marketing..... | 10 |
| The panel of external experts..... | 11 |

Introduction

At this moment, facing the devastating consequences of COVID, it is clear the increasing youth unemployment rates needs our attention. In Greece, the youth unemployment rate was 28.6% (Aug '22). The government has lowered entrepreneurial taxes from 2021 to promote employment in the coming years and promote entrepreneurship, thus motivate youth to start new businesses. In Aug '22, Spain also reported one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the EU: 26.6%. Malta has shown a 9.8% (Aug '22) of young people who were unemployed, Romania 22.8% and in the Netherlands the number is 8.6% in Aug '22. In all countries a negative trend took place, the numbers are going down. However, they are still not at the pre-Covid levels, which need our attention.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) the pandemic had "devastating and disproportionate" impact on youth employment, while the most recent figures show that young people face major obstacles in continuing training and education, moving between jobs and entering the labour market. In addition, young people are more easily dismissed if the economic cycle is weak (EC). To emphasize the importance of wellbeing of youth in the future, the EC developed a **Youth Guarantee**, which is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 receive a decent quality offer of employment and continued education. To promote youth employment and entrepreneurship, the EU wants to invest in skills employers look for and develop career guidance and counselling service. This project can reach a huge impact to activate especially the young people to be creative, innovative and start a (social) business, and use this opportunity to get connected to peers and community again. Although a lot of training material is available related to SE for youth, there is a lack of attention to the digital, innovative, and practical part of these curricula. Especially at this moment, where distance learning became the new standard, it is important for youth to learn about SE and become aware of necessary digital skills.

Youth entrepreneurship is a valuable tool to combat youth unemployment and social exclusion, as well as stimulating innovation among young people (EC). As young leaders of tomorrow, it is pivotal that youth are informed and engaged with the global vision for the future (United Nations). Therefore, we are combining teaching SE with the Sustainable Development Goals and involvement of the community to encourage youth to directly apply their business ideas in the local community. According to Eurostat in 2021, NL (87%), EL (87%), MT (92%) and ES (84%) are at the top of youngsters (16-29 years old) who having the highest share of basic overall digital skills.

On the other hand, Romania is on the other end of the scale: 46% of the youngsters have at least basic overall digital skills. The development of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge is a priority for governments that want to encourage an innovative and enterprising society. Business plan competitions (i.e. Pitching competitions), although primarily aimed at producing start-ups, have been found to provide a range of benefits to participants, the most important being the development of entrepreneurial skills, access to mentors, opportunity for networking and increased self-confidence and risk-taking propensity. It is a great way of receiving feedback from the audience, find partner's connections, get business ideas funded and learn how to deal with stress.

Target group of this WP are youth workers and additional stakeholders who are interested in organising a competition related to (social) entrepreneurship and business models. Indirect target group will be youth, entrepreneurs and the local community as they will also contribute and participate in the competition. Organising these types of events empower both youth but also the organising organisations. The yielded benefits are range among:



- Creating awareness of social economy and social entrepreneurship among youth as an (self) employment opportunity for their future and increase employability in the short & long term.
- Develop innovative ideas supplemented by related training material using the SDGs as a common thread and allow the connection of youngsters to their local communities.
- Offer a more practical approach to learn about social economy and social entrepreneurship.

Overall, the SUSE partnership aims to create guidelines and practical recommendations on organising similar events in any type of organisation working with youth.

This guide targets youth workers, stakeholders and other organisation representatives that wish to organise a pitching event.

Objectives

The objectives of this work package are multi fold, ranging from collecting past experiences from partners in organising similar events and activities, to offer guidelines and guidance on how to actually set up such actions in-house. The methodology utilised was to primarily collect through an online questionnaire, information from the partners on their previous work, research on most common approaches taken in general to set up an online pitching event, to discuss and collect input from other experts and mentors who have supported such events.

The main objectives are for the SUSE partners to use this document as supplementary, to the PPT, and design online pitching events or hybrid events for youth. Young people will:

- **Foster** their entrepreneurial skills and improve their entrepreneurial opportunities,
- The activity will **empower** youth to act as intrapreneurs,
- Help the organisations **fight youth unemployment** across Europe by stimulating social entrepreneurship and uptake of new businesses,
- **Activate young people** by involving them in finding solutions for social problems in the local community focused on sustainability through also integrating information about SDGs,
- Bring attention to the **need of actively inspiring youth** to become social entrepreneurs by organising a skills and pitch competition.
- To finally, aim to **bridge the gap between youth and business** by connecting youth and entrepreneurs in an early stage in their lives, thus, promote collaboration.

Experience in organising skills and pitching events

Through the online questionnaire devised by the WP leader, a total of 10 experiences were collected. The summary of the collected information is provided below:

1. All partners are experienced in organising pitching events, either in-house, collaborating with a third party or organise an event as part of an overall event (a summit).
2. The aims of the events varied:
 - a. The majority related to the presentation of general business ideas or enhancement of skills needed for a business prospect,
 - b. Others related to receiving a prize or to receive start-up capital.
3. Most events were organised physically except 2. One was organised fully online due to the Covid restrictions and one in video format i.e. videos of the pitching ideas were sent for evaluation.

4. Related to the question, what made the pitching competitions successful, the following comments were received:
 - a. The online event allowed multiple participants from all over the country to participate, with participants as young as 15 presenting ideas.
 - b. Good preparation of the participants, providing clear instructions on what was expected with regards to the content of their pitch; the time they had to make the pitch and instructions with regards to main points and messages which should be brought across.
 - c. To co-organise the pitching competition as part of a bigger social entrepreneurship event, and invite expert speakers. For example, one of the founders of Tony Chocolonely, one of the biggest chocolate brands in the Netherlands. That helped to attract audience.
 - d. To co-organise by all local VETs and universities of applied sciences, who have collaborations with the overall startup ecosystem, with the bank as sponsor. So, the organisational power is very strong and the network as well.
 - e. The pitching competition's success is attributed to features like professional pitch training, a structured selection process by judges, audience engagement with a "People's Choice Award," and clear rewards including monetary prizes and exhibition opportunities.
 - f. The pitching competition, organised for students of the Politechnical University of Bucharest, had been initiated over several years providing continuity and perspective for future initiatives of participants. The pitching event included several phases, presentation of the business idea in broader terms, video presentation in 1 minute and final presentation with active participation of students and evaluators. There was also a grant offering for best business ideas.
 - g. the competition implicated a prior training of students focusing on development of entrepreneurial knowledge, presentation skills, marketing, public speaking etc. it also included a close collaboration, mentorship by an entrepreneur. Grand finally was organised with the implication of well-known businessman in a grandiose fashion, offering financial grants to students.
5. Related to the question, which type of professionals were involved in the pitching set up, the following information was collected:
 - a. An experienced moderator and a project manager possibly knowledgeable in the area of event management,
 - b. Panel experts participating coming from various areas of expertise, or from public and private sector, or judges who evaluate the pitches based on innovation, financial feasibility, team strength, and technology use,
 - c. Mentors to support participants and help them with their pitching ideas and presentations,
 - d. Administrators to help with the organisations i.e. front desk for registrations, marketing professionals,
 - e. Experts in the field of social innovation, entrepreneurship as well as teachers/trainers and their peer students which were relevant to the specific event and ideas presented (i.e. targeted field),
 - f. Participants who can follow and apply the three-step evaluation. Firstly, ideas had to be presented following criteria and formalities as established in the guide of participants. After a primer selection, successful business ideas had to presented in creative and compelling video. On a third phase, selected ideas had to presented online in the grand

finale, where each team qualified in the last round could argue for the business idea and answer questions from the jury.

6. The funding context of which the events were organised: the events were either funded through an EU Funded project i.e. part of its activities or promoted and funded through a university or public institution.

Setting up a pitch

7. Related to the professionals needed to organise a pitching competition, the following were listed as necessary (listed as per their importance:
 - a. Entrepreneurial skills and/or entrepreneurship trainer,
 - b. Project manager / pitching manager
 - c. Panel member related to the areas presented,
 - d. Existing entrepreneurs to offer advice,
 - e. Mentors and/or trainers to offer support,
 - f. Other supporting professionals such as IT experts, support trainers, motivators for public speaking.
8. Infrastructure needed:
 - a. Conference room or large event room,
 - b. Catering and area for coffee breaks,
 - c. IT infrastructure (microphones, internet, online meeting software), welcome area for registration, guest area to sit / stand,
 - d. Online / offline support for information sharing, preparation area for competitors to prepare, separate area for panel members to sit,
9. Marketing using social media: It is necessary to make strategic use of social media such as X, Instagram, Facebook to market your events. Other marketing channels used were a dedicated website, direct emails and newsletter sent to organisations, the creation of posters to inform people, and finally, other types of promotions such as presentation of the event in other events, face to face invitations etc.

Skills needed to organise a pitching event

10. The partners reported the following key skills needed to organise a pitching event:
 - a. Most important: have entrepreneurial skills to understand the presented business ideas and to be able to write the selection criteria and guidelines for the participants.
 - b. Secondly, skills to organise and moderate a pitching event,
 - c. Thirdly, IT support offered to manage online events, marketing skills to advertise the event and writing selection criteria for the evaluation panel members.
 - d. Following the above, these skills are also reported: time management, team management, administration skills, organising live streaming events, presentation skills, networking skills to promote the event, technical skills to manage zoom/team platforms.
11. Related to the question: What would you require considering all the above, to organise a pitching event? The following answers were collected:
 - a. Networking and marketing skills, a conference room, time to organise it,
 - b. Event management skills and the network to attract the participants and the public,
 - c. Network to find the participants and the audience,
 - d. Professional expertise needed to evaluate pitches (highest importance),
 - e. Access to experienced and successful entrepreneurs to be invited to speak,
 - f. If organised in online space IT expert to provide technical support, online moderation skills,

The conclusion of the questionnaire analysis is that most partners are experienced in organising events and feel confident in organising an online or hybrid event as part of the SUSE project.

Three step process – the methodology

The preparation methodology is key for all partners to understand how the SUSE pitching events will be organised. It contains the time aspect and time related information as well as breaking the process into manageable steps. Moreover, the methodology will allow the partners to individually prepare in-house and organise their resources. What is the SUSE project looking for from the applicants:

- **Relevance of the need identified** – they should be able to why this need is a problem and make sure that they aim to solve social or environmental issue.
- **Solution** – is their described idea original and thoughtful?
- **Product or a service?** What is the innovation - differentiation from existing competition, why is their idea better and stronger?
- **Team** – the ability of the team to execute the proposed idea – Do they have what it takes? They should provide a short overview of their or their team's experiences and know-how.
- **Social impact** – What social impact do they want to create? Define their mission. What the change do they seek to implement?

The SUSE Pitching methodology – setting up your pitching event

As per the answers of the questionnaire above, a pitching methodology is necessary. The proposed SUSE Pitching methodology is comprised of the following steps:

1. **Determine the event structure and the platform for your online pitching event.** If you are planning to organise fully online event or a hybrid event, it is necessary to decide which platform you will use. The selection should be between platforms such as Zoom or MS Teams which offer a variety of services such as the breakout rooms. They further support multiple presenters' mode, possibility for chat, sharing documentations and Q&A sessions. Make sure that your pitching event is broken down into distinct sessions visible in your agenda:
 - a. **Opening session:** where you introduce your event, the participants, the panel, the aim, the structure and the evaluation process. Do not forget to mention how the online platform works and where they should send an email in case of a technical issue and the GDPR principles. Consider having one person delegated to answer questions posted in the chat. Make sure you share your agenda online as you speak.
 - b. **Individual or group pitches:** The main part of the event. Make sure the rules, especially related to the time allocation, are clear and understood by the participants. Ask them if they are prepared to start and if they can share their presentations. Things to consider: Allow multiple presenter's mode, receive their presentations before the event so that you have a copy, make sure the panel is present and can hear through their speakers, make sure the sound is ok, record the sessions and store them for later use, allow for Q&A after each pitch by the panel members, thank the participants for their presentations. Inform your participants that they can raise their hands if they wish to speak or comment.
 - c. **Repeat rules / methodology after the pitches are complete:** make sure you repeat the evaluation process and time related to the evaluation by the panel. You can break the panel members in a separate room to discuss for a set period. Tips: Do not take more

time that originally planned for the panel discussion, make sure the panel has the necessary criteria sent to them prior to the event and have had the time to ask any possible questions regarding the criteria, make sure the panel writes down each evaluation so that it can be sent to the presenters following the event so as to enhance their pitches, when all parties have returned to the main conference room, make sure everyone is there.

- d. **Award:** have the panel members present the winning pitch and their justification. Make sure you repeat the winner and what they have won. Make sure to mention that losing pitches will receive a dedicated evaluation letter from the panel. See specific section below for the panel selection. Write everything in the chat so that they also can read this information.
- e. **Close:** allow for a possible Q&A from all participants. Make sure to mention that the event has been recorded and interested participants can receive a copy of only their pitches if they so require. Thank everyone (participants, panel, administrators, IT personnel and others that have helped you) and close the session. If you want, you can ask for a screenshot to post on your social media. Make sure everyone who has agreed on having their cameras on, does so. Save the recording on your computer with an original name.

Selecting the participants

2. **Participant selection:** Prior to your event you need to select the participants and thus, need to have a clear application process with clear participation criteria. You can set up a dedicated website where you inform possible participants on this in your own language. The website, social media or any other medium you select should contain: a registration form, the aim of the event, the summary and audience targeted, the award, general information related to the time frame and deadlines, pitching format, key elements that should be included such as the mission statement, their targeted audience, their solution, their financial strategy and/ or market potential etc.). The partners can further add (if they want) that they will review the first application versions so that they can be improved and allowed in the pitching event. The website should also have a dedicated section for the panel members to locate necessary information and registration information and forms. All participants and panel members should agree to your GDPR statement that should allow recording of the event, sharing names and emails addresses to interested parties, pictures taken etc. Discuss in-house what you need to write in your GDPR statement. The SUSE FB page and project website should also include national information about the winners.

Possible questions to ask on the online registration/ application form:

- Name / surname, or name of group, age, contact information
- Application / idea title,
- Social business area focused upon / social issue to solve in their community
- Solution offered
- Short description of their business idea / services or products to be offered,
- What makes them different from their competitors,
- Option to submit a document, logo etc.

SUSE Participants

According to the SUSE application, the participants invited to participate in the pitching sessions should comply with the following criteria:



- Youth aged 16-25,
- Young entrepreneurs.

The participants will be called to complete a pitch with the following characteristics:

FORMAT: 5 min Pitch, 5 min Q&A Session by the panel members

The Final Pitch presentation should include:

- o **Title** - provide your name, company name
 - o **Problem** – describe the needs you want to fulfil
 - o **Solution/Opportunity** - how are you going to solve the identified problem?
 - o **Social impact** – what the change do you seek to implement in society?
 - o **Go-To Market Plan** – who is your customer/ pricing/financial information / maturity?
 - o **Competitive Analysis** – how do you differ from the competitors
3. **Possible pre-event preparation:** You can offer a pre-event preparation supported by your trainers if you have the possibility. This will allow participants to rehearse and make them familiar with the online technology that will be used. Again, one can use a Zoom or Teams platform. Make sure to allow enough time for this. Ensure the organisation of technological checks with both participants and panel members before the actual event. It is important that the participants are prompted to go through the training materials created as part of the SUSE project. They will have the opportunity to discuss and interact with national mentors and trainers, part of the SUSE partnership, to help them prepare. Make sure you have shared the link to the educational programme as well as programmed a follow-up session or email.

Organising the event

4. **The event:** Start the event at least 15 minutes prior to actual starting time. Have one slide with the event organisation active during this 15min period so that the participants know that they have entered the correct link. During this time, you should regularly check the email for emails related to possible technical issues encountered by participants or panel members that prevents them from joining the online event. Another member or your staff should contact these participants and help them join. As stated above, a clear agenda should be presented and followed. The agenda can include additional information and links such as live polls links, and general information about the event. A dedicated person can be responsible for Q&A sessions, live polls and their presentation, managing time, ensuring smooth transition between pitches and organising the breakout rooms. Tips: make sure that you have rented a space or booked the room in-house that you will use. Select the most appropriate time for your event (morning, noon or afternoon) to make sure for optimum attendance.

Event marketing

5. **Marketing the event:** it is essential that your event has been properly marketed to ensure applications, guest participants, speakers, panel members applications etc. Create a strategy that spans 1 month prior to the event with information such as event dates, application information, award information and general information for the event such as venue or online platform used. Use social media, websites, posters, paid social media campaigns, emails and newsletters and in general, utilise your whole network to promote the event. As youths are concerned, consider contacting local, regional and national youth organisations, universities and other associations that might be able to further promote this to related target groups and audiences. Create excitement! If possible, use extracts of submitted applications as teasers (prior agreement

should be made with applicants of course). Use hash tags to further enhance visibility and audience engagement.

- a. **Facebook marketing:** use the FB page (either your page or create a dedicated for the event) and set up a paid campaign to promote the event. You can select the audience, the duration, the budget and what results you want to achieve. You need to have created a specific post that will be campaigned. Make sure you have the content correct (date, venue, form link, award etc.) as well as supporting pictures to add to your ad.
- b. **Instagram:** use the business version of Instagram and set up a paid campaign. You will need a business email as well as the information as stated above (See a)
- c. **TikTok:** create a short video and post it, send the link to youth organisations, universities and your network to attract possible applications.
- d. **X:** create a tweet with a link to the dedicated website / page with the event information. Keep in mind to also post after the event is completed with the winning idea. You can also opt to obtain short interviews by the applicants during the event (1-2 min) on their experience and post it on your social media and on the SUSE FB page.

6. **Engaging with audience and stakeholders:** it is important to engage with audience stakeholders and organise short live polls for the pitches to stimulate interactions. You can use Mentimeter for live feedback. This will make the event livelier. Mentimeter can also be used during a hybrid event or a face-to-face event with the results shown online directly in the presentations. If stakeholders, youth influencers or others are participating, they will add to the event and offer both expertise but also possible future opportunities.

The panel of external experts

The panel experts you invited should be relevant to entrepreneurship either as experienced entrepreneurs themselves or as trainers. They should be able to offer quality evaluation, assess the pitches and be able to score based on best quality solution offered.

1. Create a call for panel experts for your online pitching event. It should be an odd number 3 or 5.
2. Create an online form and collect information on: Name, profession, years of experience in entrepreneurship, previous experience in participating in evaluation panels, possible trainers experience, mentoring experience and motivation to participate,
3. Connect with the ones that suit your criteria best. Do not forget to also search your in-house staff in search for panel members.
4. Sign informal agreements for their work if your in-house administration requires this. Remember, the panel activities are not a paid service from the SUSE project.
5. Organise a short online session to present the SUSE project and pitching event. Present the evaluation criteria. These can look something like this:

| Criteria | Definition | Score | | | | |
|----------------------|--|-------|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Problem/Need | What customer needs do you fulfil? | | | | | |
| Solution | The quality of the solution? | | | | | |
| Target Market | How well the market is defined? What is the business space? Who are the customers/clients? | | | | | |
| Team Mngt. | Ability of the team to execute? How is it balanced? Expertise? | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Competition | Difference from competitors (innovation feature) | | | | | |
| Finances | Proof of the income? How solid are the financials? | | | | | |
| Social impact | Changes to make in society? | | | | | |
| Quality of presentation | How structured and smooth is the presentation? | | | | | |

Make sure they understand the criteria and have access to the online platform you have selected. Do not forget to do a tech check prior to the event.