

JA Bulgaria Communication on Engagement for 2019-2021

Statement of continued support to the UN Global Compact

23.12.2021



Dear stakeholders,

We are pleased to confirm that Junior Achievement Bulgaria reaffirms its support to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption. This is our Communication on Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact. We welcome feedback on its contents.

In this Communication of Engagement, we describe the actions that our organization has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles as suggested for an organization like ours. We also commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication.

Sincerely yours,



Milena Stoycheva

(Chief Executive Officer)



Boni Bonev

(Chairman, Board of Directors)

Description of actions

After becoming an official supporter of the UNGC, we decided to form an internal team that would outline a simple strategy for engagement with the UNGC and its principles at the beginning of each calendar year. We are committed to not only spreading the word about the UNGC to our partners and stakeholders, but also to living the principles daily. We believe that through the educational programs we create we have the power to address the 10 principles and embed them into the lives of the thousands of students we reach and impact each year.

Actions to promote the UNGC and its principles

Our team took several steps to promote its support for the UNGC on all levels:

1. Our Board Chairman and CEO emphasize our commitment to the UNGC principles in public appearances, as well as during meetings and discussions with possible business and NGO partners.
2. Our support for the UNGC is prominent on the [homepage of our website](#) (the UNGC logo is incorporated). We also have a separate page dedicated to our social responsibility where we have featured our support for the UNGC (http://www.jabulgaria.org/page/about_us/nashata_socialna_otgovornost). We plan to develop that further to include more information on our efforts to support ESG (environment, sustainability and governance) practices and internal initiatives to support these principles.
3. We are planning to expand our communications on our commitment to the UNGC principles and our contribution to the achieving of the Sustainable Development Goals (a global priority for our worldwide network [Global Goals — JA Worldwide](#))

Partnership projects on corporate sustainability

We are constantly working to forge partnerships with the corporate sector that result in joint educational programs and experiences that correspond to one or more of the 10 UNGC principles. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, our organization faced challenges related to adapting our internal processes, adapting programs and educational format to serve online and blended learning formats and successfully fulfilling commitments to our stakeholders. In addition, a lot of our corporate and NGO partners were themselves facing internal issues which resulted in program and project delays, unexpected changes in budgets and restructuring of planned mutual activities. Despite these internal and external challenges, our organization managed to quickly pivot its ways to serve the new reality and needs of our network of partners and successfully transitioned to new flexible models of conducting program activities that allow us to adapt to the fast-changing environment.

Some examples of programs/activities that we have done with corporate partners in the last three academic years (2020-2021) are highlighted below.

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship education is one of the three core pillars of our work and a key element of all our programs. We try to integrate all project activities into the further development and enrichment of our programs.

The “Citi & JA Enterprise Program”, realized for several years in partnership with Citi, tackles the low level of financial literacy and the lack of proactive thinking and entrepreneurial behavior in the high school and university students. It provides them with educational modules that are focused on

real life and existing business practices and standards. In 2020-2021, the program helped more than 2000 youngsters understand how to take responsibility for their own lives by creating jobs for themselves through establishing a small or medium-sized enterprise. All participants engaged in interactive online formats with real business practitioners who helped them in the improvement of their idea in the mini company. 80% of all high school participants and 50% of all university participants came from low-income communities and areas of minority concentration. We managed to educate them how to be pro-active and look for opportunities. We gave them the fundamentals of how to plan, set up and operate a small enterprise and a full set of skills to manage people, work under pressure and do basic corporate finance.

In partnership with **NN**, we ran the “**Social Innovation Relay**” – an online interactive competition for social innovation ideas where teams of students have the possibility to find out more about social and environmental problems around the world and the ways to address them through innovative business ideas. In the process of shaping their social innovations, student teams are assisted by NN volunteers who mentor them on how to improve their ideas and make them more realistic and applicable. Every year, the Social Innovation Relay saw the involvement of more than 1000 students from across Bulgaria, distributed into teams supported by the professional mentors from NN. In the 2021 edition, the winning team presented a [series of products](#) produced by residual wood that assist students with special education needs (SEN).

In 2019 we initiated a redesign of our emblematic enterprise program the university level gradually transitioning to a pre-acceleration model, developed by JA Bulgaria with the international collaboration of the entrepreneurial ecosystems in Europe and the European Institute for Innovation in Technology (EIT). The pre-acceleration model went through a pilot phase and successfully developed into a working model. As a result, the pre-accelerator received further support by the local venture capital ecosystem that recognized the need to support the development of early-stage startups until they become investment-ready. What is more, <https://beyondaccelerate.com/> was recognized by the worldwide organization of Junior Achievement as a model that has the potential to enhance cross-sector partnerships and strengthen local entrepreneurial ecosystems and is currently being replicated with our team's support in other countries within the JA Europe region. The model has also attracted the attention of our peer organizations in other countries in Central Asia and we are currently exploring the opportunity to expand even further.



Beyond Accelerate

The program targets students (BSc, MSc and PhD level) along with young professionals and JA alumni that want to work on creating and developing lean technology startups in a fast and efficient manner, specialized in the following industries



Smart cities
and communities



Sustainability,
circular economy
and raw materials



Digital healthcare and
medicine

beyond.



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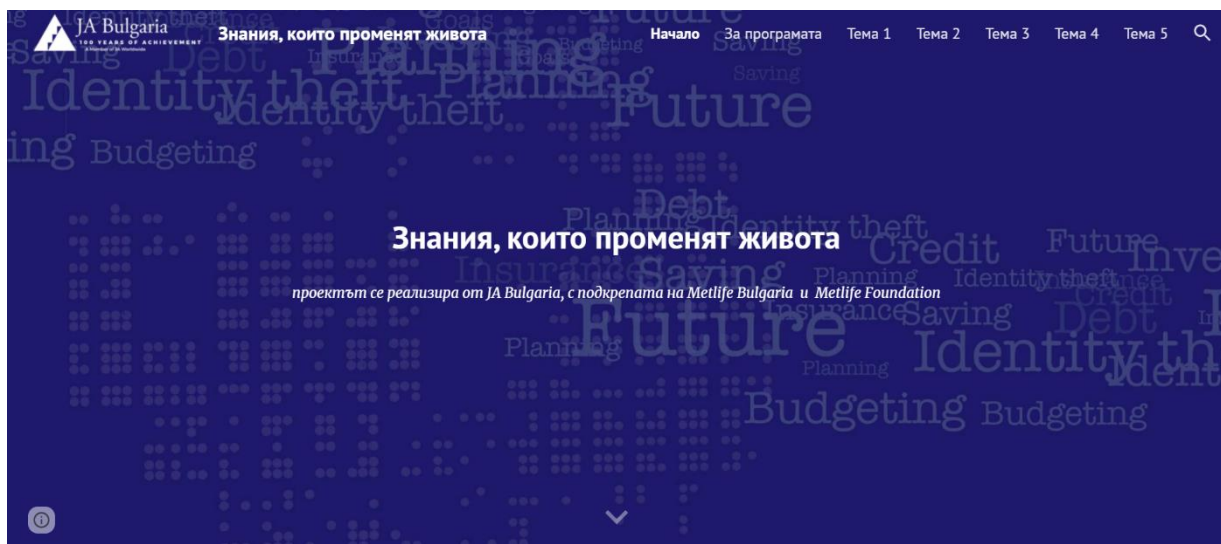
Within the entrepreneurship pillar, in 2021 we introduced some further developments also on the high school level, introducing three main thematic areas for work for mini companies within the Student Company Program. In line with our long-term commitment to encouraging sustainable business creation and empowering young people to become solution-creators, as well as corresponding to the needs of more practice-oriented educational activities and the integration of STEM and entrepreneurial skills in the education curriculum, we defined the areas as:

- Green Entrepreneurship and Circular Economy
- Social Innovation
- Digital Innovation

The three chosen directions allowed us to better integrate our project activities in collaboration with a variety of corporate and NGO partners creating higher added value for the students participating in the programs and projects of JA Bulgaria. This allows us to develop also additional educational content specifically targeting these topics, which can in turn be made available to more schools.

Financial Literacy

The project “**LifeChanger**” developed in partnership with **MetLife and MetLife Foundation** works to improve the financial literacy of students that come from low-income financial backgrounds or are at-risk according to some other criteria. The six waves of the project so far have reached more than 3000 students in several Bulgarian cities. JA Bulgaria developed the educational content “Smart Finance” which is delivered in class by trained volunteers from MetLife. The six editions of the project so far achieved impressive results in terms of increased student awareness of personal finance issues and improved skills for personal finance management and budgeting. The seventh edition which is currently ongoing is taking place in online, hybrid and blended-learning formats due to the current COVID-19 measures at Bulgarian high schools. This has called for additional content development and digitalization of training and educational materials which are now available for the participating schools, teachers, and students online.



Another project where we have managed to mobilize businesses to realize corporate sustainability initiatives is the “**Practical Finance**” project where we attracted leading financial companies in Bulgaria to contribute to the development and piloting of the first-of-its-kind educational content on financial literacy for upper secondary high school students across the country. The first two editions of the project were supported by NN Bulgaria, BNP Paribas, Karroll, Bulstrad Life Vienna Insurance

Group, Doverie and DZI. The funding contributed by these companies was matched by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The 2020-2021 edition of the project is realized thanks to the support of NN Bulgaria, BNP Paribas and UniCredit Bulbank. The educational course consists of 12 topics which are taught as an elective subject during 72 school hours. This year we have seen a significant interest from new schools to join the program which is why we expanded the access to the program to more than 40 schools around the country, who will equip 800 students with skills and practical knowledge in the personal finance domain. To assist schools in the process we are planning a series of interactive webinars where students can directly engage with professionals in the financial field. We are looking into opportunities for partnerships with municipalities for regional development of financial literacy skills and training of trainers.

As a pioneer in the field of financial literacy education in the country, JA Bulgaria has been acting as a host for Bulgaria of the Global Money Week - an annual financial awareness campaign built to inspire children and young people to learn about money matters, livelihoods, and entrepreneurship. Every year as a virtual host of the campaign, JA Bulgaria not only provides ideas, competitions, and materials to help initiate local small-scale financial literacy-related activities, but also serves as a bridge between schools and mentors from the private sector who engage in activities with young learners within the course of the week. During [Global Money Week 2021](#), Junior Achievement Bulgaria, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education and Science along with partners reached 11,474 children and youth through several digital activities such as webinars, open lessons, innovation camps, and competitions. High-level discussions, seminars, and other educational sessions were organized online with JA Bulgaria and partners.

JA Bulgaria is also an active member of the working group to the Ministry of Finance, working on the development and implementation of a National Strategy on Financial Literacy in partnership with the OECD and the Ministry of Finance of the Netherlands. In line with this work, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science we initiated the first nationwide competition on financial literacy for high school students which became part of the nationwide competitions that are recognized for university entry. We engage representatives from our business partners as members of the national commission appointed for the purpose of the competition.

Work Readiness

In the 2021 edition of the annual national initiative “Manager for a Day”, together with our corporate partners, we have contributed to the early career orientation and development of employability skills of thousands of young people in Bulgaria thanks to a new online format, corresponding the worsening COVID-19 situation in the country in March 2021. “Manager for a Day” is a job shadowing experience for young people where they get immersed into the daily business activities of top managers and professionals from small and large companies and institutions and make an informed choice about their future career based on their impressions. 700 students from universities and high school all around the country successfully went through the application process and were selected for shadowing positions, where students get access to educational materials that help them improve their CVs and cover letters. The students who were not selected to participate in the shadowing day, still had the opportunity to interact with managers from top companies in the country, through interactive online formats and social media campaigns and a streaming session that reached more than 11,000 people in all the corners of the country. Our partners in 2021 included **BTV media group, Manpower Group and Publicis Groupe**, as well as **HP Inc., Coca Cola Hellenic Bottling Company, Nestle, ITA Group, UniCredit Bulbank, Novartis, Commerzbank, Kaufland, Cargotec, Chaos Group, HP Enterprise** and the media partnership of **BTV Radio, Manager Magazine and Economy BG Magazine**.

Another business partner that we attracted in a co-creation process to realize a meaningful CSR activity is **Coca-Cola HBC**. Together we are realizing the ambitious educational program “**Youth Empowered**”. The aim of the program is to reduce the number of economically inactive young people through prevention of NEETs status (NEETs = not in education, not in employment). About 20% of Bulgarian youth aged 19-29 fall in the NEETs category. For more than 5 years now, our joint work with Coca Cola has been addressing the problem through a variety of in-school educational and out-of-school motivational and practical instruments. We have been able to impact positively the motivation, employability skills and chances for professional realization of thousands of youngsters from the upper secondary grades.

Other actions to support the Global Compact and to engage with the initiative

JA Bulgaria has been extremely active in developing special actions in support of principles 7, 8 and 9 related to the environment in 2015-2017. Our first action, the “Green Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development” project in 2014-2015, was created with the aim of contributing to the formation of an entrepreneurial culture that respects nature and allows environmental care to be at the heart of economic activity. In 2015-2017, we continued our work in this direction by implementing a larger project called [GREENT](#), funded by the European Union's Erasmus + program. In partnership with organizations from 4 European countries, we developed a comprehensive methodology and innovative teaching content for teachers across Europe in order to extend the teaching of green entrepreneurship through blended learning. With this content, we both address the need for sustainability, the need for green businesses and the need for social entrepreneurship, without overlooking the current global challenges, but using them as a driver for entrepreneurial action and not as a discouraging factor. GREENT was so successful that in 2017 the global organization JA Worldwide honored us with the extremely prestigious JA Collaboration Award.

Driven by the recognition and evidence of the need for this type of training, in 2019 we turned GREENT into a global wave, [conducting two trainings for Green Entrepreneurship teachers in Tanzania and discovering the African eco-entrepreneurial spirit](#). Our activities continue to this day with the translation of the developed educational toolkit into Spanish, and in February 2020 there will be a remote online training in green entrepreneurship for teachers from Colombia.

A natural continuation of our efforts is the “**Green Cooperation Beyond Borders**” project, which launched a large-scale green entrepreneurship training program in schools in Bulgaria and Norway. The innovative element of the project is that the ideas for green business generated by young people were truly realized in the 2020-2021 school year through the formation of cross-border teams, which produced real green products and services using the model of JA's flagship educational “Company Program”. [HERE](#) you can find videos presenting some of the green businesses, developed by the students within the project, as well as recordings of some of the international exchange and information events that we organized within the project, culminating in the **Bridge Green Ideas Study Week** in late October 2021. Two of the participating teams - [KafEco](#) and [BioFoam](#) continue to develop their innovative products and managed to attract some additional funding through the [PandaLabs](#) program that the local office of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) started with our support in 2020.

These activities not only reflect our deep conviction as an organization that entrepreneurial activity of the future should come from a genuine and deep understanding of the intrinsic value of nature, natural ecosystems, but has also pushed us to further innovate and develop new partnerships that would allow us to achieve measurable results in building a sustainable model of our future economies. In the upcoming 2022 we are looking forward to starting new projects that will further enhance our impact and outreach to empowering young people to be the change-makers of our future.

Internal initiatives

We continue to look both inward and outward for ways to become more sustainable and promote sustainable practices. Hence, we are looking into developing internal ESG policies (Environment, Sustainability and Governance) to further enhance our internal impact and to serve as an example to our partners and peer organizations within the country and abroad.



Moreover, we have undertaken further measures to reduce our own environmental footprint and contribute to positive change. We relocated our organization's office to new premises that provide a more efficient use of space, as well as a location more easily reachable from all parts of the city by public transportation. Our new location reduced the need for commuting for our staff members and made it easier for external partners, guests, and participants in our programs to reach us either by public transportation or walking. In addition to the location, we aim to reduce the organization's carbon footprint through providing flexible work-time opportunities that allow colleagues to commute less often in general.

In the past year there have been limited opportunities to organize in-person events due to our responsibility to put first the safety of our colleagues, partners, beneficiaries, sponsors, and guests. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 situation in the country forced us to also work entirely remotely for a lengthy period.

Therefore, our office space was not fully utilized for a big part of 2020. To solve this problem, we invited alumni entrepreneurs from our network to utilize some of the office space for important meetings and teamwork activities. We gave this opportunity also to the 11 NEETS (young People Not in Education, Employment or Training) entrepreneurs who were selected through a pitching competition and received training within our three-year international project "NEETS in Entrepreneurship". Of course, this arrangement required additional health and safety measures as well as a coordinated effort of our staff members to diminish the risk for others.

In our new location we continue our good practices of using LED lighting, ensure responsible disposal of obsolete office equipment and recycling of plastic, paper and metal and we continue to encourage our staff members to use multi-use boxes for lunch.

Measurement of outcomes

The adequate measurement of outcomes is a crucial element in the delivery of each of our activities, including our support for the UNGC. We regularly keep track of basic metrics related to our educational programs/projects such as number of students, number of teachers, number of schools, cost of program delivery per student, number of real startups created, etc. We are also focused on measuring the impact of our programs through tools such as self-assessment pre- and post-tests and satisfaction surveys. We are committed to developing better ways of measuring more adequately the social impact of what we do in terms of mindset fostering, skills development, etc. Information about these measurements has been incorporated at appropriate places in the text above.