

JA Bulgaria Communication on Engagement for 2015/2016

Statement of continued support to the UN Global Compact

03.01.2017



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 want to achieve more than the basic which is asked from civil society organizations like ours. Thus, 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 all those thousands of students we reach and impact each year.

Actions to promote the UNGC and its principles

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

1. Our Board Chairman and CEO rarely miss an opportunity to emphasize our commitment to the UNGC principles in public appearances, as well as during meetings and discussions with possible business and NGO partners. An example is this video interview with Boni Bonev (Chairman of the Board) during the Annual General Meeting of our regional organization JA Europe in 2016: <https://youtu.be/5jsRICUfyCI>.
2. Our whole team has included the UNGC logo in our e-mail signatures next to the logo of our organization, thus signaling that supporting the UNGC is a question of brand identity for us. We estimate that around 38 000 emails with the UNGC logo in the signature have been sent by our staff members to external partners/contacts in the period 2015-2016.
3. Our support for the UNGC is prominent on the [homepage of our website](#) as well (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). Approximately 1200 unique visits to the pages where we have announced our support have been made by readers of our website.

Actions to mobilize business toward CSR

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. Some examples of programs/activities that we have done with corporate partners in the last two years (2015-2016) include:

1. 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. This year, the third wave of the project is expected to reach 500 students in several Bulgarian cities. JA Bulgaria develops the educational content **“Smart Finance”** which is then delivered in class by trained volunteers from MetLife. The first two waves of the project achieved impressive results in terms of increased student awareness on personal finance issues and improved skills for personal financial management and budgeting.
2. In partnership with **NN**, we run 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 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.

3. Another project where we have managed to mobilize businesses to realize CSR initiatives is the **“FIQ project”** where we attracted 3 leading financial institutions in Bulgaria (**NN, MasterCard and Unicredit**), the OECD and the Ministry of Education and Science in developing a methodology and realizing a first-of-its-kind large-scale survey of the financial literacy of Bulgarian students. More than 5500 students from primary, middle and secondary grades took the baseline test in September 2016. The results from the survey are now being used to inform the creation of concrete educational modules that would address the shortcomings in the students’ level of financial literacy. The modules are currently being developed with the participation of OECD experts and the active involvement of the 3 corporate partners who are providing practical case studies to complement the theoretical content.
4. Another business partner that we attracted in a co-creation process to realize a meaningful CSR activity is Coca-Cola HBC. We realized the **“My First Company”** project which combines several priorities: it introduces university students to the world of startups and challenges them to form teams and develop product prototypes; it awards the most mature and market-ready of these startup teams with a seed investment of 5000 EUR to start realizing their idea in practice; it supports the creation and furnishing of a co-working and workshop space and library for young entrepreneurs – the JA Startup Hambar at the Sofia Tech Park.
5. Our annual national competition for student mini companies (Youth Business Forum Rising Stars) takes the form of a trade fair where the student teams display their products and make presentations in front of jury members from the business community. It usually features several award categories that affirm the 10 principles, such as “most socially innovative product”, “most socially responsible mini company” or “environmental sustainability”. The student teams can enter the race to win one of these awards and based on the track record of their company’s activity throughout the school year the jury decides whom to award the prize. This is a great way in which we work toward firmly embedding these values into the mindset of the future generation of Bulgarian (who can one day become global) entrepreneurs.

Actions in support of the Ten Principles

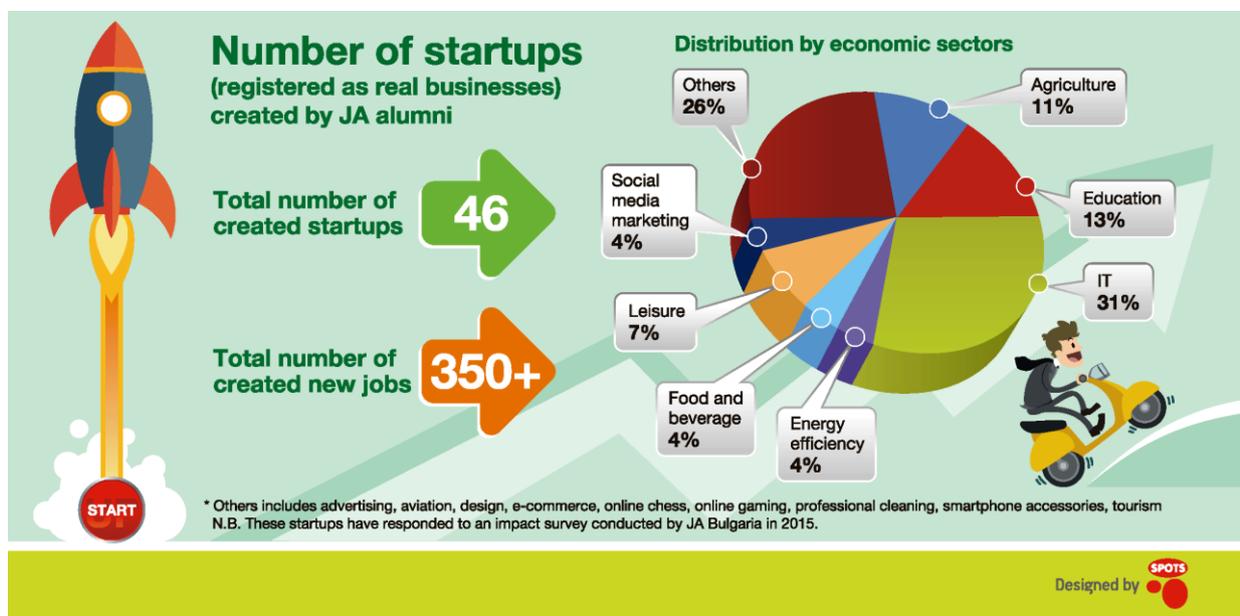
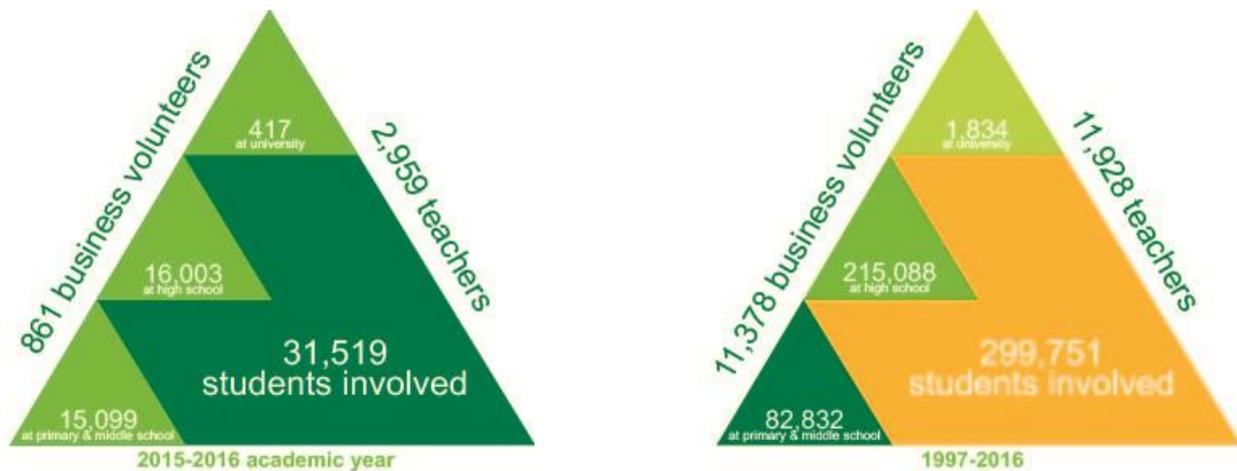
1. In 2015-2016, JA Bulgaria developed a new overall strategy and vision for the next 10 years whose leading slogan is “From learning to doing, from entrepreneurial people to a happy nation!” We strongly believe that through our activities and programs we are making a contribution towards a new paradigm of development that puts happiness as a leading criterion for high quality of life. We are also proud that through our new strategy we will contribute even more to making Bulgaria a happy country with a happy nation where the 10 principles are an indispensable part of the culture of life and behavior. The linchpin of our strategy is the creation of a “Ministry of Entrepreneurship” – a special body with a mandate from all the institutions to work on developing the entrepreneurial spirit of people through education, putting a special emphasis on constructive entrepreneurship in all spheres of life, including crafts, agriculture, clean technologies, etc. The goal is to inspire everyone to be entrepreneurial and sensitive towards society and environment as a whole, perceiving financial gain only as a means and not as an end in itself. As part of realizing that strategic goal, we initiated a cooperation process on local level by getting in touch with the local governments and working with them to develop entrepreneurial skills on local/regional level in order to ensure more fulfilling professional realization of young people there. We see this bottom-up approach as an important prerequisite for the creation of a new consciousness that would lead to the institutions adopting such strategic measures at the highest state level.

2. Since 2015, we have been coordinating the international project [GREENT](#) which aims at creating a comprehensive framework (blended-learning methodology and syllabus) and educational content on green entrepreneurship for high school students that teachers can use in their classrooms when talking about the green economy, sustainable development and the role of new enterprises that have sustainability at its core. The educational content is currently in its final stage of editing and will then be piloted into high schools in the next couple of months. There will be place in it for mentioning the UNGC as a champion of business social responsibility and engagement with the SDGs. 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 action and not as a discouraging factor. The interesting thing about the content is that it is being created by teachers from 5 European countries who collaborate with each other in the process.
3. We organized a summer school on green entrepreneurship for high school students in 2016 as part of our joint project with Samsung Electronics on introducing more digital tools into the classrooms. The program of the school offered a perfect mixture between practical activities and theoretical approaches to build the knowledge base of the students, several experts were invited to lead workshops on individual carbon footprint, businesses that support biodiversity, climate change, construction with natural materials, business model canvas, etc.
4. With our partners from JA Sogn og Fjordane (Norway) we organized and held a 10-day Eco Camp for 30 high school students from Bulgaria and Norway in Norway in the fall of 2015. This camp was a continuation to a previous Eco Camp for the same students in Bulgaria in 2014. The idea behind the camp is to improve the students' skills for teamwork and collaboration in the development and presentation of sustainable business ideas. There were many practical activities and visits to real sustainable businesses that can serve as an example. The students were introduced to tools such as the business model canvas that helped them shape, analyze and improve their ideas before presenting them to a jury of environmental and business experts.
5. In terms of reducing our own environmental footprint and contributing to positive change we have realized the following:
 - We replaced incandescent light bulbs with LED lighting in our office premises.
 - We engage in responsible disposal of obsolete office equipment.
 - We recycle used paper.
 - We introduced the usage of plastic multi-use boxes for lunch. Instead of buying their lunch in disposable single-use plastic boxes, staff members are encouraged to bring their own thicker boxes to the nearby restaurants and asking to be served in them before bringing the meal to the office kitchen to consume. This results in reducing the unnecessary amount of plastic going to the landfill (currently, a very small percentage of plastic garbage in Bulgaria's capital Sofia is recycled and most of it still ends up in the landfill). An idea to improve the engagement of staff members with this measure is to brand those personal plastic boxes with the JA branding – this would also serve to distinguish ourselves as pioneers in the eyes of food suppliers and lead the change.
 - We organized a [tree planting activity](#) in the spring of 2015 in which all staff members and several students took part. Despite the cold weather, we not only planted more than 350 tree saplings, but also learned a lot about the issues of sustainable forest management from the staff of the local forestry department.
 - We used biodegradable and compostable plates and cutlery for our final 3-day training this year – a creativity camp for high school students. As a results, we threw much less plastic waste into the trash bins and also composted part of the biodegradable plates. This is a good practice that we will try to follow in most of our upcoming events and trainings.

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.

Here are a couple of graphs that show a part of our impact in the 2015-2016 period, as well as the overall number of people we have reached and benefited throughout our existence since 1997:



This infographic shows the number of real businesses created by JA Bulgaria alumni in the period 2006-2015. It reflects only this part of businesses who responded to a survey we launched in the summer of 2015, meaning that the actual number may be higher because not all of our alumni responded to the survey.