



JUNIOR Wirtschaft erleben

Contact

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THE PROJECT

In terms of startups, Germany lags behind the European average, a trend that in recent years has worsened. Regulatory and institutional barriers account in part for this gap, though many observers point as well to insufficient attention paid to economic issues in schools. German companies often complain of the lack of knowledge and maturity among school-leavers. The Cologne-based JUNIOR program responds to these challenges with a practical approach: The program offers students the opportunity to start their own small business and thus learn first-hand the ins and outs of running a business. In contrast to theory-driven education, the project focuses on real-life learning involving practical challenges. The young entrepreneurs must learn how to realize a business idea with limited capital while paying wages and taxes and keeping an eye on costs. The goal here is not only to promote the next generation of entrepreneurs, but also to foster their ability to take on responsibility, organize, present ideas, and work both independently and in a team – skills needed for any occupation. Participants benefit from both in-school and external guidance: educators from their school serve as on-site advocates and organizers while volunteer “business angels” oversee each startup process. Comprised of various modules, the project can be adapted to all types of schools and age levels: The challenges faced by older students are different from those faced by young students, and general schools (Hauptschulen) will focus more on practical skills than will, for example, college-preparatory schools. Through its approach, the project has already reached more than 100,000 students.

IMPACT

The JUNIOR program’s “learning by doing” approach has proved effective. Starting one’s own business is an experience that leaves a lasting impression on participants. JUNIOR alumni are more likely to start their own business, more successful in their occupations and take more pleasure in their work. Looking back on their experience in the program, alumni identify their participation as the most important aspect of their preparation for their occupation. Nine out of ten educators confirm that the program improves participants’ ability to work in teams, their sense of responsibility and their independence. Ongoing improvements are made to the program as a result of annual surveys conducted among the participants, educators and business angels. Additional modules for elementary and tertiary-level education institutions are currently in planning.

Founded: 2008

Project start: 1994

Organization income (2015): €2.8 million

Project budget (2015): €1.3 million

Number of project staffers: 357

Of which volunteer: 334

Reach: National

Target group: Students from 5th grade onwards



Potential project impact

Objetives and target groups	★★★★★
Approach and concept	★★★★★
Development of quality standards	★★★★★

Organizational performance

Vision and strategy	★★★★★
Leadership and staff management	★★★★★
Supervision	★★★★★
Finance and oversight	★★★★★
Transparency and public relations	★★★★★