

IBS.INNOVATIONS  
ONLINE 2020

\$30 000

інвестицій в найкращий проєкт

by GLOBAL GENESIS



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Success Stories  
#ChangingCities

## \$30,000 for a Dream: Business Ideas of Young Entrepreneurs Bankrolled in Zaporizhia

Heavy industry forms a solid foundation of the economic capacity of Zaporizhia, and the city is rightfully considered the centre of Ukraine's metal industry. However, there is a flipside to the focus on all-out industrial development: small and medium-sized businesses are growing sluggishly here. Meanwhile, modern global trends indicate that it pays off to support innovative business ideas, take a chance on information technologies, and create businesses that can readily adapt to external changes.

In response to the city's need for the active growth of small and medium-sized businesses, a group of companies called Global Genesis launched the unique Investment Business School Innovations in Zaporizhia. It offers Zaporizhia residents an opportunity to not only learn the basics of private enterprise free of charge, but also showcase their own ideas, with the best of them to be funded. In 2020, IBS Innovations was successfully held for the third time in a row, this time under the auspices of the PLEDDG Project. Studies at the business school this year differed from previous years: the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine restrictions necessitated a switch to online learning almost entirely.

“In approximately 3 weeks, we managed to adapt to the new conditions at IBS Innovations. This year's studies at the business school have been provisionally divided into 2 parts: knowledge acquisition and presentation of individual projects. Since tuition is free, the online format made it possible to enroll almost 5,000 people from across Ukraine. While it would still be possible to teach that many people offline, the costs would be much higher. In this way, the distance learning format created extensive opportunities for scaling up the school. As for the second part, projects were presented by the top 20 students, just like before. Regrettably, the quarantine made live communication among trainees impossible: we attach great importance to creating an environment for networking among young entrepreneurs. Previously, during a 3-month study course students would make friends and often launch joint projects,” says **Artur Harslyan, founder of the Global Genesis group and initiator of the Investment Business School.**

The winners of IBS Innovations 2020 are the most innovative and promising business projects, in the opinion of experts: an online foreign language school, a mobile app for interaction with bloggers, and a marketing agency staffed by people living with disabilities. An investment of CA\$30,000 will be shared among the creators of these projects for their development. It is no coincidence that Alla Murizidi, author of the marketing agency idea, worked on this particular project: she has been personally providing various marketing services for several years and has first-hand knowledge of challenges faced by people living with disabilities.

“I’ve been in the marketing business for 4 years. I specialize in product promotion on social media and previously designed websites. I move around in a wheelchair, so I gradually formulated an idea to create an agency staffed by people living with disabilities. Nowadays, everybody can master certain aspects of digital marketing without leaving the comfort of their home: all it takes is a computer with Internet access to complete a study course and practice. In 2019, I submitted my first business idea for the StartUp Fest held in Zaporizhia. I did not win back then but got a training certificate from the Investment Business School,” says **Alla Murizidi, trainee and winner of IBS Innovations 2020.**

Studies at the business school lasted 15 weeks and were divided into 6 core modules: marketing, sales, business planning, operational management, finance, and legal aspects of doing business. In addition to the 30 main webinars, students received plenty of useful information from successful business owners. In late summer, the creators of the 20 best projects got together with experts for a busy two-day session in Berdyansk to present their business plans, followed by the selection of winners.

Considering the social aspect of Alla’s business idea, the marketing agency will rent an office fully adapted to the needs of people living with disabilities: complete with ramps, doors wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, and an appropriately equipped restroom. The office will also have a dedicated photo studio where customer products will be photographed.

“The agency will initially employ at least 5 people, including a programmer, a designer, an SMM specialist, and a copywriter. Potential customers are business owners in various industries, for whom we can update a website or create one from scratch, manage social media pages, generate textual and visual content, and configure ad settings. I consciously decided to create an offline office. I want people with disabilities who will be joining the team to socialize and communicate and to see customers. I believe that office work will make them more organized and instill in them a sense of greater responsibility for the outcome,” **Ms. Murizidi** adds.

The Zaporizhia-based school, IBS Innovations, is committed to spreading the benefits of private enterprise among residents of the city and the region. Emphasizing the promising nature of innovative business streams underscores that Zaporizhia can also be successful outside heavy industry. By supporting such important initiatives, the PLEDDG Project not only promotes systemic development of small and medium-sized businesses in partner cities, but also helps to unlock the economic and social potential of cities. Promoting an inclusive environment is especially important in the face of a global crisis when success is driven by flexibility, creative ideas, social impact, and rapid adaptation to change.



## #ChangingCities

The series of success stories #ChangingCities demonstrate successful examples and innovative approaches to democratic governance and local economic development in Zaporizhzhia, Vinnytsia, Poltava and Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts in Ukraine, that have resulted from the efforts of the international technical assistance project “Partnership for Local Economic Development and Democratic Governance” (PLEDDG) which is being implemented by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and funded by Global Affairs Canada.

