



## Winners of Europe's largest youth entrepreneurship festival unveiled

***370 000 young entrepreneurs from 40 countries competed to become Europe's Company and Start Up of the Year on United Nations World Skills Day 2021.***

*Vilnius, Thursday 15 July 2021* – Swim.me and Scribo have been named the winners of the JA Europe Enterprise Challenge and Company of the Year Competition, after battling it out with Europe's best young entrepreneurs today in Gen-E 2021, the largest entrepreneurship festival across Europe.

Organised by JA Europe and hosted this year by JA Lithuania, the Gen-E festival combines two annual awards, the Company of the Year Competition (CoYC) and the European Enterprise Challenge (EEC).

Following presentations from 180 companies led by some of the brightest young entrepreneurial minds in Europe, the winners were announced at a virtual ceremony.

The winners of the European Enterprise Challenge, for university age entrepreneurs were as follows:

- **1<sup>st</sup> - Swim.me (Greece)** who created a smart wearable device that preserves the orientation of blind swimmers in the pool. The system consists of an eco-friendly swimming cap and goggles and is intended for use in training conditions.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> - Mute (Portugal)**, a sound absorption module, able to eliminate echo/reverb and unwanted frequencies in a room by using fabric residues. Relies as a professional, sustainable and innovative solution, that promotes a circular economy.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> - Hjárni (Norway)**, whose goal is to become the world's most preferred supplier of eco-friendly tanning agents for sustainable leather production. While Europe's leather generates an annual value chain turnover of 125 billion euros, 85% of this leather is made using chrome, which is dangerous for both our health and environment.

The winners of the Company of the Year Competition were as follows:

- **1<sup>st</sup> – Scribo (Slovakia)**, a solution to dry-erase markers that are not being recycled and produce a waste of 35 billion plastic markers every year. They have developed zero-waste dry-erase whiteboard markers made of recycled wax.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> – FlowOn (Greece)**, an innovative adapter which converts outdoor taps into “smart taps” regulating the flow of water, reducing water consumption by up to 80% and reducing exposure to viruses and germs by more than 98%.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> – Lazy Bowl (Austria)**, are an all-female company specializing in freeze-dried fruit ‘smoothiebowl’ which are free from both colorings and preservatives.

For the first time ever, the Gen-E Festival saw the announcement of a “JA Europe Teacher of the Year Award. The award seeks to acknowledge role of teachers to inspire and motivate young people, to help them discover their potential and lead them to believe in their power of acting and changing the future.



Sedipeh Wägner, a teacher from Sweden, won the prize. Ms Wägner is an experienced JA teacher who teaches at the Introduction Program, dedicated to migrants and vulnerable students to prepare for the national programme, teach them Swedish and possibly complement their previous education to meet the Swedish high school levels and standards.

JA Europe, which organized the festival, is Europe's largest non-profit in Europe dedicated to creating pathways for employability, job creation and financial success. Its network operates across 40 countries and last year, its programmes reached almost 4 million young people with the support of over 100,000 business volunteers and 140,000 teachers and educators.

**Salvatore Nigro, CEO of JA Europe said:** *"We are delighted to announce this year's winners of the JA Company of the Year Competition and Enterprise Challenge. Each year over 370,000 students across Europe battle it out by designing their own mini companies and start-ups to compete at Gen-E, Europe's largest entrepreneurship festival."*

*"Our intention is always to help boost career ambitions and improve employability, entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. Young entrepreneurs have so much to offer our society, and every year we see a new wave of enthusiasm towards solving societal problems with their own entrepreneurship. It's reflected in the winners again this year, that young entrepreneurs not only see business as a means to a financial end, but as a platform by which to improve society and help people around them."*

#### **Notes to Editor:**

JA Europe is the largest non-profit in Europe dedicated to preparing young people for employment and entrepreneurship. JA Europe is a member of JA Worldwide® which for 100 years has delivered hands on, experiential learning in entrepreneurship, work readiness and financial literacy.

JA creates pathways for employability, job creation and financial success. Last school year, the JA network in Europe reached almost 4 million young people across 40 countries with the support of nearly 100,000 business volunteers and over 140,000 teachers/educators.

**What are the COYC and JA Company Programme?** The JA Europe Company of the Year Competition is the annual European competition of the best JA Company Programme teams. The JA Company Programme empowers high school students (aged 15 to 19) to fill a need or solve a problem in their community and teaches them practical skills required to conceptualise, capitalise, and manage their own business venture. Throughout building their own company, students collaborate, make crucial business decisions, communicate with multiple stakeholders, and develop entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. Every year, more than 350,000 students across Europe take part in this programme, creating more 30,000 mini-companies.

**What are the EEC and JA Start Up Programme?** The European Enterprise Challenge is the annual European competition of the best JA Start Up Programme teams. The Start Up Programme allows post-secondary students (aged 19 to 30) to experience running their own company, showing them how to use their talents to set up their own business. Students also develop attitudes and skills necessary for personal success and employability and gain essential understanding in self-employment, business creation, risk-taking and coping with



adversity, all with experienced business volunteers. Every year, more than 17,000 students from 20 countries across Europe are taking part in this programme, creating 2,500+ start-ups per year.

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