

## PRESS RELEASE

Social Impact Lab Leipzig

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### **International Workshop on Social Entrepreneurship**

Incubators and Co-Working Spaces from the MENA-Region and Germany met for exchange

**In June six social entrepreneurship boosting projects from Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco and Germany met to exchange knowledge and experience in the field. During three workshop days topics like social impact measurement, financing of a social incubator, impact investment and international collaboration were on the agenda. Workshop was complemented by two keynote speakers. Dr. Andread Rickert, CEO of Phineo, spoke about tools for impact measurement, its mindset and the importance of analyzing impact. Artur Steiner, Hivos International, the second speaker, gave the link to the MENA-Region and gave insights about his motivation to build up coworking spaces in Egypt and Tunisia. Steiner highlighted the importance of *place* and *mobility* for fostering an ecosystem of Social Entrepreneurship. As a result of the workshop the six projects plan steps to create an international network and exchange program as well as ongoing knowledge transfer to boost social entrepreneurship on an international level.**

The workshop was initiated by the Drosos Foundation which invited the projects Cogite (Tunis, Tunisia), Yunus Social Business (Tunis, Tunisia), Moroccan CISE (Rabat, Morocco), le comptoir de l'innovation (Casablanca, Marokko), Ibtikar Khana (Cairo, Ägypten) and the Social Impact Lab Leipzig to participate. All projects have in common that they operate incubators as well as coworking spaces that support social entrepreneurship. All the participating projects are at very different stages of their implementation. While the Social Impact Lab in Leipzig already operates for two years and is part of a bigger germanwide network, the project in Cairo just started to develop the whole incubator concept. In

Tunisia they had to establish the concept of coworking as a new style of working together before an incubator could be launched. After 3 years the founders of the Cogite Coworking Space in Tunis a whole community of coworkers was formed and a space for changemakers and social entrepreneurs formed. Now with the Drosos support they were able to move to a bigger space, which gives them the chance to open up to even more initiatives and „Doers“. This process also attracted the first tunisian social business accelerator Yunus Social Business, which is now part of the Cogite community. For the first application round the team of Yunus Social Business received 2000 applications. That shows the need and the movement that is going on in the country.

The main issue of the workshop besides networking and best practice exchange was knowledge transfer and joint action. In order to do so all projects had to find a common understanding of social entrepreneurship. „Even though there are existing slightly different cultural and scientific specificities we all agreed on that social entrepreneurship is more doing than theoretical fulfilling of a definition. It is about a mindset which stands for solution-oriented and societal actions,“ explains Marcus Bittner, Incubator Manager of Social Impact Lab Leipzig. On the second day for topics defined the day: social impact measurement, financial sustainability of incubators, business processes & organisation, cooperations. Especially the financing lead to discussions. „The challenge is to balance social impact maximization and to be economically efficient and sustainable,“ says Bittner, who was moderating the financing topic. All the projects handle this differently. Whereas in Leipzig the focus is on the support programs and to collaborate with companies and municipalities, the other projects face the situation that there are no big companies or government aid and therefore they have to focus more on global companies, renting out the coworking space and make money with events. Also impact measurement was a big topic. The challenge here is to define impact measurement indicators that make it possible to monitor the impact. Every project will work on that in the upcoming months. Meanwhile the projects will collaborate online until the next international workshop is planned.



**Social Impact Lab Leipzig:** In 2014, the Social Impact Lab in Leipzig opened its doors to people who share a single goal: to change the world with socially innovative ideas. The Lab offers 260 sqm of floor space in the Stelzenhaus (an old industrial building) where it provides support for social entrepreneurs. At the Lab, social startups and young people are given professional support - such as mentoring, individual coaching, consultancy, coworking space, workshops and networking - helping them on the road to becoming self-employed. The Social Impact Lab Leipzig also provides support for startup teams that are setting up a social business in Portugal or Spain.

**Drosos:** Drosos Foundation owes its existence to a private endowment. It is ideologically, religiously and politically independent. Drosos Foundation is committed to enabling people in difficult situations to live a life of dignity. Every individual bears the responsibility for him/herself, for others, for the environment. The Foundation creates aptitudes and promotes skills which enable people to fulfil these responsibilities.

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