

# Barcelona Activa

Barcelona Activa, established in 1986, is the **Economic Development Agency of the city of Barcelona**. It has the aim to promote economic and local development to ensure a better quality of life for the citizens by designing and implementing entrepreneurship, employment and business support policies.

## Entrepreneurship as a development policy: facing social and economic exclusion

Cities in the EU attract investment, people and services and this capability thereby stimulates their creativity and innovation. However, there is often a **paradox** insofar as **some of the most thriving cities in the EU generally offer the widest range of employment opportunities** but, at the same time, some of them have the highest levels of unemployment and social exclusion. This trend has a dramatic impact on people's life since people's free will depends nowadays a lot on their economic autonomy. On the contrary, economic dependence could leave them behind and push them towards economic and social exclusion.

**Entrepreneurship is one form of job creation and a way to raise individuals' economic and social autonomy.** However, being an entrepreneur **means facing several barriers and these barriers could ban many people from becoming an entrepreneur.** These barriers are especially hard for specific groups of population such as **women, youth and people over 45.** This model is both universal and tailor made: targets all the population willing to be an entrepreneur and, at the same time, adapts its tools and services to the most vulnerable population for whom the conventional entrepreneurship support services don't suit.

## An inclusive model

The **Inclusive Entrepreneurship Model's** aim is to **coach entrepreneurs from their business ideas to the setting up of their companies**, no matter what their means and background is. It is important to note that the innovate elements of the model come from combining apparently contradictory features, that make its scope broader. That is to say, it is open to everyone but, at the same time, it also adapts its tools and means to people with specific needs, so it is valid and useful for very different groups of people.

The Inclusive Entrepreneurship Model has the following features:

1. **Universal:** it is open to everyone, no matter who the entrepreneur is, no matter the sector in which he/she wants to start a company. In fact, there are no previous requirements requested to the entrepreneurs.

The starting point to enter the entrepreneurship model is the welcome session. 226 welcome sessions are held every year to present Barcelona Activa's programmes, activities and resources to coach the entrepreneurs' business ideas into feasible business projects. Each quarter 5 welcome sessions are offered in English for foreign entrepreneurs who also have access to on line welcome sessions if they haven't landed yet in Barcelona.

After this welcome session all the attendees are offered different services according to their needs. Thus, a customized advice is provided: a team of entrepreneurship experts coaches entrepreneurs to transform their ideas into feasible businesses models with:

- **A set of on-line tools:** an effective online toolkit to produce SWOT analysis of business ideas, well structured business plans, self-assessment of key entrepreneurial skills, and key information about legal procedures, access to funding and market intelligence.

- **Group training seminars:** entrepreneurs are offered training in those fields that are essential for the management of a new company, such as legal formats and procedures, market research, financial plans, entrepreneurial skills, corporate communication.

- **Personalised advice:** a team of entrepreneurship experts coaches entrepreneurs to transform their ideas into feasible businesses models with

2. **Blended:** the combination of the on-site and on-line services provides the model with flexibility for those entrepreneurs facing mobility and time restrictions to work on their project.

3. **Tailor-made programmes:** customized contents designed for those groups that face specific hindrances due to their social/personal circumstances.

4. **Integrated:** it has the ability to refer those who reach out to Barcelona Activa but are not ready to start their own business to other services, such as those offered by the employment or training departments.

Barcelona Activa's **role in the social and economic ecosystem is close to that of a broker or a connector. Barcelona Activa analyses, detects, connects and "make things happen"** together with social and **economic stakeholders** of the city in order to provide the most suitable support and to better identify the needs and gaps of the society. So, Barcelona Activa is connected to the city and its ecosystem: relies on several stakeholders of the city in order to have the most specialised experts for every kind of activity according to the needs of the targeted groups.

## Results achieved

The current entrepreneurship model started in 2004, even though Barcelona Activa provided entrepreneurship support services from the very beginning of its activity, back in 1986.

The main results of the model in the period between 2004 and 2016 are:

- More than **100.000 people participated** in any of its services or tools (**3.800** of them in tailor made programmes).
- More than **26.000 business plans** coached and almost **18.000 companies created**.
- These companies created more than **32.000 new jobs**.

## An inclusive model born in Barcelona to face a European challenge

The GP would be interesting for other European cities because it is a tested approach to an unsolved common European challenge: **In the European Union, approximately 4 million jobs are needed to return to pre-crisis employment levels. Promoting an inclusive entrepreneurship could be a mean to fight against these challenges** since stimulating successful business creation across all sections of society is an important requirement for a sustainable and inclusive growth and to reduce social and economic exclusion.