

EMN Peer-to-Peer Visit Report

PerMicroLab Onlus visited Autoocupació on 28th May 2018

Background of the meeting and the visiting delegation:

The main object of the visit was to better understand Autoocupació's strategic and operational model. Autoocupació is a very similar NGO to PerMicroLab in terms of mission, projects, activities and main sponsors. In fact, both organisations belong to a worldwide network called "Youth Business International" (YBI) that helps us develop and improve activities such as mentoring and training for young entrepreneurs. Moreover, Autoocupació in Spain operates in a similar environment as PerMicroLab in Italy.

Autoocupació has been operating for longer than PerMicroLab; in fact, it has more than 30 years of experience in its activities. However, over the last five years it has developed very quickly in terms of its activities (mentoring services, number of mentors, training courses and new services for entrepreneurs) as well as in terms of its geographical presence in Spain. PerMicroLab and Autoocupació have very similar mission goals and activities and so PerMicroLab's main aim of the visit was to compare respective operations and models.

Lessons learnt during the visit:

- *Development strategy.* Thanks to a strong marketing strategy, Autoocupació was able to build a network of existing and well-structured partners in Spain who decided to join Autoocupació as operational partners. In fact, Autoocupació opted to search for the best partners in terms of the complementarity of their activities instead of creating "ex novo" ones in each city where it operates.
- *Training activities for entrepreneurs:* Finding potential young entrepreneurs to participate in training courses is very hard, even for Autoocupació. The main difference with PerMicroLab is that Autoocupació has one person completely dedicated to contacting potential young entrepreneurs on a daily basis to keep them informed about upcoming Autoocupació events and trainings, and to collect registrations for courses. They receive precise lists of young entrepreneurs thanks to a person dedicated to analysing and collecting data about young people in Spain.

Autoocupació has developed a range of training activities dedicated to “already established” entrepreneurs (business English classes, cost analysis, etc). They are also seeking to obtain public funds to finance other activities for entrepreneurs who are closer to Autoocupació’s mission, helping start-ups and potential young entrepreneurs.

- *Mentoring:* Autoocupació has put a strong focus on the Mentoring Programme, which it developed with the help of YBI. In fact, it was a part of its strategic marketing offer together with the membership to YBI. This has helped Autoocupació attract many partners from all over Spain who have therefore decided to join Autoocupació and to develop Mentoring and Training as part of their own activities.
- *New services:* Autoocupació has created a new service for entrepreneurs called “Reempresa”: a sort of integrated market platform with a one-to-one consultancy service to help entrepreneurs sell and buy already existing small enterprises instead of creating new ones.

PerMicroLab’s plans to adapt some key lessons to its own organisation:

- *Development strategy:* PerMicroLab is planning to start looking for and analysing potential established Italian organisations to integrate into PerMicroLab to scale up at a national level while reducing goodwill costs.
- *Training activities for entrepreneurs:* PerMicroLab is planning to start applying for public and European funds such as “Youth Guarantee” and “European Commission” funds to obtain finance to increase the offer of training activities for entrepreneurs.
- *Mentoring:* Now that PerMicroLab also has a well-structured Mentoring Programme, a good strategy for the future would be to start “selling” the methodology to similar and complementary organisations.
- *New services:* PerMicroLab would like to look into analysing the legal framework in Italy in order to develop a service like “Reempresa” and to start looking for existing organisations that are already offering this kind of service to partner with and to scale up.