

Europe Social Entrepreneur of the year awarded at World Economic Forum on Europe and Central Asia

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Istanbul, Turkey, 30 October 2008 – Five social entrepreneurs, two of them from Turkey, have been recognized as leading social entrepreneurs in Europe during the opening plenary session of the World Economic Forum on Europe and Central Asia, held in Istanbul on 30 October. The five are the Social Entrepreneur of the Year winners from Turkey, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom. They received their awards in the presence of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and other heads of state.

Social entrepreneurs have an important lesson to share in today's financial crisis. They emphasize long-term sustainability instead of short-term gain. Their primary focus is to maximize benefits for society and the environment. They operate social businesses or organizations that are a mixture of non-profits and for-profits.

The Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, an affiliate organization of the World Economic Forum, conducts the search and selection for the Social Entrepreneur of the Year in 25 countries around the world. In Europe, the Foundation partners with The Boston Consulting Group and Ernst & Young to identify the leading social entrepreneurs on the continent.

The following five winners were awarded the Europe Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2008.

Nebahat Akkoc, Kamer, Turkey Hybrid Non-profit

Having experienced violence firsthand, Akkoc founded Kamer to share her experiences and awareness with other women. Working in all 23 provinces of Eastern and South-Eastern Anatolia, Kamer holds awareness-raising campaigns and educational activities on issues of domestic violence. In an area that is characterized by traditional, sexist and tribal social structures, the organization has been successful due to its fostering of a self-empowered, grassroots movement to promote social and political change. Beyond providing social support for women facing domestic violence, Kamer has launched an entrepreneurship programme that allows women to empower themselves through ownership of small businesses, such as day-care centres and restaurants. Since its creation in 1997, Kamer has reached 40,000 women through its educational programming, and has provided legal, psychological and social support for 3,000 women facing domestic violence

Aynur Bektas, Hey Tekstil, Turkey Social Business

Hey Tekstil invested in less-developed regions of Anatolia, which has led to radical socio-economic change. From her position as the president of the Turkish Clothing Manufacturers' Association, Bektas advocated for relocating production to the underdeveloped regions of Anatolia. In cooperation with public authorities, Hey Tekstil transformed empty buildings in Anatolian cities into manufacturing factories. This innovative investment created employment opportunities for young people and women. The project first started to teach women to organize a small production place, and later expanded to a big investment project with four major sites around Anatolia. Since its creation in 1992, Hey Tekstil has grown to become the largest knitwear manufacturing company in Turkey and is the source for the biggest retail chains, employing more than 3,500 people

Reed Paget, Belu Water, United Kingdom Social Business

In the last 150 years, the world's population has used or polluted two-thirds of the available fresh water, and by 2050 we will have run out of the rest. Belu Water was launched to harness the

resources of business and use them to create a sustainable balance between people and the planet. Belu has introduced the UK's first biodegradable and compostable plastic bottle made from corn. They look like ordinary plastic bottles, and can be recycled with plastics or commercially composted back into soil in just eight weeks. By demonstrating that eco-friendly bottles are economically viable, Belu is leading a change in favour of a more sustainable approach to consumer goods. Belu has also reduced its carbon footprint by using clean electricity and locally sourced water. Belu invests 100% of its profits in water projects. Through investments in WaterAid, a clean water charity, Belu is funding wells and hand-pumps in Tamil Nadu and Mali, which provide water for 20,000 people. Further plans include funding of eco-sanitation projects to treat sewerage to produce fertilizer.

Marco Roveda, LifeGate Group, Italy Social Business

LifeGate Group is a business based on the "zero impact" motto to promote a sustainable, profitable future. The range of LifeGate activities and enterprises span from LifeGate Radio, promoting environmental consciousness, to LifeGate Café providing goods from biological agriculture in the FairTrade markets. Of the most noteworthy enterprises, Impatto Zero (zero impact) is a project to evaluate and reduce carbon emissions, involving a number of universities and over 450 companies. Impatto Zero compensates companies' emissions with a reforestation programme in one of the biggest natural parks in Italy (Parco del Ticino) and in Costa Rica, in partnership with the Costa Rican Ministry of Environment and Energy. So far, the project has created 13 million square metres of new forest. In another field, LifeGate Energy, the first Italian distributor of 100% clean energy, distributed over 30 million kWh to businesses last year. The next step for this project is to open up to private citizens by the end of 2008, once legislation is in place.

Rose Volz-Schmidt, Wellcome, Germany Hybrid Non-profit

Young families in Germany face stressful situations as the country's mobile working class often does not receive family support in raising children. One consequence has been steadily declining birth rates. Wellcome supports new families by recruiting and training older, experienced mothers as volunteers to go into families in distress on a temporary basis. Families pay a fee of 4 euros per hour for support by a volunteer. To address the lack of knowledge on other sources of support, Wellcome also works with a network of paediatricians and family services to refer families in need of help. Organized as a social franchise, Wellcome has 50 local teams working independently across Germany, which have adopted the concept into regional family institutions. According to a study by the University of Kiel, the Wellcome concept has a proven potential to prevent violence against children. Since its creation in 2002, Wellcome has helped 1,200 families across Germany

About the Schwab Foundation

The Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship was started by Klaus Schwab, Founder of the World Economic Forum, and his wife, Hilde. Since its inception in 2000, the Foundation has been searching for the world's leading social entrepreneurs, who implement innovative and pragmatic solutions to social problems by tackling the root causes and creating social transformation. The current network of the Foundation spans 150 social entrepreneurs and their organizations from more than 40 countries. Selected social entrepreneurs of the Schwab Foundation network participate in World Economic Forum events, thus providing unique opportunities for them to connect with business, political and media leaders. In one year alone, the Schwab social entrepreneurs raised close to US\$ 80 million as a direct result of the contacts and opportunities offered by the Foundation.

Further information on the social entrepreneurs can be found at <http://www.schwabfound.org>.

The World Economic Forum is an independent international organization committed to improving the state of the world by engaging leaders in partnerships to shape global, regional and industry agendas.

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