

Report concerning the association's activities during the year 2018

YEEP – The Young Entrepreneur Exchange Project

For YEEP, the Young Entrepreneur Exchange Project, 2018 was a year of adaptation: After 3 YEEP editions, which were carried out exclusively with the Bern University of Applied Sciences (BFH), we had to find a new way how to organise the project. In 2017 BFH had decided to give priority to a similar project (also called YEEP) organised with a partner university in India. YEEP still had the possibility to recruit students from BFH, but the project was not any more considered as an official module, where participants were entitled to receive credits for their studies¹. At the same time, the involvement of professors was less strong, as none of them was able to accompany the 2018 YEEP in Ethiopia.

In retrospect, the lesser involvement of BFH was an opportunity for YEEP to rethink its objectives and to relaunch the programme with new strength. We were more flexible concerning the content of the programme as well as the timing. We decided to organise YEEP 2018 as a new pilot project in February (instead of August) and to give a new, more active role to the participants. At the same time, in February our partners in Ethiopia and the business teams were already more advanced, so that we had the chance to work on more practical questions and did not have to spend much time on developing (and writing) the business plan.



For this new concept of YEEP, we were looking for a small team of very motivated participants, whom we found at HFW in Bern (Höhere Fachschule für Wirtschaft) and at University of St. Gallen, where we got in contact with the local Student Impact initiative. Advertisement for YEEP was however done broader, involving different other universities, schools and institutions (like Impact Hub in Bern). The team was completed by an engineer, who is co-owner of a software company in Bern.

YEEP 2018 in Ethiopia was successful in the way that we not only managed to support the local student teams to make their business ideas more realistic, but we furthermore also could try out the concept, where Swiss participants took over more responsibility for the content of the week and were less attached to a single Ethiopian business team.

Three out of the six Swiss participants remained very much involved in the project and helped to organise the next YEEP edition, which will take place in April 2019 with 18 participants, mainly from St. Gallen, HFW .

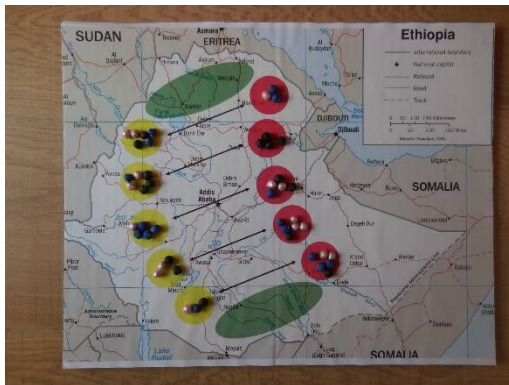
¹ YEEP remained however part of the Certificate of Global Competence Programme.

Inside Travel

Inside Travel is currently more or less on stand by (or in a transitional phase) and we did not actively carry out trips in 2018 (except one individual trip for two participants in Ethiopia). Contrary to other years, we did not participate in travel fairs or other promotion events.

At the same time, we tried to establish a new partnership with “begehbar Reisen” and “strangers and friends”, which have a similar travel concept as Inside Travel does. In regular meetings with “begehbar Reisen”, we laid down our ideas and created a common vision. We are currently testing our ideas with selected consultants and will probably try to find a business partner, which could then focus on the commercial aspects of the idea, with the aim to transfer into a travel agency, while the association can keep its focus on the supportive side.

Ethio Play



We were in regular contact with Mesfin Aboneh, one of the participants of our initial Business Machine week in Ethiopia. He took up the idea of creating an Ethiopian board game and got inspired by Gebeta, a traditional Ethiopian game known in many other African countries under names like Kalaha or Mancala. He would like to combine the rules of this game with a construction component, which could be connected to the Great Renaissance Dam, which is currently being completed in Ethiopia. However, unfortunately Mesfin did not yet take any steps beyond first ideas and a prototype game.

Other activities

We were indirectly involved in a project to establish wood pellet cooking stoves in Ethiopia. This is a much more efficient cooking method than classical stoves such as charcoal or kerosene and would not produce any harmful smoke. As the original material is coffee husk, a by-product of coffee production, which would usually just be thrown away, this is a CO2 neutral form of cooking. The local team, who already established a company, was struggling during the last 12 months to get all the necessary licenses and the foreign currency to import the machines and the pellet stoves. This was however very complicated and basically the project is still at the starting point. We will see in the next months, if it is possible to overcome the bureaucratic obstacles or not.

