

Task owners' view of CRE8 in Sibiu

In Sibiu, at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, we had a hard job to decide who to choose as the task owners for CRE8 Europe. We are happy to have many alumni employed in various fields of activity, even alumni who became entrepreneurs and started their companies from scratch, based on wonderful ideas. After a careful analysis of our alumni activity, we chose three businesses to present to CRE8 Europe participants, two of them as task owners and the third as part of the extracurricular schedule. The two task owners were TransAgape, bread and pastry producer represented by Mr. Iulian Niță, graduate of the Faculty of Agriculture, Food Industry and Environment Protection and Hug the Plate, a brunch restaurant, a startup owned by Nancy Panța and Paul Bahnean, alumni of the Faculty of Economic Sciences. The third business, Questo, is in fact an app developed by Alex Govoreanu, alumnus of the Faculty of Economic Sciences and his team, which allows you to visit Sibiu (and many other cities) in the form of a thematic treasure hunt. While within the workshops the students had the chance to put their ideas together in order to create the ideal “Back to school” TransAgape package, addressed to pupils or come up with new solutions for employee motivation at Hug the Plate, in the case of Questo, our guests were split in teams and competed to discover as many information as possible about the wonderful city of Sibiu.

As the idea behind CRE8 Europe is a new and exciting one, we wanted to find out the impression that the project left on our alumni, why they got involved and what were their thoughts during this collaboration.

First of all, we wanted to know **why they chose to get involved in CRE8 Europe project.**

Mr. Niță, from TransAgape said that he liked the idea, especially the fact that he would have the opportunity to meet youngsters, having fresh and courageous ideas and a different approach to problems. Nancy Panța, the owner of Hug the Plate, found the project a very good opportunity to interact with new and fresh perspectives given the purpose of it – exposing a problem that needed to be somewhat solved by gathering multiple minds to cooperate and find solutions towards it.

As the involvement of our alumni had a major impact on our students, offering them the occasion to develop their skills by solving a real-life issue, we wanted to find out **if the companies participation in the project impacted the business in any way; were any ideas proposed by the students were taken into consideration?**

Mr. Niță says that TransAgape participation in CRE8 Europe was a success, that the debates and students' ideas were exactly what they needed for the launch of a new product. TransAgape has been collaborating with LBUS activity for quite some time, offering to students all their resources to learn and practice. Nancy found the students' ideas helpful for Hug the Plate, in the way that they were creative and applicable for integration; she grasped a set of things that she thinks they managed to implement in order to improve the engagement of employees. Also,

Nancy strongly believes that students are a valuable asset in contributing with input especially to small enterprises, and this kind of project should be an ongoing one.

Furthermore, we asked our alumni **how they evaluate the employability of graduates in Romania, what would prepare them better for the labor market and what would be useful for the development of their skills during their university studies.**

From his experience at TransAgape and not only, Mr. Niță says that, unfortunately, the Romanian higher education system produced too many diplomas and not enough professional employees. For the engineering and food engineering area, too many theoretical aspects are discussed, that are fast forgotten if not practice. That is why he suggests putting the accent on the practical aspects, internships and so on.

Ms. Panța finds that students are somewhat formed into clusters when talking about “employability”. Some of them are really curious and eager to learn and form new skills, while others are having a difficult time to find something they are genuinely interested in (which further leads to low engagement at work). From her experience in the field, she thinks that it would be useful for students to work more on developing teamwork skills, to be involved in (more) extracurricular activities, so that they can orient themselves maybe more clearly and successfully career-wise.

We asked our alumni **if they find this type of project useful for students and what skills they think were developed for students during this project.**

Iulian Niță considers that this type of project is extremely important and this can always be seen in the attitude of those who participated in such projects. They have much more confidence in themselves, they learn to work in a team, to listen and accept the opinions of others, they learn to "lose" and they understand that not all ideas can be put into practice but we can learn something from all of them.

Nancy Panța says YES! Completely useful – a very good opportunity to interact with different mindsets, which helped them to develop critical thinking, problem solving skills, analytical skills, communication skills and even more. Although she totally agree that skills are necessary, Nancy thinks that generally a good and well-intentioned attitude helps in the working field – so maybe this could be a suggestion for further projects (not that it was a problem with any of the students, but it is helpful for young people overall to form positive attitudes professionally speaking).

Last, but not least, we wanted **to find out the one thing that our task owners appreciated most about CRE8 Europe in Sibiu.**

For Mr. Niță, from TransAgape, it was the way the students were extremely motivated and involved in their task, but in the same time relaxed. Nancy 100% appreciated the diversity. She

also liked the students' way of organizing and working together, their way of relating to the problem that was exposed and the professional (+creative) manner in developing solutions.

As Alex Govoreanu, the developer of Questo app did not interact with the students directly, he offered us his point of view about CRE8 Europe's concept, which he appreciated a lot: "The CRE8 initiative is useful in helping students develop some skills they will need during their career. The opportunity to work in a small and agile team is great for students, as it teaches them to follow a common goal, track results and assign responsibilities. This, in parallel with the pitch at the end, also boosts the importance of prioritization and time management, two very important skills for any future professional."