INTEGER

INTERCONNECTING 4 HELIX INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS IN EUROPEAN REGIONS

Deliverable D3.6 – Regionalised Incubation and Acceleration Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This deliverable, 3.6 of INTEGER, provides a comprehensive follow-up to the last stage of Task 3.3, specifically regarding the mentoring process. In this document, readers will find a detailed account of the activities and outcomes related to the incubation and acceleration of selected social-digital projects through regional Col·laborathons.

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SYMBOLS, ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

D	Deliverable
DoA	Description of Action
EU	European Union
INTEGER	Interconnecting 4 Helix Innovation Ecosystems in European Regions
T	Task
WP	Work-Package

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.2 Background and aim

This report conveys a gathering of the final documentation of the project's main actions, methodologies, and results across three focus regions from the INTEGER project: Krakow, Hamburg, and Catalonia. It provides a comprehensive overview of the mentoring processes implemented to foster social innovation and addresses the lessons learned, commonalities, and differences that emerged throughout the project. The document reflects the collective effort to develop impactful solutions tailored to the unique regional challenges while advancing shared goals of societal progress.

The report begins with an in-depth exploration of the mentoring processes adopted in Krakow. These efforts were centered around immersive events like the AHAthon, which brought together multi-generational teams to co-create solutions for active and healthy aging challenges. The Krakow section details how group mentoring and follow-up support successfully engaged stakeholders from diverse sectors and provided critical resources for early-stage social innovations.

In the Hamburg part, the report highlights the city's emphasis on centralized coordination and its integration of mentoring within broader initiatives such as RIS and 105 VIERTEL. By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and prioritizing socio-political dialogue, Hamburg created a dynamic ecosystem of innovation that addressed themes such as cultural inclusion, sustainability, and entrepreneurship. Metrics such as the number of public events, mentoring sessions, and counseling activities are analyzed to showcase the impact of these efforts.

The section on Catalonia details the region’s structured, long-term mentoring approach, which incorporated strategic tools such as the Business Model Canvas, SWOT analysis, and innovation resources. The integration of academia, social innovators, and mentors is emphasized as a critical factor in the projects' success, with a scientific analysis of the mentorship process contributing to ongoing research and best practices.

The report concludes with a comparative analysis of the mentoring processes across the three regions, emphasizing their state of art and unique methodologies, as well asshared principles and challenges. The report identifies critical success factors, including multi-stakeholder collaboration, capacity building, and adaptive approaches, while highlighting the lessons learned throughout the project. On a final chapters a reflection is undertaken on the overarching impact of the initiative and outlines the potential for scaling and replicating these strategies to foster sustainable innovation in other geographical and social contexts.

1.2 Structure of the deliverable

The report describes the three mentoring processes that have been developed within the INTEGER project by the regional based partners from Krakow, Hamburg, and Catalonia, with the support of all INTEGER partners. These three regional processes were carried out with the aim of providing social innovators through the use oftools to promote the advance of their projects towards a solid business model.

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1.3 Synergies with other tasks and deliverables

The upcoming deliverable will provide a comprehensive analysis of the impacts achieved through the mentoring process in all three regions. It will include:

- Project Outcomes: Detailed reports on the progress and achievements of individual projects, including the implementation of innovative solutions and the measurable benefits to target communities;
- Stakeholder Engagement: An assessment of how effectively the projects have engaged with stakeholders, including feedback from participants, trainers, and external partners;
- Skills and Knowledge Development: Analysis of the skills and knowledge acquired by project teams through the mentoring process, including the application of design thinking, Agile methodologies, and strategic planning tools;
- Collaboration and Networking: Evaluation of the synergies created between different regions and the effectiveness of interregional collaboration in fostering innovation and social impact; Sustainability and Replicability: Insights into the sustainability and replicability of the projects, ensuring that the innovations can be scaled and adapted to other regions or contexts.

By focusing on these aspects, the next deliverable will provide a clear picture of the successes and challenges encountered during the mentoring process. It will offer valuable lessons for future initiatives and demonstrate the tangible benefits of supporting social-digital projects through structured mentoring and interregional collaboration.

Integrating Deliverable D3.6 with Work Package 3 and the related deliverables D3.5, D3.1, and D5.1 creates a robust framework for supporting business innovation and capacity building. Deliverable 3.6 is closely related to 3.7, as both cover different aspects of the mentoring process. In Deliverable 3.6, the focus is on describing the second part of the mentoring process, detailing the activities, methodologies, and outcomes of the sessions. This includes insights into how the mentoring evolved, key takeaways, and any adjustments made based on the initial phases. Deliverable 3.7, on the other hand, serves as a repository of all materials used throughout the mentoring process. This includes presentations, worksheets, guidelines, templates, and any other supporting documents that facilitated the mentoring sessions.

2. REGIONAL MENTORING PROCESS

2.1 Krakow

- **2. 1.1 Overview of the projects involved in the mentoring**

First, the mentoring has already started during the 1st AHATHON which took place in Nov-December, 2023 for selected 5 groups of each minimum 5 persons (for details, see table about Group mentoring).

Already during this event of two full days, those from teams who would like to start a business in social innovation - were selected as emerging solutions for the region (active and healthy

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aging) - and work together with mentors of the KPT, UJ, and Life Science Krakow – with their ideas and solution and prepared them for the business market.

During the 1st day – about 6 hours were offered with 5 mentors/experts, and during the 2nd day 8 hours were offered (table: Group mentoring), while in the third day – the ideas were presented in a pitching style.

All teams received information about further possibilities of finding how to develop ideas and where to look for funding (i.e. under the Social Innovation Incubator by the Regional Center of Social Policy, Małopolska). However, a more focused mentoring program and its implementation was part of the prize awarded to the winning team of the Ahathon event (called Col·laborathon within the project's framework), organized by the INTEGER Kraków Team from November 29 to December 1, 2023. This mentoring program was planned to run for up to at least 3 months, during this period the mentors (of Life Science Krakow and KPT) with additional UJ support (if needed) was offered to SĄSIADEX team (till April 2024). Additionally, to all other teams, the option to contact mentors and ask for further help/support was offered even if not provided a personalized program. By email and phone calls, as well, were done by UJ-KPT team to at least one representative, who participated in the AHATHON, and. required support. Some expressed interest in some materials or in joining future activities, while others changed their plans and gave up on the idea due to other obligations.

The challenge, focused on harnessing the potential of the aging population in regions, especially cities, brought together participants from diverse backgrounds and generations. In multi-generational teams, they developed solutions addressing social issues, particularly those related to communication—such as access to information (cultural, sports, local) and transportation barriers.

The presented ideas shared common characteristics:

- Addressed real social needs with appropriate solutions,
- Promoted intergenerational collaboration,
- Demonstrated innovation,
- Could be replicated in other regions or cities,
- Offers benefits in the field of Active Healthy Aging.

The winning team has been provided with a comprehensive at minimum 16-hour mentoring program by Cluster LifeScience Krakow, a partner of the AHAthon. The initial meeting between the trainers' representatives and the winning team took place with the participation of the KPT team. The UJ team was involved also in supporting winning team members, especially being engaged in the international projects can offer an unique exchange of evaluation of ideas suggested. As for example having the experience with innovative web - based application for sharing the opinions about living in the city by older persons (City&Co project).

Additionally, beyond the original plan of the project, the PL team worked with new teams interested in developing start-ups in the active and healthy ageing field during AHATHON 2 (June 2024), where 8 teams (33 people) participated in a two-day mentoring process, culminating in the winning team receiving about four mentoring sessions lasting approximately

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3.5 hours in the first phase. From June till October, additional mentoring activities were undertaken by PL team, including:

- Phone calls to all teams that participated in AHATHON 2
- Mails to all teams giving additional options for consultation and gaining new ideas about options for having funding for their business
- As all members of AHATHON 1 and AHATHON2 are members of the network with PL team, they received mentoring with information every two weeks in form of INNOVATION BREAKFAST (organized by LSK)

All other teams were presented with an offer to participate in the mentoring process (apart from the mentoring support during the events), but no one outside the winning team expressed interest in such direct mentoring activities as extensively offered. However, they had the option for participating in mentoring individual consultation if needed, and inspired for example thanks to innovation breakfast.

The teams at the events were assembled from people who did not know each other beforehand, and some did not want to continue working together. However, they could be interested in further developing their ideas individually. This option was also available and offered by e-mails.

- **2.1.2 Mentoring Process**:
    - **Mentor and mentee selection process**

The mentors dedicated to the winning teams represented mainly the business community. Business mentors could offer valuable support to social innovators by sharing practical experience, helping to create strategies and develop management skills. They also could facilitate access to networks, support the scaling of projects and help solve problems. With their support, social initiatives can gain credibility, effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

As previously stated, those who received mentoring support are members of the winning teams in the event. What is important, however, is that during both editions of the event, all participants had **full access for 2 days to a group of mentors** - experts in various fields whose experience covered the full range of potential mentoring support. The mentors present during the meetings represented a broad environment - the entire social innovation ecosystem. Mentors represented the business community, academia, public administration and NGOs.

Having mentors from business, academia, public administration, and NGOs provides key benefits. It offers diverse perspectives, combining business, research, policy, and social impact insights. This cross-sector expertise helps innovators create balanced, sustainable solutions. Mentors also open up broader networks, increase project credibility, and encourage creative problem-solving, leading to more comprehensive and effective social innovations.

- **Data Collection**:

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Throughout the mentoring process, participants' needs were continuously assessed to ensure alignment with their evolving goals and challenges. Feedback on these needs was collected through face-to-face interviews, supplemented by regular check-ins via telephone and email, allowing for timely adjustments and personalized support.

- **Evaluation Framework**:

As the mentoring process in Poland was somewhat different from that in other regions, the evaluation of mentoring also had to be adapted to the changing needs of the mentoring participants. An ongoing evaluation was carried out in the mentoring process, focusing on ensuring that the mentoring met the needs of the mentees.

Key criteria

- **Goal alignment**: were the mentee's personal and professional goals identified and aligned with the mentoring objectives?
- **Engagement level**: how regularly did the mentor and mentee meet, and was there active participation from both sides?
- **Mentor feedback**: did the mentor provide constructive feedback, and was it actionable for the mentee's development?
- **Resource provision**: were adequate resources, tools, or connections provided to support the mentee's learning?
- **Communication quality**: was communication clear, open, and respectful throughout the mentoring period?

- **Stakeholders**:

Stakeholders (mentors) represented all the key communities in the region's social innovation ecosystem. Below there are list of them in the II AHAthon.

The mentors brought together a wide range of expertise from various communities within the region's social innovation ecosystem. Their approach was interdisciplinary, ensuring participants received guidance from multiple perspectives. By tailoring mentoring to the specific needs of each team and fostering collaboration, the event encouraged synergy across different domains and promoted innovative solutions.

Business:

1. Agnieszka Podkowa – Krakow Technology Park
2. Renata Fryc – Life Science Krakow
3. Kazimierz Murzyn – Life Science Krakow
4. Hubert Borecki – B&W MED
5. Bolesław Kurczab – Farmabol
6. Paweł Olborski - PallMed
7. Emilia Branny-Jankowska – EPAM System Poland
8. Ludmiła Frydrych - Krakow Technology Park

Public administration:

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9. Karolina Wałocha – Regional Center for Social Policy
10. Dominika Marszałek-Rojek – Regional Center for Social Policy
11. Jerzy Fugas - Municipality of Malopolska Voivodship

Academia:

12. Dorota Gierszewski – The Jagiellonian University

NGO:

13. Aleksander Dymek - District Pharmacy Chamber Cracow
14. Andrzej Lejczak – Phd, Polish Chamber of Long Term Care Facilities

Throughout the event, the KPT (Agnieszka Włodarczyk-Gębik) and Jagiellonian University (Joanna Kwinta-Odrzywołek, Anna Szczucka) teams were continuously available to provide support.

- **KPT** was responsible for mentoring in the field of technological innovations, offering expertise and guidance to teams developing tech-driven solutions.
- **UJ** focused on social innovations, supporting participants in addressing social challenges through creative and impactful approaches.
    - **Timeline of mentoring activities:**

Table 1: Group mentoring. Unlimited access to mentors present during the event

	Project	Number of participants	Number of mentors	Number of hours (the presence of mentors)
AHATHON I	Sąsiadex	5	5	14
	My i Wy	6		
	Klub wdzięczności	5		
	Prężne umysły	5		
	AHA!	6		
	TOTAL	**27**	**5**	**14**
AHATHON II	Edisonda	3	14	8
	IGWA	4		
	Atomówki	3		
	IKS	4		
	Balicka	7		
	Silver Sparks	3		
	Lecostar Team	4		
	Chłopcy WIMIRowcy	4		
	TOTAL	**32**	**14**	**8**

I AHATHON. 30-31.11.2023, 01.12.2023

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1 day: 10.00-18.00 = 6 h (group mentoring)

2 day: 09.00-17.00 = 8h (group mentoring)

II AHATHON. 13-14. 06.2024

1 day:10.00-18.00 = 6 h (group mentoring)

2 day: 9.00-11.00 = 2 h (group mentoring)

Mentors: 14 mentors

1. Agnieszka Podkowa – Krakow Technology Park
2. Renata Fryc – Life Science Krakow
3. Kazimierz Murzyn – Life Science Krakow
4. Karolina Wałocha – Regional Center for Social Policy
5. Dominika Marszałek-Rojek – Regional Center for Social Policy
6. Dorota Gierszewski – The Jagiellonian University
7. Hubert Borecki – B&W MED
8. Aleksander Dymek - District Pharmacy Chamber Cracow
9. Jerzy Fugas - Municipality of Malopolska Voivodship
10. Bolesław Kurczab – Farmabol
11. Andrzej Lejczak – Phd, Polish Chamber of Long Term Care Facilities
12. Paweł Olborski - PallMed
13. Emilia Branny-Jankowska – EPAM System Poland
14. Ludmiła Frydrych - Krakow Technology Park

Figure 1: The photo shows the team working during the event. In the background, on the board, the silhouettes of the mentors available for the duration of the event



Report with mentoring activities as timeline (number of hours and used tools) additionally after the **AHAthon I** is set out in the table below:

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Table 2: Mentoring for the winning team (AHAthon I)

Number of hours	Form	Tools and activities
2	on-line	Introductory meeting, determining the scope of work, the status of the idea development and the next step - the meeting.
3	offline	design thinking, scrum, agile, lean
3	offline	design thinking, scrum, agile, lean
3	offline	design thinking, scrum, agile, lean
2	offline	co-creation session, workshop
3	offline	design thinking, scrum, agile, lean
16 h TOTAL		

Timeline (number of hours and used tools) for AHAthon II is set out in the table below:

Table 3: Mentoring for the winning team - EDISONDA (AHAthon II)

Number of hours	Form	Tools and activities
1	on-line	Introductory meeting, SWOT analysis, exploratory interview, stakeholder mapping
0,5	offline	design consultancy, design thinking
0,5	offline	feedback loop, analysis of customer needs
1,5	offline	analysis of funding opportunities, storytelling in presentations
3,5 h TOTAL		

Mentoring methodologies included:

- **Co-mentoring**: Mentors from various fields collaborated to offer comprehensive support, fostering idea and experience sharing. Giving comments and asking the questions about ideas suggested;
- **Design Thinking**: Guided teams through empathy, problem definition, ideation, prototyping, and testing to develop innovative solutions;
- **Agile**: Allowed rapid iterations and adjustments based on feedback for fast development and implementation.
- **SWOT Analysis**: Assessed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of proposed solutions;
- **User Feedback Loop**: Continuous consultations with seniors enabled quick improvements;
- **Stakeholder Analysis**: Helped teams identify key stakeholders and their influence.
- **Persona Creation**: Developed user profiles to better understand seniors' needs.

    - **Key focus areas:**

The main topics of the mentoring process covered several critical areas:

1. **Assessment of current status**: involved evaluating the team's initial position, including the stage of their project, the resources available, and any existing challenges. Mentors helped participants gain a clear understanding of their

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project's starting point and provided insights into areas that needed improvement or further development;

2. **Needs analysis**: Mentors guided the teams in identifying the key needs of their target audience, particularly focusing on the specific social issues they aimed to address. This step ensured that the solutions being developed were aligned with the real needs of the community, especially in the context of the aging population.
3. **Training offer**: Teams were provided with training to enhance their skills in areas crucial to their project's success. These skills included workshops on innovation, project management, communication, and user-centered design. The training helped the teams build the necessary set of competencies to advance their solutions effectively and successfully;
4. **Verification of progress**: Throughout the mentoring process, regular check-ins were held to assess the teams' progress. Mentors reviewed their development, provided constructive feedback, and helped them adjust their strategies where needed. This ensured that teams remained on track and could address challenges as they arose;
5. **Project Funding**: Mentors also discussed potential funding avenues for the projects. This included exploring grants, partnerships, and sponsorship opportunities to support the implementation and scaling of the solutions.

- **Challenges encountered during the mentoring process**

It seems that the challenges were mainly related to the diversity of the groups (diversity of age, diversity of experiences and goals). The challenges encountered during the mentoring process were:

1. **Communication barriers**: Participants from diverse backgrounds sometimes struggled to understand each other, leading to confusion;
2. **Differing expectations**: Some mentors focused on business viability while teams prioritized social impact, causing misalignment and tension in collaboration;
3. **Time management**: Teams had difficulty balancing mentoring sessions with other commitments, resulting in missed opportunities for guidance;
4. **Varying levels of experience**: Differences in experience sometimes led to imbalances in contributions, with less experienced members feeling overshadowed.

- **2.1.3 Results Achieved**:
  - **Success stories:**

Since, unlike in Germany and Catalonia, the social innovations developed during the events in Poland were at a very early stage, it is not yet possible to speak of the implementation of innovations, but the initial interest in the project of one of the municipalities near Krakow should be regarded as an undoubted success.

The regional visit in Dobczyce[1] , where the INTEGER project and Sasiadex pilot were presented to key leaders, is recognized as a significant success for several reasons:

[1]The visit included policy makers, with end-users and with representatives of the Regional Vice-Governor as well as PL team of the project

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1. **High-level engagement**: involvement of the vice-governor and local mayors shows strong regional support for social initiatives, which can lead to greater advocacy and resources;
2. **Strategic networking**: establishing relationships with influential stakeholders enhances collaboration opportunities for future initiatives;
3. **Local alignment**: the project's goals were aligned with the needs of the Dobczyce community, increasing the likelihood of community support;
4. **Demonstrated impact**: showcasing innovative solutions highlighted their potential benefits for social care, building trust with local leaders;
5. **Valuable feedback**: engagement provided insights that can refine and improve the projects based on real-world needs;
6. **Increased visibility**: the presentation raised awareness and credibility for the INTEGER project, attracting further support and funding;
7. **Encouraging investment**: successful presentations can lead to increased local investment, providing resources for scaling and sustaining initiatives;**Participatory approach** of end-users (older persons for whom the idea was presented).

The Edisonda Team, winners of AHAthon II, developed an innovative solution: Lekko, designed to support doctors, caregivers, and patients in managing prescriptions and medications. After an intensive interdisciplinary mentoring process during AHAthon II and further mentoring support post-event, the team had the opportunity to present their project at Life Science Open Space (LSOS) 28-29.11. 2024, organized by the LifeScience Kraków Cluster.

During the event, Edisonda had the valuable opportunity to participate in a pitching session, presenting their idea to leading experts from the life science, healthcare, and social innovation sectors. The event brought together representatives from over 80 organizations, companies, and startups, all showcasing groundbreaking solutions, making it a key platform for fostering innovation and collaboration.

This is a great example of the efficiency of the planned activities within the INTEGER project and the importance of a flexible and interdisciplinary approach in supporting startups and project teams. Collaboration with a broad network of mentors and the opportunity to present at key industry events, such as LSOS 2024, increases the chances of commercializing innovative solutions and further developing projects emerging from AHAthon.

- **Testimonials or feedback from participants:**

1. What were the main benefits you gained from the mentorship sessions?

The mentoring sessions were valuable because they allowed ideas to be refined and the project to be developed with the support of an expert. It was also an opportunity to better understand the target groups, e.g. older persons, and to improve presentation skills.

2. What key lessons did you learn that you will take with you?

The most important lesson was the importance of clear communication and precise roles and responsibilities at each stage of the project. I learned that refining an idea is one thing, but implementing it requires a much more concrete plan and adequate resources. I also

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appreciated the importance of understanding the needs of the project audience and the need to tailor the concept to their expectations. It is also important to know from the outset whether the project is intended to be an exercise or an actual implementation - the difference makes a difference to the approach.

3. Is there any advice you would share with someone else who is on a similar journey of turning an idea into reality, based on what you have learned from INTEGER?

I would recommend making sure from the start who will support the implementation of the project and how, and what resources are available. It is important to understand exactly what the purpose of the event is, e.g. whether it is a conceptual exercise or a drive towards implementation. Working with the right mentors, particularly on business and operational issues, can significantly accelerate progress. You also need to be flexible, open to change and ask questions when something is not clear - this is key to avoiding unnecessary misunderstandings.

- **2.1.4 Lessons Learned**:

The first edition of the AHAthon highlighted the importance of social innovations in the regional economy. Polish partners effectively promoted Active Healthy Ageing through various initiatives, including the AHAthons. For KPT, this led to new opportunities by attracting interest from healthcare providers, senior care organizations, and social innovation enterprises, resulting in increased awareness and partnerships focused on enhancing the quality of life for older adults. This success demonstrated the potential for innovative solutions beyond their traditional ICT focus.

At UJ, new initiatives emerged, such as the Incubator of Social Innovations project and Demo Day 4.0 (March 2024). Building on the success of the first AHAthon, KPT organized a second edition to further emphasize the role of social innovations in improving older adults' quality of life and to strengthen KPT's commitment to these initiatives. By continuing to host such events, Polish partners aim to diversify their activities, promote socially responsible innovations, and enhance the regional innovation ecosystem. Additionally, they are preparing for the second AHAthon, seeking to engage more regional stakeholders and the general public.

The AHAthon initiative yielded several important lessons. First, collaboration with diverse stakeholders is essential, as it enhances project outcomes and fosters valuable partnerships. Focusing on the specific needs of the aging population ensures that social innovations remain relevant and effective. Additionally, exploring innovative solutions beyond traditional sectors can significantly improve the quality of life for older adults.

2.2 Hamburg

- **2.2.1 Overview of the projects involved:**

RIS: Advancing Socio-Political Dialogue Through Innovation

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The RIS initiative aims to foster socio-political dialogue as an integral part of the innovation process. One of its key achievements is the creation of AUFBRUCH.Hamburg - Together for a City Worth Living In, a central showcase for Hamburg's innovation ecosystem. This initiative enhances interdisciplinary collaboration among stakeholders interested in innovation, facilitates socio-political dialogue on key topics, bridges connections between business and academia, and integrates cultural and artistic dimensions into the innovation landscape.By focusing on societal benefits and Hamburg's future-oriented priorities, the project has established centralized, inclusive access for a diverse array of stakeholders and topics. Through a wide variety of interactive formats and events addressing exciting future challenges, the HUB has become a vibrant, central innovation center. Its mission is to engage broader society, strengthen Hamburg's position as a hub for innovation, and amplify the city's visibility as a metropolis driving sustainable progress.

Coordinated by a dedicated management team, the HUB has already launched numerous networking events and topic-specific initiatives to advance Hamburg's socially relevant goals. These activities promote collaboration, encourage participation, and enhance the visibility of Hamburg's innovation ecosystem on a global scale.

Impact Hub

105 VIERTEL, a non-profit social enterprise, envisions making Hamburg the most inclusive and dynamic city in the world for its 105 districts ("Stadtviertel"). Acting as a startup, accelerator, and incubator, it supports ventures in culture, education, inclusion, and sustainability while fostering growth both for itself and others.

In alignment with this mission, 105 VIERTEL has applied for ownership of the Impact Hub Hamburg license within the Global Impact Hub network. The initial motion has been approved, and the application is now under due diligence. Regardless of the outcome, 105 VIERTEL remains committed to connecting and enabling the impact entrepreneurship community while advancing sustainable and inclusive innovation at scale.

Through the **105 VIERTEL Impact Accelerator**, impact-driven startups address critical challenges, achieving growth, professionalism, and meaningful impact. Tailored mentorship and expert guidance strengthen Hamburg's impact economy, empowering startups to navigate complex ecosystems while creating social value.

AiDiA: Empowering Afro-German Entrepreneurs

AiDiA, developed in collaboration with the non-profit organization **BOLDLY e.V.**, is Germany's first Afro-German startup pitch event. This initiative aims to promote Black entrepreneurs, addressing the unique challenges they face due to historical and structural barriers.

By providing recognition, support, and opportunities for knowledge exchange, AiDiA seeks to change the status quo, fostering inclusivity and innovation in the entrepreneurial landscape.

StartupPort: Enabling Entrepreneurial Success

At **StartupPort**, we are dedicated to supporting founders on their entrepreneurial journeys. From business ideation to market entry, our tailored mentorship and expert guidance ensure a strong foundation for success.

We specialize in supporting startups with a social or sustainable focus, recognizing the additional complexities of creating cost-effective business models in these areas. Our incubators provide infrastructure, expertise, and a thriving ecosystem, integrating young companies into a network where they can grow and thrive.

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Körber Foundation: Advancing Social Dialogue and Innovation

Established in 1959 by entrepreneur Kurt A. Körber, the **Körber Foundation** is a nationally and internationally active organization committed to addressing societal challenges through dialogue, networks, and collaborations. With an annual budget of approximately €26 million and assets of €578 million, the foundation supports a broad range of charitable projects, focusing on innovation, civic engagement, and social improvement.

Key initiatives include:

- **KörberForum**: Hosting 80+ public events annually in Hamburg's HafenCity to foster discussions on socially relevant topics.
- **Körber Start-Hub**: Providing resources and programs for young entrepreneurs to establish socially impactful startups.
- **KörberHaus**: A space in Hamburg-Bergedorf dedicated to intergenerational and intercultural collaboration, promoting vibrant civil society engagement.
- **Shared Civic Spaces**: Offering infrastructure and event spaces for non-profits, schools, and cultural organizations.
- **Capital City Office**: Located in Berlin, it facilitates dialogue among decision-makers in politics, science, and think tanks to address pressing societal challenges.

Through its extensive resources and partnerships, the Körber Foundation creates spaces for innovation, dialogue, and inclusive societal development.

- **2.2.2 Mentoring Process**:

The process in Hamburg was structured with a strategic focus on maximizing efficiency and avoiding redundancy. Information and methods developed in work package 3 were carefully passed on to the mentoring organizations already operating within the region. These organizations, which had established networks and expertise, were then able to seamlessly integrate the new tools, resources, and strategies into their existing workflows. This approach ensured that the newly introduced methods did not require the creation of entirely new structures, but rather enhanced the current processes.

A significant advantage of this cascading model was the avoidance of duplication of efforts. Instead of initiating parallel programs or interventions, the resources and insights from work package 3 were absorbed into the established mentoring programs. This allowed for a smoother transition and more effective use of the available support infrastructure.

Moreover, the established mentoring organizations already had direct access to a network of start-up companies, making it possible to reach these entrepreneurs without the need for additional outreach efforts. By leveraging these pre-existing channels, the process was able to scale quickly and efficiently, providing support to start-ups that were already familiar with the mentors and systems in place. This continuity helped ensure that the integration of new methods was not only swift but also had a direct and immediate impact on the entrepreneurs, contributing to the overall success of the initiative in Hamburg.

This cascade model ultimately proved to be an effective and sustainable approach to disseminating new ideas and methods. It allowed for a rapid uptake of innovative practices within the existing mentoring framework, ensuring that the resources reached those who

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needed them most, without the need for duplicating efforts or building entirely new structures. The integration of work package 3 into the established mentoring systems maximized impact and streamlined the process, benefiting both mentors and start-up companies alike.

- **2.2.3 Results Achieved**:

Hamburg Aufbruch serves as a public entity acting directly on behalf of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, making it a key player in the implementation of this project. Due to its public status, Hamburg Aufbruch is required to provide data and information, ensuring transparency and accountability. In contrast, other involved stakeholders operate in a decentralized manner, and as such, no additional data is currently available from them. Given this structure, the project places a strong emphasis on the activities coordinated by the City of Hamburg.

The following metrics reflect the scope and impact of the project's activities as facilitated by Hamburg Aufbruch:

1. Counselling Sessions: Number of initial and referral counselling sessions: 98
These sessions were aimed at providing targeted support to individuals and organizations, ensuring clear pathways for action and follow-up where needed.

2. Public Events: Number of multiplier, information, and publicity events organized: 23
These events served to raise awareness, disseminate information, and engage a broad audience to amplify the project's objectives and outcomes.

3. Mentoring Events: Number of mentoring events: 8 (average duration: 2 hours per session)
These mentoring sessions focused on delivering tailored guidance and expertise to participants, enhancing their skills and capacity to contribute to the project's goals.

- **2.2.4 Lessons Learned**:

  - **Social Innovation** addresses societal challenges by creating solutions that bridge gaps in existing systems, aiming for long-term positive change, especially where traditional systems have failed.
  - **Mentoring in Social Innovation** accelerates the journey for social entrepreneurs, particularly from underrepresented groups. Mentors help with navigating challenges, avoiding mistakes, and connecting to partners and funding, while also assisting in task prioritization.
  - **Focus Areas for Mentoring** include validation, as social entrepreneurs often face skepticism about their ideas. Mentoring should be flexible, adapting to evolving challenges and needs as the entrepreneur's project develops.
  - **Flexibility and Collaboration** are key in mentoring. Entrepreneurs may not initially know their main challenges, so mentors must remain adaptable, establishing clear expectations and combining mentoring with coaching to empower mentees in decision-making.
  - **Future of Mentoring** will involve integrated support systems offering not just guidance, but also resources like funding, marketing, and leadership development, enhancing the efficiency and impact of social entrepreneurs.

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- **Empowering Entrepreneurs** through balanced mentoring helps them drive sustainable and impactful innovations. The evolving role of mentoring is crucial in shaping the future of social entrepreneurship.

In summary, mentoring plays a vital role in helping social innovators overcome challenges and make a lasting impact, with future mentorship networks offering broader support and resources.

2.3 Catalonia

- **2.3.1 Overview of the projects and stakeholders involved:**

Four of the six projects participating in the Col·laborathon were selected to engage in an intensive mentoring process. The Col·laborathon, a dynamic event designed to accelerate early-stage social and health projects in Catalonia, serves as a platform for fostering innovation and addressing regional challenges. These events are specifically tailored to identify and nurture innovative solutions by promoting collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Emphasizing the social dimension of innovation, the Col·laborathon actively involves multiple actors, enabling the testing of multi-level governance approaches and the creation of synergies between policies and funding mechanisms. The ultimate aim of the Col·laborathon is to develop transformative solutions that deliver wide-ranging benefits across society, including economic growth, environmental sustainability, workforce development, and enhanced social cohesion. The projects were the following:

1. **FoodCLIC:** Promoting healthy and sustainable eating habits in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona. The project originated from a multi-organization pilot program involving 25 organizations. It was supported by the **Fit4FoodBcn** initiative and the **Barcelona CaixaResearch Living Lab**.
    - **Mentored**: Rosina Malagrida, Laia Vives, Marina Pino.
2. **Memima:** Developing a mobile application to enhance children's cognitive, linguistic, and creative skills through music education for parents.
    - **Mentored**: Albert Munné.
3. **Healthy Cities:** Creating an online tool to assess the health impacts of urban planning, offering actionable insights to improve urban health.
    - **Mentored**: Marta Rofín.
4. **SeniorLab**: Addressing the challenges of an aging society through the co-creation of innovative models, processes, and services in collaboration with committed entities.
    - **Mentored**: Karina Simieli, Lluis Pajellà, Jordi Rodríguez.

- **2.3.2 Mentoring Process**:

The mentorship sessions were conducted biweekly online over two and a half months, from May 31, 2024, to July 29, 2024, via the Microsoft Teams platform. Each session lasted one hour and provided a structured, accessible framework for advancing project development. These

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sessions were coordinated and led by a member of the Integer team, fostering consistent interaction between the entrepreneurs and their respective mentors.

At the start of the mentorship program, a comprehensive questionnaire was administered to assess the initial status of each project, identifying key challenges from the perspective of the innovators. This was followed by a business analysis in the first session, comparing the challenges highlighted by the innovators with those observed by the mentors. During each session, actionable tasks were assigned to the innovation teams to address identified gaps and areas for improvement. Progress was reviewed in subsequent sessions, culminating in a final questionnaire at the end of the mentorship period to measure overall progress and gather participant feedback. Continuous feedback from innovators was collected throughout to ensure the mentorship process remained adaptive and responsive to evolving needs.

- Data Collection: During each mentoring session, a representative from the university was responsible for taking detailed notes to document all feedback and discussions. This systematic approach ensured that every interaction, suggestion, and observation was captured for later analysis. Additionally, with the consent of all participants, the sessions were recorded to provide a comprehensive reference for reviewing the nuances of the mentorship process.

  These notes and recordings serve as a valuable dataset for studying the impact of the mentorship process, allowing for a deeper understanding of its effectiveness and areas for improvement. The collected data will be analyzed to evaluate the outcomes and dynamics of the mentorship, with the findings contributing to the development of a scientific paper. This paper aims to provide evidence-based insights into the mentorship model, highlighting its role in fostering innovation and collaboration among diverse stakeholders.

- Methodologies and Tools Employed
  Several methodologies and tools were employed to enhance the strategic development of the projects:
  Business Model Canvas: Visualizing and designing clear business models.
  SWOT and CAME Analyses: Identifying internal and external factors impacting projects.
  Benchmarking: Conducting comparative analyses with competitors and industry leaders.
  Innovation Resources: Encouraging creativity and disruptive thinking.
  Financial Management Strategies: Establishing robust and transparent financial systems.
  Balanced Scorecards: Providing a comprehensive view of project performance.
  Leadership Development: Strengthening management skills and fostering adaptability.
  Agile Methodologies: Streamlining project management processes.
  Automation Tools: Optimizing repetitive processes for efficiency.

The mentorship sessions provided invaluable support for the entrepreneurs, helping them refine their understanding of target customers, articulate compelling value propositions, and align their projects with market needs. By introducing strategic tools and methodologies,

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mentors empowered participants to build robust business models, improve operational efficiency, and position their projects for long-term success.

The program successfully created a collaborative space where expertise and innovation merged, resulting in significant advancements for each project while fostering resilience, creativity, and strategic thinking among the entrepreneurs.

- **2.3.3 Results Achieved**:

The results achieved across all projects involved in the mentorship process have been highly successful. The application of structured methodologies, including the Business Model Canvas, SWOT analysis, and Balanced Scorecards, coupled with tailored guidance from mentors, has significantly contributed to the growth and development of each initiative.

All participating projects affirmed that the mentorship sessions enabled them to gain clarity in their strategic direction and adopt a more focused approach to achieving their objectives. The structured process helped the entrepreneurs prioritize their efforts, refine their understanding of market dynamics, and align their activities with long-term goals.

The mentoring process was instrumental in fostering a deeper understanding of key areas such as customer engagement, financial planning, and operational efficiency. As a result, all projects reported marked improvements in their ability to progress effectively, with a clearer focus on actionable outcomes. This demonstrates the value of collaborative mentorship in driving innovation and ensuring sustainable growth for early-stage initiatives.

To consolidate and disseminate these findings, a scientific paper is currently being prepared to document and analyze the results achieved throughout this process, highlighting the impact of the methodologies and mentorship on project development and growth.

- **2.3.4 Lessons Learned**:

The mentorship process in Catalonia underscored the critical importance of fostering interconnections among key agents—academia, social innovators, and mentors—through structured dialogues. These connections played a pivotal role in strengthening the focus and development of the projects, highlighting several key lessons:

  - Academia: Bridging Research and Practice

  Academia brought valuable theoretical insights and evidence-based approaches to the mentorship process. Researchers provided analytical frameworks and methodologies, enriching the strategic planning and problem-solving processes for the projects.

  Academic involvement ensured that the projects were grounded in rigorous methodologies, fostering a robust foundation for addressing challenges. However, it also became evident that academia's practical engagement with projects needed to be well-structured to translate theoretical knowledge into actionable strategies effectively.

  - Social Innovators: Driving Practical Solutions

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Social innovators served as a bridge between theory and practice, offering creative and community-driven approaches to tackling societal challenges. Their hands-on experience in implementing solutions added a layer of practicality to the mentoring process.

Social innovators were instrumental in fostering a dynamic and collaborative environment, enabling the projects to better align their goals with real-world societal needs. Their participation highlighted the value of integrating local expertise and grassroots innovation into broader strategic frameworks.

- Facilitating Dialogues: Strengthening Project Focus

Structured dialogues between the projects, mentors, and stakeholders created a collaborative space for exchanging ideas, refining goals, and aligning efforts. These discussions helped identify gaps and opportunities, allowing projects to sharpen their focus.

The facilitated interactions demonstrated the importance of continuous communication and feedback loops. By fostering open dialogue, the mentorship process encouraged critical thinking, adaptive problem-solving, and a stronger alignment of projects with their intended impact areas.

The mentorship process in Catalonia highlighted the power of interconnections among academia, social innovators, and mentors in driving project's success. Academia provided theoretical rigor, social innovators brought practical expertise, and structured dialogues facilitated alignment and focus. Together, these elements created a comprehensive and supportive environment that enabled projects to clarify their objectives, strengthen their strategies, and maximize their potential impact. Future mentoring programs can build on these lessons by prioritizing the integration of diverse stakeholders and fostering continuous, facilitated exchanges to further enhance project outcomes.

Some of the impacts achieved through the mentorship process are highlighted in the following video, featuring testimonials from both mentors and mentees in Catalonia: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U89lO9qUShs

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3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL OUTCOMES

The mentoring processes implemented in Krakow, Hamburg, and Catalonia reveal distinct approaches tailored to regional contexts, while also sharing common elements that foster collaboration and innovation. Each region adapted its methods to address specific needs and challenges, resulting in unique yet complementary strategies.

In Krakow, the mentoring process centered on group mentoring during intensive events such as the AHAthon. These events, focused on active and healthy aging, featured full-day workshops where teams worked with mentors from diverse sectors, including academia, business, and public administration. The initial engagement provided a comprehensive but short-term opportunity for participants to develop their ideas, followed by phone and email consultations for ongoing support. Winning teams received more structured, long-term mentoring, which emphasized intergenerational collaboration and solutions to societal challenges such as communication and transportation barriers for aging populations.

Hamburg's approach, on the other hand, was characterized by centralized coordination through public entities like Hamburg Aufbruch. This ensured alignment with regional objectives and transparency in the mentoring process. Mentoring activities were integrated with broader initiatives, such as RIS and 105 VIERTEL, which aimed to foster innovation through networking events, public sessions, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The Hamburg process addressed a broad range of themes, including entrepreneurship, cultural inclusion, and sustainability, while promoting socio-political dialogue as a key driver of innovation.

Catalonia adopted a highly structured and individualized mentoring process through its Col·laborathon initiative. Conducted biweekly over two and a half months, the sessions provided consistent, one-on-one engagement between entrepreneurs and mentors. This approach used strategic tools such as the Business Model Canvas, SWOT analysis, and benchmarking to guide project development. Feedback loops and continuous data collection ensured the mentorship process remained adaptive to participants' evolving needs. The integration of academia, social innovators, and mentors strengthened project strategies and highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Despite these differences between the regions, these are as well shared sommon characteristics A main one is that all processes involved diverse stakeholders, including mentors from academia, business, public administration, and NGOs, ensuring a broad range of perspectives enriched the mentoring experience. A focus on social innovation was central to each process, with projects designed to address real-world challenges such as aging populations, cultural inclusion, and health. Additionally, all regions prioritized capacity building, equipping participants with tools and strategies to scale their projects effectively. Collaborative learning was another shared element, with dialogues between mentors and mentees playing a critical role in refining project goals.

While the methods varied from Region to Region —ranging from Krakow's group workshops to Catalonia's structured one-on-one sessions and Hamburg's centralized coordination—all regions demonstrated a commitment to fostering impactful social innovation. Together, these

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processes reflect a shared emphasis on collaboration, innovation, and the empowerment of participants to create meaningful and sustainable changes within their communities, by reinforcing regional networks and better awareness of challenges and possible solutions.

Once the project and the mentoring process are completed, a key concern is ensuring the **sustainability of the project** and maintaining connections among participants. To address this, all regions have established strong networks and collaborations with the projects involved, fostering long-term engagement and support. These connections are crucial for sustaining the impact of the mentoring process, allowing for the continuous exchange of knowledge, best practices, and mutual support beyond the official project timeline. By maintaining active communication and collaboration, the initiative aims to ensure the long-term sustainability of the outcomes, reinforcing the positive effects achieved and enabling future opportunities for growth and development.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The completion of this project marks a significant milestone in advancing social innovation across Krakow, Hamburg, and Catalonia. The diverse methodologies and strategies implemented in these regions demonstrate the potential of tailored mentoring processes to address regional challenges while fostering collaboration and impactful solutions. Throughout the project, the integration of diverse stakeholders, innovative methodologies, and adaptive approaches emerged as critical factors in achieving meaningful outcomes.

In Krakow, the focus on group mentoring during intensive events like the AHAthon underscored the value of immersive collaboration for addressing the needs of aging populations. By engaging multi-generational teams and providing follow-up support to the most promising initiatives, the process highlighted the importance of flexibility in responding to participant needs. The emphasis on active and healthy aging aligned with the region's priorities and showcased how targeted mentoring could drive innovation in social care.

In Hamburg, the centralized coordination through entities like Hamburg Aufbruch demonstrated the power of aligning mentoring efforts with regional objectives. By integrating mentoring with broader initiatives such as RIS and 105 VIERTEL, Hamburg successfully created a dynamic ecosystem of innovation. The inclusion of socio-political dialogue as a core element enriched the mentoring process, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and amplifying the city's position as a hub for sustainable progress.

In Catalonia, the Col·laborathon provided a structured, long-term mentoring process that emphasized individualized support and the use of strategic tools such as the Business Model Canvas and SWOT analysis. The integration of academia, social innovators, and mentors created a holistic environment that encouraged resilience, adaptability, and a clear focus on project goals. The scientific analysis of the mentorship process further highlights the region's commitment to evidence-based innovation.

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Across all three regions, several common themes emerged. The projects successfully fostered multi-stakeholder collaboration, leveraging the expertise of academia, business, public administration, and civil society. A consistent emphasis on addressing real-world challenges through innovative, socially impactful solutions united the processes, despite their unique regional adaptations. Capacity building was central, equipping participants with the skills and strategies necessary to scale their initiatives effectively. Collaborative learning played a vital role, enabling meaningful dialogue between mentors and mentees to refine project goals and enhance outcomes.

As the project concludes, the collective achievements reflect a shared vision for social innovation that transcends regional boundaries. The lessons learned and methodologies developed provide a robust framework for future initiatives. The project demonstrates that mentoring processes, when carefully designed and adapted to local contexts, can be a powerful catalyst for addressing societal challenges and fostering sustainable innovation.

This final report not only captures the successes and challenges encountered but also serves as a testament to the transformative potential of mentorship and collaborative work. As these findings are disseminated—through scientific publications, shared networks, and continued collaborations—they will contribute to a broader understanding of how mentoring can drive impactful, scalable, and socially significant innovations across Europe and beyond.

5. REFERENCES

Through the INTEGER LinkedIn page (INTEGER LinkedIn), we have shared interviews with both mentors and mentees to highlight their experiences, insights, and key takeaways from the mentoring process.

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