



1st cohort Training eReport

CERlecon - CE119
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Playpark Overviews Summary

Young entrepreneurs and company founders often come up with their new and innovative ideas willing to open up new businesses but fail due to an inappropriate or lacking culture in their region. The lack of an entrepreneurial culture and mind-set in Europe often leads to a limited interest in entrepreneurship and the start-ups are confronted with a rocky road ahead. In order to improve the entrepreneurial ecosystem and smoothen the process of building up new businesses seven regions in Central Europe came together for the project “CERlecon”.

The aim of the CERlecon project is to support and encourage young entrepreneurs through an inspiring environment and additional training opportunities to create new firms, create new work places and even give them the chance to change the world with their new products and services. It will contribute to a change in the way entrepreneurs are inspired, trained and supported through a balanced package of strategies, actions plans, pilot actions, training and tools to create new-type comprehensive regional innovation ecosystems in seven Central Europe regions.

Seminars, workshops and mentoring support the development and implementation of business models and convey the necessary entrepreneurial knowledge. An international exchange with startups from the other project regions, network meetings and company visits complete the program.

The start-ups can develop their project at a free workplace for the duration of six months. For this instance, the seven different partners established so-called Playparks. Playparks are co-working spaces, equipped with everything a young entrepreneur needs for successful brainstorming sessions, workshops and mentoring by the supervisors.

Area, equipment and opening hours may differ which is why we take a closer look at the similarities and differences in the following. The biggest playpark with 130 square meters is located in Stuttgart. The playpark program offers 5-7 activities per week such as lectures, mentoring or networking events. The Playparkees are supported by two staff members of the Generator Startup center. The program started with a casual kickoff on April 9th. The first part of the playpark program ends on 22 June with a demo day, where the start-ups pitch their ideas publicly. After that the block of mentoring and internationalization starts.

With 110 square meters playpark Vienna is second biggest. It is open 24/7 and supervised by one staff member. The startups feature social and technological innovation equal parts. Weekly meetings are scheduled. The second cohort started on March 19th and is planned to terminate on June the 19th.



Bratislava also opened the second cohort on March 19. And the startups can work in an area of 78 sqm. Six regular activities are offered on a 2-weeks basis including workshops on entrepreneurial skills. The playpark is open on weekdays from 8am until 6pm.

The Cracovian Playpark is available from 10am to 6pm. 60 square meters house diverse Startups: from medical care to applications for drivers. The playpark offers the possibility to host meetings with business partners in affiliated rooms. Startups are supported in promotion, legal aspects and acquiring investors. Up to four people support the Playparkees.

Playpark Verona is also supervised by four staff members, supporting young entrepreneurs during opening hours weekdays from 9am to 5pm. The current cohort, that has started on April 6th, features business ideas related to the creative industry, Smart-Manufacturing, sustainable living and Agrifood. 12 Startups share the space of 34 square meters with meetings scheduled twice a week.

Playpark Brno offers 50 square meters to 20 startups. The plan is to start the second cohorts with workshops, teaching basic entrepreneurial skills, and later focusing on personal mentoring and consulting.

Startups based in Rijeka are trained in 2 workshops per week and have one key per team for unlimited access to the playpark. Out of 12 teams, there are three teams focused on tourism/traveling sector, one team focused in the sector of maritime affairs, two teams focused on eco-brands and healthy lifestyle sector, three teams from art sector and hand-made products. There are also two teams from IT sector - one focused on big data analytics, and the other focused on flood control systems.

To sum it up: Even though there are minor changes in the design and implementation of the program, the network helps to see the aspects we all have in common. The idea of a playpark is not only creating suiting and free working environments for young entrepreneurs. The most important aspect of the project is creating a European network for company founders and startups where a main part is networking. The Playpark program creates a European network with an inspiring environment across borders. The possibilities of working together and learning from another are endless and enabled through CERlecon.

Further details related to the Playparks can be found in the tables below (in alphabetical order by the regions of CERlecon).



Summary of the 1st regional cohorts' experiences

All seven regional Playparks are established and up and running, the Transnational Trainings for the Playpark staff were implemented, the methodology and the contents of those Trainings were jointly developed. At the moment, all Partners are working on regional solutions to make their respective Playpark sustainable. In Vienna, for instance, the Playpark will be incorporated into the City's strategy on "Learning neighbourhood". After project lifetime, the seven regional Playparks will continue to work together according to the Letter of commitments already signed by the partners.

Contents that were developed in previous projects (e.g. i.e.SMART) will be also incorporated, thus showing in practice that those contents are still relevant and in use.

The purpose of this document is to depict the concept and agenda of the Initial joint transnational training, thus enabling each partner to successfully organize and run the Idea generation Lab and the regional CERlecon Playpark as a whole.

During the joint transnational training, three consultants/mentors/Playpark managers will be qualified to run and deliver all trainings, consulting and mentoring services to cohort members.

Key characteristics:

- Train the trainer/consultant/mentor format
- Workshop style - extremely practice oriented - participants should be able to deliver lectures and/or mentorship to Playpark beneficiaries
- Leveraged with reading materials, tools and other sources (books, webinars, YouTube...)

Key topics:

- Playpark management and startup consulting skills in general
- Idea generation lab
- Innovation management and growth tools
- Startup development and growth tools

All regional Playparks organised regional Idea generation Labs with over 100 participants in total.

In the 1st cohort of regional Playpark trainings, only 52 start-ups and young SMEs were trained to improve their skills and entrepreneurial competences, although according to the AF the number should have reached 70+ start-ups and young SMEs. From ca. 100 business ideas participating in the regional idea generation labs, 52



ideas were chosen to participate in the regional cohort training and mentoring program. To compensate the lower number it was reported that all of the 52 start-ups/young SMEs completed the 6-month 1st cohort training.

The 1st cohort was trained according to the Playpark methodology developed at the regional Playparks and in the network in all six interlinking domains of a functioning ecosystem.

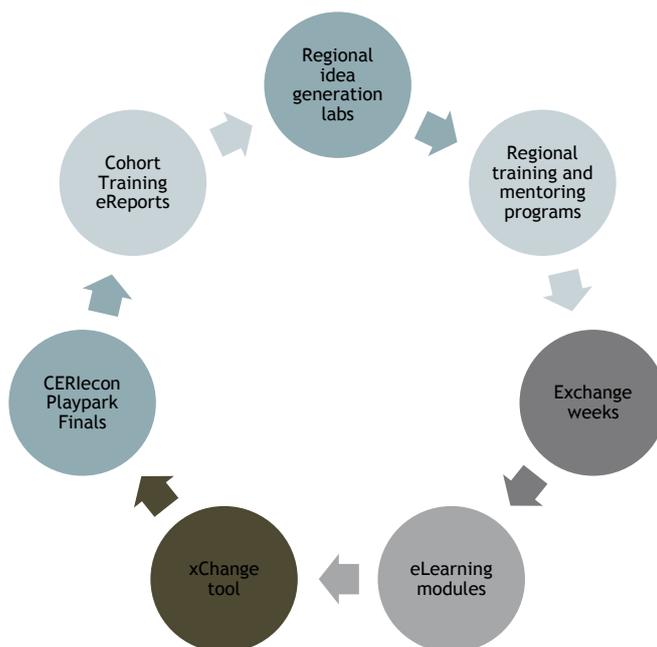


Figure 2: CERlecon Cohort and Training Sub-systems
 Source: CERlecon, 2018

As part of the regional cohort training program, start-ups together with the respective Playpark managers visited another Playpark in the frame of the so called ‘Playpark Exchange week’.

1st cohort Playparks Exchange (5-day)

Based on the success of their RIS3 business idea on the Playpark xChange tool, 12+ firms & 1-2 Playpark staff are chosen per reg. for 5-day work-visits at another Playpark to accelerate SME internationalisation and create new firms

What is the added value of an exchange for CERlecon participants?

The participants can benefit in various ways from the exchange, as it is another possibility to network with other young firms/start-ups from Central Europe and learn about and experience new tools and concepts. It also offers the perfect opportunity for the visiting young firms/start-ups to learn about the national resp. regional RIS3 economic and social emphases of the hosting Playparks.



During the exchange week, the participants meet other young firms/start-ups, which are in a similar situation. At the same time, they get to know other cultures, best practice examples, intercultural communication as soft skills etc. Also hard skills, like further funding structures, creative industries, and business modelling among others can be learned during the week. The focuses can be discussed between the different exchanging partners so that the benefit is as big as possible on both sides.

How the exchange will be organised

The Playpark Exchange will take place between 20 November 2017 and 8 December 2017 (i.e. within three full weeks). Each Playpark should decide on a topic of interest that will be presented during the Exchange week, e.g. creative industries, sustainability-driven entrepreneurship, business modelling, design thinking, pitch preparation, digitalisation etc.

The topic of interest should be decided on by 20 October 2017 and communicated to the other Playparks.

Each Playpark is allowed to send max. twelve participants, plus one to two Playpark staff members in order to exchange and broaden knowledge on different topics of interest. Visiting Playpark staff members can also act as 'guest lecturers' at the hosting Playpark.

Each topic of interest should relate to the application form/RIS3 and also prepare the participants for the Playpark finals (D.T3.2.5). The Exchange week should focus on the training of the visiting young firms/start-ups according to the chosen topic of interest but should also provide enough opportunity and time for networking between the visiting and hosting young firms/start-ups. This will encourage the joint development of transnational/international business ideas.

Before the Exchange week takes place a fine tuning should take place between the hosting and the visiting Playparks. The hosting Playparks will support the visiting Playparks with information about cost-effective accommodation and information about public transport, etc through an extra deliverable called 'Helpful hints dossier'.

The hosting/visiting order for the 1st cohort will be defined in alphabetical order of the participating Playparks: i.e.

- (1) Bratislava is going to
- (2) Brno is going to
- (3) Cracow is going to
- (4) Rijeka is going to
- (5) Stuttgart is going to
- (6) Veneto is going to
- (7) Vienna is going to (1) Bratislava.

Based on this, the 2nd cohort would have the following order:

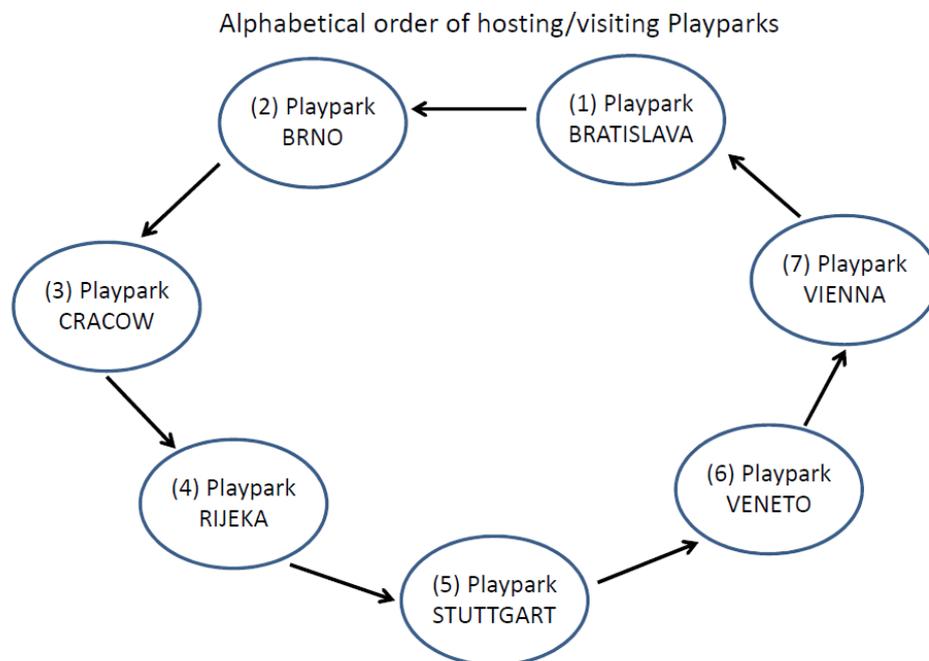
- (1) Bratislava is going to
- (3) Cracow is going to
- (5) Stuttgart is going to



- (7) Vienna is going to
- (2) Brno is going to
- (4) Rijeka is going to
- (6) Veneto is going to (1) Bratislava.

(And analogue for the 3rd cohort.)

The advantage of this model is that within the three cohorts, each Playpark will visit three different Playparks and host three different Playparks meaning that each Playpark will interact with all the other Playparks in the transnational network either through hosting or through visiting.



Suggested schedule for the Exchange week

In the following, a possible schedule for the Exchange week is suggested, which can be adapted to the needs/specific focuses of each Playpark. The schedule simply shows possibilities in order to make it easier for the Playparks to plan the week. The schedule shows different types of activities where both, the young firms/start-ups and Playpark staff have the possibility to network, have fun and also learn something about the new culture. As mentioned, the hosting and visiting Playparks jointly define the exact schedule, the exact types of activities and the exact timeframes before the Exchange week takes place.



	Monday, 27	Tuesday, 28	Wednesday, 29	Thursday, 30	Friday, 1
Morning		Workshop	Getting to know the city	Round table	Summary Evaluation
Afternoon	Arrival + Check-in	Excursion	Networking time	Workshop	Departure
Evening	Welcome Informal get together			Fare-well	

1st cohort Playparks Final (2-day) - Stuttgart (DE)

In order to finish up the 1st cohort in an adequate scenario, The 1st Final was organised in Stuttgart (22-23 February, 2018), where the best start-ups of every region had the chance to pitch their final ideas/products in a transnational competition. An international jury of experts/funding initiatives will choose winners who receive personal coaching sessions

How the participants benefit from the finals

First, it has to be clear what an entrepreneur needs: “An entrepreneur is a risk-taker who invests his time, energy, and/or capital to create a new product, process or service that has resonance within a given community.”¹ Additionally, Ready emphasizes that an entrepreneur needs to find a way to interact with many people (ibid.). This is why CERlecon wants to enable participating entrepreneurs to get in touch with as many people as possible. The first step towards this vision is the exchange between the different regions. To complete this experience the participants get to know a new dimension during the finals.

While the participants can see on which projects the other start-ups are working by using the app, they only have small interaction possibilities through this. A strong network is equivalent to a rich community within the start-ups. This is not the only benefit for the participants when taking part in the finals.

At the same time, the project partner want to enable the participants to get a feedback from an international jury. Having the possibility to get different opinions from the seven partner regions makes up one of the unique characteristics of the CERlecon programme.

When being enabled to participate in a (international) competition, the firms can raise their image immediately due to the media attention and certificates they can show to journalists or even future investors. By appearing in online articles and webpages, they increase their position in search engines, which helps them with their SEO and visibility for the public.

¹ Ready, Kevin (2011): Startup: An Insider’s Guide to Launching and Running a Business, Springer Science+ Business Media:New York, page 1.



The firms can broaden their skills with the newly introduced tools during the finals. Of course, the firms make international contacts and can network during the playpark finals. This strengthens the resonance, interaction and feedback possibilities. Still the participants can learn more during the finals, by attending the different classes offered.

Keeping this in mind, a good foundation is laid for the participants to continue their entrepreneurial journey as they are empowered by this innovative support.

The selection process

According to the application, all firms of the CERlecon project will take part in the finals. At the same time the best ideas should be honoured which is why we decided to put a selection process before.

Each partner region has the possibility to send two teams to the finals in Stuttgart. The teams can be chosen by national prelims or any other selection process the regions consider most suitable to their needs and structures. Still there is one aspect, which each partner region should refer to: According to the application, each region should create 50% of economic and 50% of social entrepreneurs during Playpark. This is why each region should send one firm with economic background and one firm with social background. During the finals, there will be two parallel sessions in order to cope with the diversity of ideas.

The following criteria can be taken as blueprint, in order to find adequate participants: As for the economic firms: Feasibility, Desirability, Viability and Pitch. And for the social firms: Feasibility, Desirability, Sustainability and Pitch.

In order to make a clear and uncomplicated final countdown, 16 teams will be admitted to the finals in Stuttgart. This is where the xChange-tool comes into play. In addition to the 14 teams coming from the regions by the national selection process, two teams of the xScore ranking can take part in the finals. Here again we have to differentiate between the social and the economic aspect, meaning that one of each sector will be admitted. The highest ranked teams of each within the xChange score will be admitted to the finals by 15 December 2017. If one of the first ranked teams already won the national prelims, the next one in the line will be able to go to Stuttgart.

Even though only two teams per region will travel to Stuttgart, all the other firms will appear on the finals by sending in image videos, which will be shown during the two days. In these videos, the firms are supposed to introduce their idea, the team and the current work or a review of the past weeks or months. These videos should not exceed two minutes.

Summary of the feedback of 1st cohorts' start-ups

The first cohort of Playparks was very satisfied with the offers made by the PP in each region. During the SCM 4 in Bratislava, the project partner discussed the process and the evaluation of the first cohort. One observation was that the training program includes similar aspects in all the regions and thanks to the good collaboration, the exchange on PP level went so well that only minor changes in the program have to be taken for the second cohort.

Some PP reported that it was good to start with the early stage start-ups and that for the next cohort they will try to find similar project ideas that are on a same level. The start-ups



reported that they were fully satisfied and only made some suggestions regarding more or different input for the training such as more project related workshops where they can put hands on the stuff they learnt previously. Other feedback was regarding the mentorship that was fully appreciated from all start-ups. Many start-ups said they were very happy to be part of the first cohort of Playparkees and that they learnt a lot not only for their business but also for life. Regarding the exchange there was a lot of positive feedback but some things can be improved such as defining the agenda or preferences on where to go. The last point was already implemented and the LP collected all information on participating start-ups and their wishes for the 2nd cohorts exchange.

The feedback regarding the first cohort finals was really positive and the participants were satisfied with the organization and process. Only some questions arose for the jury members and some of their decisions, which is why it is suggested to choose a comprehensive jury, which represents different stages or addressees for startups: experts, successful startups, business angels but also other people who are affine to start-ups.

From the Playpark program organizers perspective it was a little bit bumpy in the beginning for almost all of the PP because of the deadlines, different starting points of the startups and agreements that had to be made. But after some days it was getting easier and now as all the PP got used to the new working environment all the programs and agreements run more smoothly. For the second cohort it was easier to make up the program, the exchange schedules and all the other events surrounding the Playparks.

Overall the first cohort was a huge success which is why now it's necessary to find a sustainable possibility to continue with the good work.



Overview of the regional Playparks

A. Playpark Bratislava

Area	78 m ²
Begin of the 2nd cohort training	19.3.2018 (cohort opening/Idea Generation Lab) 26.4.2018 (training of participants selected for the program)
End (planned) of the 2nd cohort training	30.9.2018
Location	University Technology Incubator of STU, Pionierska 15, 83102 Bratislava, Slovakia (until 30 th June 2018) University Technology Incubator of STU, Ilkovicova 2, 842 16 Bratislava, Slovakia (from 1 st July 2018 until 31 st May 2019)
Number of staff at the Playpark and number of working hours/week (FTE)	2; 0,75 FTE
Opening hours per week	Monday - Friday 8:00 - 18:00 (until 30 th June 2018) Subject to change from 1 st July 2018 until 31 st May 2019
Weekly calendar	6 regular activities on a 2-weeks basis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 practical entrepreneurial skills training workshop • questions sent by the lecturer to the participants and vice versa before each training workshop in order to focus the activity of both groups and help the participants to make continuous progress toward their project goals • Facebook promotion of the workshop • regular Facebook posts about PP BA activities • continuous mentoring for the participants by the main PP BA mentor • providing the participants with all necessary continuous information by the PP BA manager and staff



B. Playpark Brno

Area (m ²)	50 m ²
Begin of the 2nd cohort training (date)	27.2.2018
End (planned) of the 2nd cohort training (date)	31.8.2018
Location (Full Address)	Lipová 507/41a, 602 00 Brno, Czech Republic
Number of staff at the Playpark and number of working hours/week (FTE)	7 (3 staff/methodology, 4 coaches/methodology) ca. 1 FTE (for all members together)
Opening hours per week (either average number of hours or detailed opening hours)	Every Tuesday (27.2. - 24.4.) from 4pm to 8pm From the end of April to end of August is coming mentoring and individual coaching time according participants needs.
Weekly calendar (which/how many activities are scheduled on a weekly basis?)	First cohort was realized from September 2017 to February 2018. Second cohort is realized from the end of February to August 2018. Playpark Brno has weekly calendar.
What kind of start-ups do you have in your current cohort? What do they focus on?	Most of our start-ups want to prepare solution for real market. In the second cohort we have interesting economy and social projects.



C. Playpark Cracow

Area	60 m2 + if necessary, additional rooms in the building (for example, a cafe for special meetings with business representatives and regional authorities)
Begin of the 2nd cohort training	23.04.2018
End (planned) of the 2nd cohort training	23.10.2018
Location	Os. Centrum B 7, 31-927 Kraków
Number of staff at the Playpark and number of working hours/week (FTE)	4. This data is variable - in the case of hours. Hours are adjusted to the requirements and the current one.
Opening hours per week	10.00 - 18.00 + trainings hours (if they last longer)
Weekly calendar	1-3 + individual meetings with mentors (the number of events depends on the needs of the participants)
What kind of start-ups do you have in your current cohort? What do they focus on?	They are different again. From medicine, through applications for drivers, to help older people. Startups also have different needs: assistance in promotion, information about the law, the basics of doing business, and acquiring investors.



D. Playpark Rijeka

Area	65 m ²
Begin of the 2nd cohort training	27.03.2018 (signing contracts) 10.04.2018 (first workshop)
End (planned) of the 2nd cohort training	27.09.2018
Location	STEP RI, Radmile Matejčić 10, 51000 Rijeka, Croatia
Number of staff at the Playpark and number of working hours/week (FTE)	Playpark staff (8): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Steering Committee Member - 10% - Project Assistant; Strategic Steering Committee Member Substitute - flexible hours - Project Partner Coordinator - 80% - Communication Manager - 20% - Finance Manager - 10% - Playpark Manager - 30% - Playpark Manager Assistant - 10% - Project Assistant - 30%
Opening hours per week	Unlimited access 24/7 (There is one key per team for entering the building and an access card for entering the coworking space; we can monitor the usage of coworking space by Access Control online tool.)
Weekly calendar	The weekly cycle consists of 2 workshops per week (one workshop lasts for 3h which is 6h in total per week) with the following week of mentorship/one-on-one consultations per team (consultation lasts 1-2h per team, which is 12h+ per week). Schedule flow on a monthly basis looks like this: workshops week - mentorship week - workshops week - mentorship week etc.
What kind of start-ups do you have in your current cohort? What do they focus on?	Out of 12 teams, there are three teams focused on tourism/traveling sector, one team focused in the sector of maritime affairs, two teams focused on eco-brands and healthy lifestyle sector, three teams from art sector and hand-made products. There are also two teams from IT sector - one focused on big data analytics, and the other focused on flood control systems. Idea developers and leaders of 7 teams are women.



E. Playpark Stuttgart

Area	130m ²
Begin of the 2nd cohort training	Casual kick-off: 9 April 2018 First training day: 12 April 2018
End (planned) of the 2nd cohort training	15 June 2018 is the last training day and the first block of the Playpark programme ends with a demo day, where the start-ups pitch their ideas publically. After that the block of mentoring and internationalisation starts.
Location	Stuttgart Media University Pavillon Nobelstr. 10 70569 Stuttgart
Number of staff at the Playpark and number of working hours/week (FTE)	2 staff members with 39,5 working hours per week each
Opening hours per week	Monday - Friday: 6am to 9pm/ restricted opening hours up to 12pm; Saturday: 8am to 4pm/ restricted opening hours up to 12pm; Sunday: restricted opening hours from 8am to 12pm.
Weekly calendar	5-7 activities per week (i.e. lectures, mentoring, talks, networking events)



<p>What kind of start-ups do you have in your current cohort? What do they focus on?</p>	<p>As we focus on the creative industries, our start-ups are coming mainly from this area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable wooden files • Story telling by audio tracks for city walks • Music box for children via NFC chips • A platform to categorize news • Staffplaner is a digitalisation strategy for temporary employees • An online platform for newbies in Germany • An app which includes an adaptive cook book • Live stream for art projects • A platform for everyday fashion • A service for IT-jobseekers • A multifunctional hall for artists, art therapy, workshops and events in the evening • Premium jewellery combined with social media coaching for artists
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F. Playpark Verona

Area	34 m ² .
Begin of the 2nd cohort training	The training part of the 2 nd cohort has begun on April 6 th .
End (planned) of the 2nd cohort training	The training part of the 2 nd cohort is planned to end on July 7 th .
Location	ENAIP VENETO - via Bencivenga - Biondani, 1, 37133 Verona (Italy)
Number of staff at the Playpark and number of working hours/week (FTE)	The Verona Playpark has 4 staff members. Each member works everyday from 9 AM till 5 PM.
Opening hours per week	The Playpark is open to the participants from Monday to Friday (9 AM - 5 PM).
Weekly calendar	Playpark Veneto has scheduled 2 meetings per week.
What kind of start-ups do you have in your current cohort? What do they focus on?	The current cohort have selected start-uppers with business ideas related with Creative industries, Smart Manufacturing, Sustainable living and Agrifood.



G. Playpark Vienna

Area	110 m2
Begin of the 2nd cohort training	19.3.2018
End (planned) of the 2nd cohort training	19.6.2018
Location	Sachsenplatz 4-6, 1200 Wien, Austria
Number of staff at the Playpark and number of working hours/week (FTE)	1 Staff member from PP2 (20hours a week) 1 Staff member from LP (full-time)
Opening hours per week	24/7
Weekly calendar	<p>At least one meeting a week with all the Start-ups and Playpark Manager for Peer-to Peer learning Sessions. Booking of the Meeting Room from Start-ups: Around 3 a week. Every week different usage of the coworking space. Every Start-up at least once a week, some multiple times.</p> <p>The Playpark Vienna also provides specific services/activities for teachers as well as for pupils on a regular basis. Besides teacher trainings regarding entrepreneurship education, also workshops for pupils are organised in the Playpark. Apart from trainings and workshops, the so called CERlecon Playpark Brunch Club is considered as a highlight. Within this event (taking place once or twice a month), pupils from elementary to secondary school are invited and listen to inspirational stories of entrepreneurs who are sharing their success stories. After the presentations, the pupils and the entrepreneurs can network and clarify further questions within a nice and relaxing atmosphere. The aim of this event is to broaden the pupils' perspective on work and the working life in general.</p>
What kind of start-ups do you have in your current cohort? What do they focus on?	<p>Half of the Start-ups have their focus on social innovation. Refugeescode sets up workshops to train Refugees with IT-Skills, Kulturenreich want to empower and help foreign women to integrated in the Viennese job market, Instaglott wants to create a platform where languages can be learned integrating refugees and elderly in this system. Another Start-up (My Future Academy) focuses more on workshop for teenagers on finding their talents and another Start-ups wants to create a toolbox for team and project related work (Strukturmanufaktur), another (Patron4Change) has a platform where Entrepreneurs can start their seed financing</p>



phase with the help of Patrons. Book a room are trying to develop a way to use empty classroom and school buildings for an interim use. The other Start-ups have a sustainability focus. Hempstatic are developing an alternative to cement with hemp based materials, Bau und Natur focuses on constructing and planning houses, that are energy efficient and with materials like clay etc., Obstraupe developed a technology for picking up efficiently fruits from orchard meadows that otherwise would be wasted. Kern-Teck are developing an effective way of using the stone from stonefruits.



<http://tinyurl.com/CERlecon>

www.interreg-central.eu/CERlecon

