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Building Bridges Across the Mediterranean: the case of Entrepreneurs for Social Change

Fondazione CRT was formed at the end of 1991, as part of the transformation of the Italian banking sector. It is a private and non profit organization with a social purpose.

There are 3 areas of intervention: arts and culture, welfare and environment, research and education.

The Foundation operates in Piemonte and Valle d'Aosta and participates to many networks of philanthropy² and in the years it started several projects in the social and research areas and more recently created aDevelopment and Growth Foundation.

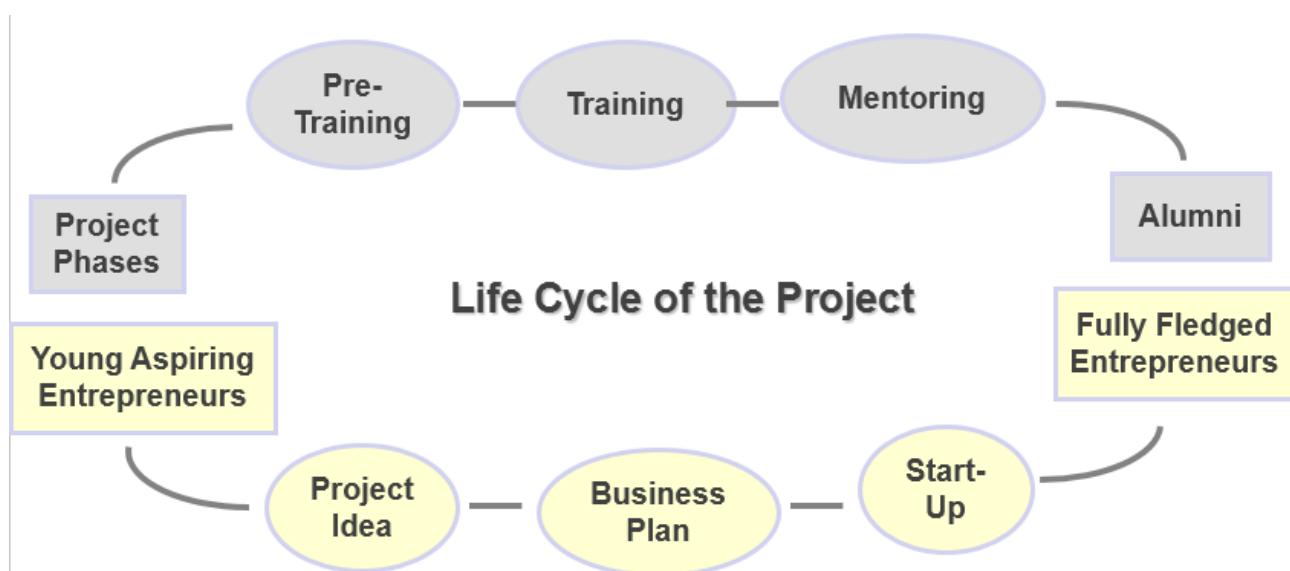
In the last year Islamic finance has developed significantly becoming a noticeable part of the international financial system and playing an increasing role in Western countries³.

Italy and other European countries for their geographic location, their culture and history of interchanges are in a privileged position.

Two years ago CRT, with the partnership of the United Nations, created a new project aimed at young people with the desire to start a project of social enterprise and to support social entrepreneurs from both sides of the Mediterranean and to promote intercultural dialogue.

The key elements of this project are: support social entrepreneurs; give tools of development and tool for social cohesion; start from Mediterranean area with the partnership of CRT, United Nations and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

They selected 20 projects of aspiring young social entrepreneurs coming from Europe, North Africa, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine.



1 Secretary General of fondazione CRT.

2 For example is part of EFC (European Foundation Centre), EVPA (European Ventur Philanthropy Association) and UNAOC (United Nation Alliance of Civilizations).

3 France, Spain and Italy.

The winners of the project arrive in Turin where they receive training. At the end of the training phase they go back to their countries of origin, and they are supported by a Mentor who follows them for the next nine months and helps them in the transition from project idea to a business plan , before moving to the start-up.

Projects presented are various: from social theater to water treatment and the use of music as instrument for dialogue between Israel and Palestine.

Social enterprise can be the instrument to start a dialogue with the countries that use Islamic finance and can help our area making know the excellence and bringing energy from the outside to enrich the territory.

The questions that arises on CRT project and future projects are how to support these young entrepreneurs who, although coming from different backgrounds, are united by some common principles of action; how to improve future editions of the project to integrate Islamic finance with the social enterprise; how to attract new partners in order to make the project stronger and start partnerships in countries where young people live, providing assistance on site.