

Support to SME Development in Armenia

# Generating Innovative Ideas to boost the Regional Tourism

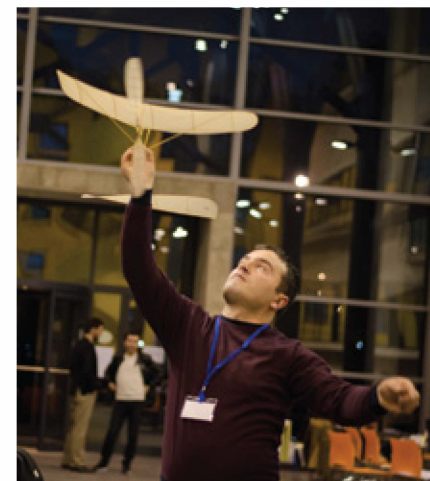
2019

**The first Hackathon aimed at generating Innovative Ideas for Tourism development in the Regions of Armenia took place on April 7, 2018 in Vanadzor Technology Center (VTC) – located at Armenia’s Lori Region.**

Around 50 young and enthusiastic teams gathered at VTC to compete around innovative and ingenious ideas that could be turned into models and embedded into regional tourism development. The idea was supported by the European Union and Armenian Government and thus, EU-SMEDA project partnered with VTC and Enterprise Incubator Foundation to make this happen.

The opening ceremony was attended by H.E. Mr. Piotr Antoni Świtalski, Ambassador, Head of the European Union Delegation to the Republic of Armenia who has stressed the importance to mobilise the energy and creativity of the youth to boost Armenia’s economy. The Government officials present at the event reassured on their readiness to further support the winning teams to bring their novel ideas into life and transfer Lori, once an industrial hub, into a true touristic center.

The 24-hour marathon of topic-related sessions, idea generation, prototyping, refinement and final team development ended with pitching of ideas to the professional jury and as a result, the three best teams with impact-generating and fresh ideas were announced as winners and were awarded prizes by EU-SMEDA project, EIF and Lori Regional Administration.



# The winning teams and their progress so far

## The winning teams, that impressed the jury and participants most were:

### 1st place

**In the fly (Fly tour)** – from Gyumri, Armenia

**In the fly** offers tours through remote control planes (drones) in gorgeous surroundings of Shirak and Lori Regions of Armenia with geographic expansion to other regions in the future. The planes equipped with video cameras will enable the tourist to view the historical-cultural monuments, natural gorgeous places like canyons, lakes, forests and colourful fields – at a high-altitude flight. The team plans to use remote-control eyeglasses to make the virtual trip even more impressive. In particular the technology convinced and impressed the jury as it is a new technology in Armenia and the idea may help to boost the tourism in regions.

### What has the team reached so far?

On July 2018, **In the fly** organised the **FlyFest Gyumri 2018**, gathering in one place all individuals and groups in Armenia working on aeromodelling and drones, and tourism sector for exchange of experience and development of extreme sports and tourism. Around 2 dozen of field representatives with 30 different models took part in this 5-hour fest, gathering up to 400 spectators. The fest was concluded with a round table with discussions on opportunities and challenges to develop the aeromodelling in Armenia. During the following months, the team used their award funds to procure video cameras, special glasses ensuring direct video communication and other devices. The founders had made a matching investment also to make holistic their first model. As a result, the team has now its first pilot model, which was used to make 20 test flies, and several half-built models.

The team is ready to start inviting tourist, however a few more details and processing are still needed to be fully ready for the big adventure. Hence, they plan to organise the next FlyFest Gyumri 2019, to be able to get 5 complete well-tested and assembled models.

### 2nd place

**Destination** – from Vanadzor, Armenia

**Destination** offers a location-based solution for tourists who do not want to spend their money on expensive tour packages or personal guides. All must-see sights like historical buildings, churches, galleries, castles, parks, monuments up to the least famous but valuable ones will be integrated in this map. But what is more interesting and innovative – is the second regime of the app, which will let tourists transform an ordinary trip into an interactive and fun quest game (so called "mission"). There are different kinds of missions such as extreme, hiking, food degustation, bicycle-only and many other mixed-type ones for different preferences. Tourists will compete with each other trying to complete as many missions possible to win some prizes. Since the quest "missions" are designed at regional level presently, this is another innovative way to attract and increase the tourist flow to Armenia. The team claims that their prototype is an innovation and that something like this is not practiced anywhere in the world!

### What has the team reached so far?

The team had initially developed a prototype version for Android OS and is currently working on the production version to enter the market and start operating in Armenia and Georgia with future plans to expand to other countries. For that purpose they used their prize funding from the hackathon to outsource part of the app development to a professional company. Within 3 months the final version of the app was ready. However, it is not complete yet as accurate and quality information about all touristic destinations in Armenia is yet to be completely collected. This requires lots of resources (time-wise and financially), and the team is enthusiastically working on it, meanwhile presenting the product to possible investors on different platforms to attract seed stage investment for the remaining processes.

### 3rd place

**Hi Traveller** – from Vanadzor, Armenia


**Hi Traveller** is a future pocket guide mobile app with full information one would like to have to plan a trip, with all possible routes, hotels and hostels, restaurants and eateries, entertainment places, useful information on local currencies and on many more. The app will help to choose from the existing internal trips within the country and it will be possible to customise them as preferred. Moreover, the app will be offered in three-languages presented by native speakers with information on historical places and sights of Armenia. The tourists will be able to use it to take photos, short videos and share with comments via social media. The SOS button within the app will enable the tourist to turn to 911 service if needed. In other words, Hi Traveller will be an enabler to play the lead role in the trip, making it fun, less costly and safe!

### What has the team reached so far?

The initial version of Hi Traveller app has been modified and improved a great deal since the hackathon. The received prize fund was directed to website design and proper translation of its content to be able to attract funds for the main idea: creation of innovative platform-app for tourists. The programming of the website is almost complete, the idea has been validated, a proper business plan and lean canvas developed encompassing all the details. The team plans to enter the market this summer. The team is currently enrolled in the Startup Studio by FAST foundation to learn more on how to develop an innovative business. The team is likewise looking for financial investment to accelerate the app development.

**126**   
APPLICATIONS

**3**   
WINNING IDEAS

**50+**   
TEAMS

**24**   
HOUR WORKING PROCESS

**4**   
WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS

**The granted awards by EU-SMEDA project were in the amount of 2 000 000 AMD, 1 000 000 AMD and 750 000 AMD to the winners of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places of the hackathon respectively, provided for the development of proposed solutions to form a viable business through support via professional services.**

**Additional prizes were granted to the best idea for tourism development by the Lori Regional Administration to Boo Mountain Bike Park team from Yerevan for working on the project in Vanadzor and Enterprise Incubator Foundation (EIF) awarded Octopus team from Yerevan for the best tech solution.**

**As it has been initially planned, the hackathon will be held annually and will expand throughout all regions of Armenia in the future.**

**The 2nd Hackathon on “Innovative Ideas for Tourism development in the Regions of Armenia” will be organised on May 18-19, 2019 with the support of the EU through EU4Business SMEDA project in Vanadzor Technology Center (VTC) in partnership with EIF and Lori Regional Administration aiming at revealing more creative and enthusiastic teams with fresh and novel ideas to boost the regional tourism.**

**SMEDA.**  
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