



**Unit 2:
Entrepreneurial
Practice – Modelling a
CCI enterprise**

Theme: 2.6

**Financing.
Opportunities and
Risks**

Author(s):

**Tzvetalina Genova, Elena
Kostadinova**

Institution(s):

**Varna University of
Management, Bulgaria**



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The training contents at a glance:

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CASE STUDY



Recycle Art Academy (Natalia Nikolova, Natalinko)

<https://recycleartacademy.bg/>

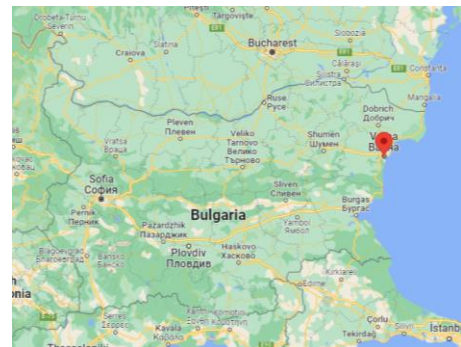
<https://www.facebook.com/recycleartacademy/>

🚩 **Country/region of operation:** Varna, Bulgaria

🚩 **CCI area:** Interior design

🚩 **Description**

Natalia Nikolova (Natalinko) is an independent artist and a graduate teacher of fine arts. Since 2012 she has been actively dedicated to creative activities involving children and young people. Thus, she discovered the direction in which she wants to develop as an artist – art from recycled materials (recycle art). In 2020 she registered a company to offer on the market decorations, furniture and textiles from waste materials and to organise creative workshops for children and adults for recycle art.



Natalia' desire to support environmental awareness of the general public prompted her to establish also a foundation, called "Recycle Art Academy" which in addition to conducting creative eco-workshops and eco-team buildings, elaborates interior decorations for personal holidays and events showcasing reusability features of many everyday household items, and engages in diverse projects to promote the added value of the art as awareness-driver and reduce humans' negative impact on the environment. Some of the activities of the foundation go beyond arts and design as the team participates regularly in clothes- and books- exchange fairs, public-area cleaning and afforestation.

🚩 **Marketing approach**

The key words in the mission of "Recycle Art Academy" are *arts* and *nature*. The motto is "Save the Planet/The New Art Generation". Thus the foundation occupies a very specific niche on the local market in the city of Varna and this makes its trademark recognizable and unique.

The products of "Recycle Art Academy" are distributed on-line – via a well-designed web-site and a Facebook group with more than 2300 followers. The web-site has an online shop that offer interior decorations, souvenirs, art works of Bulgarian artists as well as elaboration of products based on customers' ideas. The organisation of training activities can also be booked on-line.

However, the foundation does not only advertise design products, elaborated with recycled materials, but also calls for volunteering, support for different causes and mere partnership of like-minded people.

Networking and working with “friends-of-friends” has been very important for the promotion of the foundation. In addition, the academy was also supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria, which added to the organisation’s credibility.

Still the Academy has a physical space that functions simultaneously as an atelier and training premise.

Financial situation (methods of financing, sustainability of the business model)

“Recycle Art Academy” was established with Natalia Nikolova’s own means with the support from a friend. First, they offered creative workshops for children. Afterwards, Natalia began to devote more time to her own designs with waste and recycled items and materials. A small project for youth was implemented with the support of the “Youth Activities” Directorate of Varna Municipality. At a later stage, a grant from the National Culture Fund with the Ministry of Culture in Bulgaria was used for the elaboration of the on-line dissemination channels.

Natalia tries to combine the earnings from the business activities with public project-based support to sustain her creative enterprise.

Key success factors and challenges

The main success factors are the uniqueness of “Recycle Art Academy” for Varna urban area and the high social value of the foundation’s focus. Varna is the third large and most developed city in Bulgaria that avails of young and middle-class well-educated population that is sensitive to environmental and social issues. The rich cultural life and targeted municipal support for many various cultural projects also contributed as a development-driver before 2020 (Varna was a candidate city for a European capital of culture). The interesting educational approach is recognized by many schools and training-providers. At the same time, the design products of the Academy have high artistic value and are sought on the market.

Still, the market for CCIs in Varna is not that big to secure incessant long-term financial viability. The lockdown measures hit the foundation a lot as it cannot deliver its creative workshops on-line. At the same time, the purchasing habits of people changed during the pandemic and many people stopped investing life-style items. Public funds were redirected to other priorities as well.

Plans for future development

The development plans refer to the enlargement of the scope and number of the projects on which the Academy works with the aim to achieve a better impact of its motto and message.