

## Why did/do you want to start your own business? How have you come to the idea?

Motivation	Frequency
To use my competence	8
To do the job connected to my interests	6
To make something on my own	5
To make dreams come true	3
To bring innovation	3
To earn some money on my own	2
To develop creativity	2
To develop personally	2
To help others	2
To promote sustainable fashion	2
To change something	1
To get out from my difficult family situation	1
To work on my postgraduate studies	1
Single young parent	1
To interact with people	1
To meet local needs	1
To maintain traditional technical professions	1
Combination on my internal motivation and external situation	1

### TO USE MY COMPETENCE

*I had an idea about producing substrates and I decided to participate in self-employment program.*

*The most important thing about what I do is that I can combine my academic knowledge with what I do practically - that is, with the actual help of people. And this is the result of synergy and interdependence.*

*Because I write and play since always, I cannot imagine to do something else. Maybe at night I think I should quit it, but in the morning I wake up thinking there is nothing else.*

### TO DO THE JOB CONNECTED TO MY INTERESTS

*Or I never took, or I never did like job, whatever job. I always want to do a job connected to my interest. Even if those are not the one, let's say, the main thing. For example, I work for this festival many years now and although I do sort of administrative work, and artistic work as well. I do this job*

*because it connects me to the arts field. The difficult thing is to find jobs like this that can finance and to have time and space to do the things I want to work on, my personal projects.*

*Even if I've studied in Bologna political studies and then European literature in Berlin. But I've been always doing some theatre stuff. So I write, direct, I do dramaturgy, courses, projects.*

### **TO MAKE SOMETHING ON MY OWN**

*Previously I worked in some editorial offices and I wanted to create my own venture. I found a few other people sharing my thoughts and ideas and that's how it began. I had no problems finding a job but I wanted to create something on my own.*

*I wanted to make something individual and not mass; something mine and not something that other girls on the street have*

*I have always known that I would like to open my own salon.*

### **TO MAKE DREAMS COME TRUE**

*I always wanted to design something and to have my own company and half a year ago I decided to set it up.*

### **TO BRING INNOVATION**

*The fact that I have such a motivation is related to the bad experience from my school education. I know that I would not let my child go to a normal kindergarten or school because simply what is happening now is unacceptable. Some say that you have to blow up the system from the inside but I think that if you go to such a very ossified kindergarten, you can not change it only by yourself.*

*Personally speaking I wanted to study Electrical & Computer Engineering, which had the highest demand in Greece so it required excellent grades. Because of that during the period I was trying to complete my "Μηχανογραφικό", my family and friends were trying to persuade me to find other alternative departments, which required lower grades in order to ensure being accepted to a university. I came across several stereotypes ensuing from the professional or financial prospects of certain universities. For instance, the most common advice a child receives from his or her parents in Greece is to become a doctor or a lawyer. Not to mention that it is still rare in Greece for women to study in Engineering Schools. These stereotypes, along with the inability of the system to value the students needs and talents as main criteria of university admittance, leave my generation demotivated. Moreover, the financial crisis in Greece augments utilitarianism and individualism And these were the reasons that prompted me to create Unique Minds.*

## What were the biggest challenges for you to start?

Challenge	Frequency
Legislation/bureaucracy	10
To find financial resources	6
Promotion	5
To find/buy appropriate materials	4
To find clients	4
To gain credibility/ trust	3
Understand the field/how own enterprise works	2
Competition	2
Self-organisation of time	2
To find right people for my team	2
Stereotypes	2
Taking risks	1
Scepticism of others	1
To find common vision	1
International dimension of the team	1
To find connections, set up a network	1
To find personal support	1
Co-operation with employees coming from vulnerable groups	1
Self-limiting beliefs	1
My weaknesses	1
To find and to prepare the land for the kindergarten's base	1
To get out of limiting environment	1
Learning the language of the hosting country	1
Impact of Ph.D. on social life	1

### LEGISLATION/BUREAUCRACY

*The first category would be the dysfunctional structure of the Greek state. There was bureaucracy and legislative suspicion, because we were a privately held nongovernmental organisation/business*

*Greek legal and taxation status and bureaucracy*

*We wanted to do recruitment earlier as many parents were waiting for us, but the formalities with the land took up a lot of time. As a result some parents found a different place – that's life.*

*At the beginning, the most difficult challenge was to cope with the documentation as for me it was black magic, it still is.*

### **TO FIND FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

*How to get the money for the start up*

*While we needed money for our NGO, less companies accepted to be our sponsors*

*The lack of financial resources plays a pivotal role either for the production processes or for the partners wages*

*Money. Because to produce things, you need some money. We have found a way for financial support of project by funding but we also invest a lot, lot of work non paid work. Incredible amount of work, to be honest. It was an obstacle which can be also an obstacle in the future*

### **PROMOTION / FINDING CLIENTS**

*The challenge is still the same: advertising and getting clients. I'm learning and there is progress:)*

*Most of the times even doctors were ignorant of the existence of the organization, before we started promoting it*

*How to promote the product*

*The biggest challenge for me was the high percentage of high unemployment in Athens. I had to find people who would like to buy my jewelry. That was the biggest challenge. The buyers. But it quickly turned out really fine.*

*The public procurement market is quite a hermetic market and it is difficult to immediately find clients. But then it goes as an avalanche- when you find a client, especially on somebody's recommendation. But during the first two, three months we had problems with finding the first customers. Fortunately, we have succeeded and we hope that we will be able to develop.*

### **TO GAIN CREDIBILITY / TRUST**

*Being only 20 years old and trying to start a company was a big challenge. Imagine having to convince investors, while they think that you are still a child. And even more difficult was to convince parents that you are able enough to guide their children in order to decide about their academic future.*

*To convince clients to work with me*

*Maybe also the difficulty of making people to understand that you are making this seriously, that is not your free time making as a joke project but you really believe in it, you start it.*

## STEREOTYPES

*I come from a small town in Warmia, which is widely regarded as the poorest region in Poland. I have often encountered statements like "you can't work there in Warmia" or "you never succeed". The fact that I come from a small town was often the object of the mockery of people I spoke to.*

*At the beginning when we started kindergarten it was quite hard because the Poles in general like warmth. So keeping the child in the open air all day brings reactions as: "God, how come?!" "What else..?! ", " there are dangerous insects like ticks", etc.*

## TO FIND RIGHT PEOPLE FOR MY TEAM

*Unfortunately the biggest challenge is to find the right people for the core team. In the beginning - except Founders- there is really hard to find people that understand the vision of the organisation. Moreover it is even more difficult to trust people believing that they have the same aspirations and even ethos with you.*

*The main challenges are first of all the partners' ethos. Instead of being selfish they should have cooperative spirit.*

## SELF-ORGANIZATION OF TIME

*To change into completely different way of thinking and working. If someone thinks that he is self-disciplined, when he/she goes on his own business and develops something of his/her own, then he/she will see how much discipline it requires.*

*To organize my day. Theoretically I've been doing nothing but lying in bed since 1995. I have a carer coming in everyday to help me change my position. Once it's done I can't go on working so I need to get my work finished in a specific time slot. It's not uncommon in my state of health to get ill quite often.*

## OTHER CHALLENGES

*it is very nice work in international environment but it is also quite difficult from the organizational point of view. So this is for sure another obstacle because if you produce a performance with 3 people living in 3 different countries it is not only difficult to get money let them travel but it is hard to find the common time because they are also working.*

*Dealing with two different type of groups both of them vulnerable, on the one hand the refugees and on the other hand the women survivors of human trafficking*

*Sometimes I think it was to find connections. I thing to set a network like this is hard on the beginning, takes a lot of time*

*To find some people who support you, guide you or mentor you*

*The greatest challenge are my own limitations – I'm not perfect. On one hand I know something, I have some strengths and experience and you can see the results of my work but on the other hand I'm not a good teacher*

*Then I was very afraid that this is a city that I don't know, I don't know its infrastructure. I had many fears that I would not know how to enter the tram; there were a lot of such psychological blocks of a person who was always sitting safely in what was well known and had never been outside "own four corners". I was really scared that if I go somewhere I can get lost or someone asks me for directions and I would not be able to answer.*

*During my PhD the most difficult -as it was my first arrival in Germany - was the language, of course. This was the issue, I need to struggle with for maybe 3 years, I do not know, to really start speaking the language. Another obstacle was situation in Syria, I was not in Syria during the war, I have not visited Syria at all but of course, I am influenced by that. I was thinking a lot about Syria, what is with my family, my friends. So I think, it was always a psychological burden or a kind of pressure. So eventually, I had to isolate myself from anything related to Syria. Deliberately or no deliberately like Facebook, I tried to not use this things, because I got a lot of information about Syria.*

*Starting was not difficult but continuing and finishing was something which demands a lot of work from me. It was a lot of work finding a new idea etc.. Also the language, social life was not easy. It is different for sure or in UK it wasn't only difference. It has to do with the nature and society but it has also to do with a PhD. You are isolated from the rest of the world. It is not like doing a Masters or BA where you do most of things with other students. It is something, you do on your own. You need to find you social life outside of work.*