



Ford Inaugurates First European Ford Resource and Engagement Centre in Craiova

- Ford Resource and Engagement Centre opens in Craiova, the first of its kind in Europe
- Centre is part of a \$1 million investment by Ford Motor Company Fund, working with its international grant making partner GlobalGiving
- Collaboration with Asociatia Pentru Educatie SV Oltenia and the City Hall of Craiova is designed to maximise entrepreneurial training for young people, economic development and employment opportunities for the community

CRAIOVA, Romania, October 24, 2018 – Ford today inaugurated the first European Ford Resource and Engagement Centre in Craiova, Romania. Designed to support job growth, economic potential and enrich community life for local residents in the Oltenia region, the centre is the subject of a four-year \$1 million investment by Ford Motor Company Fund, working with its international grant making partner GlobalGiving.

The new facility is also a collaboration with Asociatia Pentru Educatie SV Oltenia (EDUCOL), a local non-profit organisation that seeks to maximise entrepreneurial training and employment opportunities for young people; and with the City Hall of Craiova, which is providing premises. Ford Motor Company Fund, the philanthropic arm of Ford Motor Company, and GlobalGiving, have contributed \$100,000 towards the refurbishment of the building.

“We are delighted to be working with EDUCOL and the City Hall to expand our successful Ford Resource and Engagement model to Craiova” said Jim Vella, president, Ford Motor Company Fund, “We want to work together to improve people’s lives by continually strengthening the community and providing access to opportunities and resources that help people to reach their full potential.”

The new centre will enable students and recent graduates from the University of Craiova to design and launch innovative and sustainable social enterprises – businesses with a social purpose – to drive economic progress and make a positive impact on their community. To that end, Ford Fund and EDUCOL launched a competition for students to come up with projects that help to address the community’s needs.

“Our young people will benefit both from Romanian-American financial support and from ongoing guidance and counselling in a sympathetic environment, so that they can follow the ‘American Dream’ here in Oltenia, gaining personal fulfilment and helping to develop the community. We aim to encourage innovative ideas and offer an opportunity for people to contribute and grow,” said Leonardo-Geo Manescu, president, EDUCOL.

For the competition, EDUCOL offered counselling and mentoring to help the students define their proposals and submit them for review by the organisation, Ford of Romania, Ford Fund, Craiova City Hall and the Craiova University Students’ Federation. After being adapted to reflect feedback received, teams submitted their final proposals for consideration and will progress their ideas with support from the Henry Ford Entrepreneurship Academy (HFEA), a global signature program of Ford Motor Company Fund.

Developed in partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University’s (VCU) School of Business Entrepreneurship, HFEA is a collection of interactive workshops to teach and inspire young entrepreneurs to develop their ideas into successful businesses or social enterprises.

For the sessions in Craiova, HFEA is piloting a new workshop that will use the principles of human-centred design to help students better connect their business ideas with customer wants and needs. This new workshop will be run by VCU

and The Henry Ford Learning Institute, a Michigan-based NGO that uses “design thinking” and other methods to help academic and business partners learn creatively and solve problems.

The winning teams that will be awarded up to \$50,000 to get their business ideas up and running are:

- **EcOil-Cuv** that explored the collection of waste oil for recycling into an organic soap product, and to help mitigate negative environmental impact
- **GoBike Craiova** that designed bicycle rental hubs, at an affordable price, to stimulate mobility and a healthy lifestyle
- **The Centre of Learning Assistance for School and Society** that developed an afterschool program designed to integrate children from disadvantaged backgrounds, supported by language courses

“The beauty of all of the winning projects is that these are sustainable. The students get the help of the Ford Fund in the first year and afterwards their entrepreneurship idea has to survive on their own. It’s key to encourage this generation to think outside of the box and to innovate and the first European Ford Resource and Engagement Centre is helping them to do that,” said Ian Pearson, plant director, Ford Craiova.

Ford Resource and Engagement Centres are an innovation from the Ford Motor Company Fund that bring non-profit partners together in a collaborative environment to support the surrounding community and help make people’s lives better. The newest centre complements two that already exist in Detroit, in the U.S.; and one in South Africa. Plans are underway to expand to Asia with a centre for Bangkok, in Thailand, in early 2019.

The centre in Craiova could also bring together local non-profit partners, Ford volunteers, mentors and educational leaders to provide related employability and community programs – helping residents learn new skills, develop new talents and celebrate community. In the coming months, Ford will be seeking input from local residents to ensure future programs and services are designed to reflect and meet community needs.

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