

PRESS RELEASE

## The first cohort of THE NEXT SOCIETY Levant Mentoring Program prepares to graduate in Jordan

*Amman, Jordan – 15 June 2019* - The European Union (EU), ANIMA Investment Network and Mowgli Mentoring graduated the first cohort of THE NEXT SOCIETY Mentoring Program. The graduation ceremony which took place in Amman, Jordan, saw 18 participants (9 mentors and 9 mentees) graduate as the pioneering cohort to have successfully completed the 12-month regional mentoring program which supported participants from Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine.

Over the years, the ecosystem supporting innovation and entrepreneurial development in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has progressed, and there is growing recognition on the need to have an all-inclusive ecosystem that fully supports the needs of its beneficiaries. THE NEXT SOCIETY is spurring this growth by further reinforcing innovation ecosystems across 7 countries in the Mediterranean, to foster value created by innovators, pushing forward concrete solutions that include training, access to investment, engagement in policy development and more. While a lot of investment has been placed in areas such as infrastructure and financing, a key pillar of the ecosystem that is still neglected is human capital, and this is where organisations such as Mowgli Mentoring come in to fill the gap.

The organisation which has been delivering mentoring programs in the region for over a decade is supporting this initiative by training and capacity building 120 incubator, accelerator and entrepreneurship support organisation leaders as mentors; matching 36 of the trained mentors with 36 high-potential innovators for one-on-one mentoring over a 12-month duration. Speaking on the investment and inclusion of mentoring as a key component of THE NEXT SOCIETY's agenda, Raphaële Cohen, Innovation Project Manager at ANIMA Investment Network, explained "Perhaps one of the biggest challenges in emerging markets such as in the MENA region has to do with the availability of relevant information in an efficient and timely manner, including financial information. This lack of access to pertinent information, combined with the absence of mature networks of business angels, makes it very hard for entrepreneurs to know where to start to access capital. This situation makes it even more necessary to gather the right experts and mentors to surround entrepreneurs. Among the mentors, we have chosen experienced and successful entrepreneurs but also cluster managers and managers of local incubators or accelerators who are key in the entrepreneur-to-investor pipeline in the region. The holistic approach of the mentoring programme delivered by Mowgli is key to THE NEXT SOCIETY' Start-Up Booster Track, the tailor-made offer for entrepreneurs of the MENA region, as it contributes to reinforce the ecosystem, circulate information and closes the loop."

Mowgli Mentoring's CEO Kathleen Bury also shared her enthusiasm for the project stating, "We are grateful to the European Union and THE NEXT SOCIETY community as a whole for identifying gaps within the ecosystem and developing solutions that truly serve the needs of entrepreneurs and innovators it seeks to support. The start-up scene across MENA is growing at different rates and with this being one of the most digitally connected regions in the world, merging innovation and entrepreneurship is being seen as a key driver to economic growth. The multiplier effect of supporting entrepreneurs and innovators is evident. From this cohort, we have seen the entrepreneurs grow with 50 percent sharing an increase in the quality and quantity of their products and services. During the course of the program, one of the entrepreneurs emerged as a first place winner in the 2018 Arabnet Startup Championships, with another joining the EU-funded Shamal Start Accelerator, and funding to

the tune of \$16,428 from the accelerator. With such success stories, we cannot underscore the need for mentoring as an equally important investment pillar within this ecosystem, and our data demonstrates its value. Through mentoring, we are developing generations of strong leaders who go beyond building robust innovations and businesses, to shaping communities, societies and economies. It has been an inspiring journey witnessing the entrepreneurs and mentors' growth over the past 12 months and we look forward to seeing each of them continue with their mentoring relationships and seize new opportunities for growth."

This graduation ceremony, scheduled to take place on 15th June in Amman, Jordan, and brought together representatives from the European Union, ANIMA Investment Network, Mowgli Mentoring and other implementing partners of THE NEXT SOCIETY as well as the programme participants. The ceremony celebrated each person's journey, highlighted the impact achieved over the past 12 months and provided support for mentor-mentees pairs who will continue with their mentoring relationship beyond the structured program.

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#### About THE NEXT SOCIETY

THE NEXT SOCIETY is an open community of change makers engaged in innovation and economic development. It gathers entrepreneurs, investors, corporates, NGOs, public and private innovation, research and economic development hubs from Europe and the Mediterranean countries.

THE NEXT SOCIETY gathers already a large network of over 300 business & innovation, research and investment organisations, 2,500 international SMEs and entrepreneurs from 30 countries.

THE NEXT SOCIETY is launching a four-year action plan (2017-2020), co-funded by the EU up to 90% for a global amount of EUR 7.8 million budget. [www.thenextsociety.co](http://www.thenextsociety.co)

#### About Mowgli Mentoring

Mowgli Mentoring is a not-for-profit organization driving inclusive economic and social change in the Middle East, North and Sub-Saharan Africa. Mowgli's unique, accredited methodology provides a supportive framework which empowers entrepreneurs, corporate employees, women and youth to unlock their potential and seize new opportunities.

Over the past decade, Mowgli has worked with philanthropists, and local and international governmental and private sector partners to provide mentoring across 17 countries in the Middle East, North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and the UK.

Mowgli has trained more than 1,200 mentors who have supported entrepreneurs (across all levels including micro, refugee and SMEs) and corporate leaders/employees from all sectors. They create and ensure the retention of jobs, producing a significant economic and social return on investment.

As a recognized leader in the field of mentoring, the organization was awarded the European Quality Award by the European Mentoring and Coaching Council in 2016 for their program syllabus. In the region we received the Ta'atheer Employment Generation Award in 2016 and the Mohammed bin Rashid Best Mentor Network in the Region in 2012.

To learn more about Mowgli Mentoring, visit [www.mowgli.org.uk](http://www.mowgli.org.uk)

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