



## FLIPPED STUDIO “SUCCESSFUL INNOVATOR” - NOVA

Project No. 2020-1-LT01-KA227-ADU-094751

### The Comedy Club Sofia

**Creator of the good practice, country:** Bulgaria (originated in USA)

**Sector:** Performing arts

**Type of business / employment:** Entertainment club (Ltd. Company); Private sector

#### Achievements in CCS before the Pandemic

Stand-up comedy is a comedy genre in which a person tells a funny story to an audience. It is usually held at the Comedy Club or on the stage. Good stand-up comedians should keep loud laughter from the audience every 6-10 seconds. The Standup Comedy genre originates from Mark Twain's stories in US golf clubs, where he made members laugh with his real and fictional stories.

In 1972, Mitzi Shore (along with her husband Sammy Shore) created the world's first true Comedy Club, marking the beginning of the first stand-up comedy boom in the United States.

We've all seen it in the movies: A man with a microphone makes some people laugh in a bar. This is a stand-up comedy.

In 2012, the comedian Ivan Kirkov started the company Comedy BG in order to promote stand-up comedy in Bulgaria. So far, there are no professional stand-up comedy shows in the country. Kirkov began negotiations with all the partners and clubs he had worked with so far, but the very idea of creating a Comedy Club in Bulgaria made every producer or restaurant owner at the time laugh in his face. Despite the refusal of absolutely everyone to invest in such an endeavor, Ivan does not lose hope. He collects his savings and starts looking for a suitable place only with his own team, despite the predictable failure of the Comedy Club by absolutely all dedicated to show business producers and club owners.



*Photo source: <https://pixabay.com>*



Two years later Kirkov founded the Sofia Comedy Festival, and in 2015 he created the first and only Comedy Club in the country - Comedy Club Sofia. In just 2 years, Comedy Club Sofia has become one of the most popular places in Bulgaria. Every night the best stand-up comedians in the country appear on the club stage with their best or latest jokes.

Only 6 years later, there is almost no young person in Bulgaria who has not heard of Comedy Club Sofia and stand-up comedy as a genre.

Soon after, most club owners, who until recently denied stand-up comedy and predicted a lack of potential for stand-up comedy in Bulgaria, began inviting the club's comedians and copying the concept.

### Challenges faced during the Pandemic and innovative solutions to overcome them

The national state of emergency declared due to the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic, declared in March 2020 affected the business sector the most. All restaurants, clubs, bars and other entertainment places were closed, thus causing huge negative impact on their owners, staff and clients as well.

A year and a half later, while the world is still trying to find a way to adequately respond to the challenges caused by the pandemic, many businesses in the culture and entertainment sectors find innovative ways to continue their work despite all difficulties and adapting to the constantly changing restrictive measures on national and international level.



Photo source: <https://pixabay.com>

During the first lockdown in spring 2020, the owners and workers in Comedy Club Sofia started to think how they can continue providing fun and entertainment to their numerous fans without violating the existing severe social isolation measures at that time. The owner, Ivan Kirkov was



absolutely convinced that in these difficult and dark times, full of uncertainty and loneliness, people need laughter more than ever. This is how the idea for the Comedy Club Podcast was born. The regular comedians who are part of the club started to share their thoughts and talents online using the so popular podcast tool (A podcast is a program with a monologue or conversation with one or more people that is broadcast on the Internet. There is usually a presenter and a topic of conversation for the episodes.) The podcasts were absolutely freely accessible by anyone interested at any time. The purpose of the Comedy Club Podcast channel is to make people forget the busy and hard everyday life and to "spend" some virtual time with their favorite comedians from the Comedy Club, who talk about the fun things from everyday life.

The next step towards digitalizing the stand-up comedy performances was taken in the autumn of 2020 when the second lockdown again closed all entertainment places in Bulgaria for an indefinite period of time. At least 2-3 times per week, the Comedy Club live-streamed their shows in ZOOM or other online platforms to anyone interested, for a modest fee, aiming to support the Club and the actors during the pandemic.

### Conditions for the innovativeness and success

The comedians in The Comedy Club Sofia demonstrated that even in such unprecedented situation of lack of social contacts and entertainment in real environment it is still possible for them to continue doing their jobs and share their talent by using very simple, but very powerful digital solution – the podcast.

By also offering the comedy show performances online every week, the Comedy Club not only became a pioneer in the performing arts online industry in Bulgaria, but also managed to bring more fun and joy to many people behind the screens in the light of the pandemic.

Since its creation, the popular YouTube podcast series has over 800 episodes in several categories and popular themes. Today over 500 episodes of Comedy Club Podcast are active on iTunes, Spotify, Soundcloud and Youtube. Stand-up comedy and Podcasting network makes Comedy Club Podcast Channel the only one of its kind in Bulgaria followed by more than 40 000 subscribers.



Photo source: <https://pixabay.com>



**Source:** <https://thecomedyclub.bg/>

### Self-reflection questions

1. How can a company/initiative in the sphere of performing arts survive during a pandemic?
2. How can entertainment shows and performances be offered in an online format? What tools/equipment is needed for this?

**This good practice story is prepared by Know and Can Association**