



EUCIS-LLL



EPP Group
in the European Parliament

18 June 2013 - Synthesis report

Policy Debate

“Entrepreneurship skills: common understanding?”

On 18 June 2013, EUCIS-LLL co-organised a policy debate in the European Parliament with the EPP Group, hosted by MEP Heinz K. BECKER, on the theme of “Entrepreneurship skills: Common understanding? Common expectations?” The European Commission’s Communication “Rethinking Education” states that the development of entrepreneurial skills is a top priority for our education and training systems in order to deliver the right skills for the labour market. In a broad sense, entrepreneurship should be considered as a general attitude that can be applied in all working activities and in life: entrepreneurship is firstly a mindset. A range of measures has already been adopted at the national and European level in order to build a stronger culture of entrepreneurship and ‘entrepreneurial mindsets’ of European citizens. However there is a varied understanding and interpretation of entrepreneurship education. It is sometimes limited to formal education when we know an entrepreneurial “mindset” can also be acquired outside the formal system notably through volunteering experiences within non-governmental organisations. This issue is also directly connected to the debate around partnerships between educational providers and the private sector. Moreover, if many reports highlight the benefits of entrepreneurship education, access to programmes and activities remains unequal across countries and sectors today. The aim of this policy debate was thus to launch an exchange of views and experiences on entrepreneurship education between educational stakeholders, decision-makers and businesses and build some concrete policy recommendations. Around 40 people took part in this debate where civil society representatives presented several good practices on entrepreneurship education, trying to define the concept and the best ways to teach it and learn it. Representatives from the Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee provided some policy feedback.

With the financial support of the EU under the Lifelong Learning Programme:



Opening session

Heinz K. BECKER

Member of the European Parliament

MEP Heinz K. BECKER, member of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee and of the Culture and Education Committee of the European Parliament (EPP, Austria) welcomed the participants and gave some insight about the policy process concerning the adoption of the Parliament's report on "Rethinking Education" planned in October. The policy debate is thus very timely. To his mind, entrepreneurship should be understood in a broad sense and should focus in particular on social businesses. He concluded by saying that he was very interested in the civil society point of view on these questions.



David LOPEZ

President of EUCIS-LLL

David LOPEZ, EUCIS-LLL President, expressed EUCIS-LLL concerns regarding Rethinking Education with its very strong focus on employability at the expense of a life-long and life-wide approach of learning. He reminded participants that the purpose of this policy debate was to define more precisely what are entrepreneurship skills, which sectors and policy levels (national and European) are concerned and how it can be implemented and assessed, as well as the challenges ahead. Finally, he reminded that the policy outcomes of this debate should provide some policy guidance to the European Parliament in its discussions around the Rethinking Education strategy. The outcomes will also nourish EUCIS-LLL's position paper on entrepreneurship to be published in the coming weeks.



Round table

Rosaleen COURTNEY

Experiences from VET, Norton Radstock College (UK), EfVET

Mrs COURTNEY presented two initiatives from [EfVET](#), the European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training: “LIFE 2: Transfer of Innovation” and “Women entrepreneurship in rural tourism (WERT)”.

“[LIFE 2](#)” helps teachers to develop entrepreneurship skills for their students in VET systems in five European countries. The team developed a “Train the Trainer” pack including a range of resources and examples for teachers to use in vocational education. These resources help to develop the employability and entrepreneurship skills of learners. Entrepreneurs were involved throughout the project to check that workplace needs were addressed including “soft” skills (i.e. resilience). EfVET started by asking entrepreneurs the kind of skills they needed to succeed and conveyed the results to teachers to be passed on to the students. Pilot results showed that the LIFE 2 resources helped teachers and learners to connect with employers and the real world and stimulated creativity and entrepreneurial thinking through activities (i.e. Entrepreneurs’ Day). Following the pilot phase, new resources have been developed, many of which help to develop entrepreneurial skills. The Pack is transferable to other countries and can be used at all levels of vocational education.

The project [WERT](#) aimed to offer informal learning to women who would like to start a business in rural tourism in seven European countries. Developing the entrepreneurship skills of women in rural communities was identified as a way to stimulate rural economies, encourage young people to stay and improve the wellbeing of local communities.

The WERT project produced and tested a course to develop the business skills of women entrepreneurs in both existing and new-start businesses. The course helped to develop their entrepreneurial mindset and covered areas such as marketing, e-marketing, finance, legal and developing a sustainable business plan. A wide range of resources such as a win-win game to encourage networking and community development were produced. The delivery of a flexible and informal training programme was adapted to meet local needs. Workshops were held close to where the women lived and helped them to build their own supportive networks. The trainings aimed to provide learners with the right competences through informal methodologies; women who participated in the programme did not look for a formal qualification. A finding of this project is that the definition, realities and perceptions of entrepreneurship skills/education differ a lot between countries.



From grassroots initiatives
to systemic change

Laura LOPEZ BECH

European Youth Forum, “The impact of non-formal Education in youth organisations on young people’s employability”

Mrs LOPEZ evoked the European Youth Forum’ study [“The impact of non-formal Education in youth organisations on young people’s employability”](#) whose results can give some perspective to the debate; for example how non-formal learning can provide entrepreneurship skills and if the competences gained in youth organisations contribute to young people’s employment and match the employers’ demands. The study is based on consultations with young people, employers, human resources professionals, etc.

Some of the outcomes of the study that might be relevant for our discussion:

- There is a match between the competences acquired in youth organisations and those valued by employers: out of the 6 most demanded competences, 5 are among the top skills developed in youth organisations: communication, organisation and planning, decision-making, teamwork, confidence and autonomy (the last one being literacy and numeracy).
- Young people are aware of the competences they developed but find it difficult to present them in a recruitment process; they need to be aware of the importance of these competences and feel entitled to include them in their CVs.
- Overall employers have a positive reaction to those experiences but it depends on many factors such as the level and type of experience and the relevance to the job opening.

The study highlights the role youth organisations play as non-formal education providers and, in particular, their role in fostering entrepreneurship competences. Another added value seldom mentioned by youth and employers is the social capital: youth organisations help young people create networks and connections, which stimulates job search for example.



Eleni BOULOMYTI

Former participant in the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme

Mrs BOULOMYTI told the audience about the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme (E4YE) and her personal experience of it. She has a Master in Environmental management and another one in European studies and would like to create a specialised consultancy firm in Brussels. The Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs helped her to start modelling her business. E4YE is a cross border exchange programme that gives new entrepreneurs the chance to learn how to run a business across the EU. The programme is coordinated at European level but each local contact point runs the link between young entrepreneurs and host companies. The purpose is to exchange knowledge, create new commercial relations, and have some professional training for the young entrepreneur and, for the host, to have fresh ideas from motivated new entrepreneurs and specialized skills or knowledge in area they did not master. It is supposed to be a win-win collaboration. This programme is very well

organised, quite flexible (on duration and age) and the application procedure is user-friendly. However, she warned that some host organisations are taking advantage of the programme and are using young entrepreneurs to replace professional employees. Her experience of the programme is however positive and after one year and a half, she is planning to start her company. This exchange really helped her in defining her priorities, understanding the environment and making contacts.



Beata MATUSZKA and Mathieu SOETE

The added value of non-formal education, AEGEE

Beata MATUSZKA and Mathieu SOETE, representatives of the European Students' Forum ([AEGEE – Europe](#)), presented the European School of Entrepreneurship and the Europe on Track projects.

Europe on Track aims to give young Europeans a voice in their future. Two teams travelled around Europe to ask youth about their views and promote, among other, entrepreneurship to help them make their vision happen. It touched about 400/500 young people on the road and about 1000 online. AEGEE used this project to find out what youth were expecting from entrepreneurship education/training. The main finding was that young people do not know which skills/competences are part of entrepreneurship competences, and therefore, they cannot identify them in their own learning experience. For example students active in AEGEE sections do not realise that competences such as event planning are part of entrepreneurship competences.

In the framework of the Youth Employment Action, the European Students' Forum (AEGEE) launched the [Youth UnEmployment project](#) aiming to help young people to increase their employability. A series of activities are implemented to advocate for a better recognition of non-

formal education because it has been identified as a critical factor for youth employment. One of those actions is the [European School of Entrepreneurship](#) (ESE), a non-formal education course (workshops, case studies, practical sessions, information, experience sharing) to help



young people taking the first step in creating their own business. This one-week training uses innovative non-formal education methodologies and targets small groups of students to provide an interactive and dynamic learning experience. By the end of 2012, the ESE action had already entered its 2nd cycle.



Panel discussion

Elin McCALLUM

Policy Officer «Entrepreneurship Education», DG EAC

Mrs McCALLUM argued that the aim of Rethinking Education is to see how education and training can contribute to answer the current economic crisis. That is why the point of view is so economical; it is an attempt to bring education closer to the labour market. DG EAC is not overlooking the social aspect and the importance of well-being in education but it is not the point of this communication. The Communication picked out key areas such as entrepreneurship skills, transversal competences and VET excellence. We could also add peer learning, learning by doing, and the importance of providing practical experiences and involving partners outside education (businesses and local communities). Non-formal education methodologies should be better incorporated into the formal system as well.



We still have to face some challenges. For example, the definition and perception of the word entrepreneurship varies from one country to another. The Commission understands entrepreneurship as “turning ideas into actions”. That idea can be many things – not only about business. We also need to define the scope of the concept: what sectors are involved? It is education in a broad sense, including non-formal learning. To support entrepreneurship education, the Commission is currently developing a policy guidance document for Member States with the support of a thematic working group. It will cover core themes such as the professional development of educators, curriculum, pedagogies, learning outcomes and learners’ motivation. The publication has been planned for Novem-

ber 2013. DG EAC is working with the OECD to develop a self-assessment framework for entrepreneurial education in universities that they want to translate to VET institutions and schools. It is a very long process that requires working with various stakeholders. The Commission will also develop a reference framework for the entrepreneurship competence within a year to really identify what the skills behind it are. She welcomed our inputs in these policy developments.

Simone BALDASSARRI

Policy Officer «Education for Entrepreneurship», DG ENT

Mr BALDASSARRI started his intervention by highlighting that entrepreneurship education is one of the three pillars of the Commission’s Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan. He outlined the good cooperation between the two DGs on this topic. DG Enterprise and Industry (DG ENTR) launched the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan on how to boost entrepreneurship in Europe; it is composed of three pillars, the first being entrepreneurship education. He agreed with previous speakers that there is an issue on the definition of the entrepreneurship competence, but this can be seen positively: it is thus a very inclusive concept. Still, there is a common misunderstanding: even if entrepreneurship has some core business elements, it is only a part of a broader concept that includes transversal competences. It is important to emphasise it, so teachers can see entrepreneurship as a key competence for everybody, among others, to help youth find a job. To have teachers on board, the Commission organises a series of European workshops on how to run entrepreneurship activities in the classroom and will soon publish a manual.



Entrepreneurship is not intended to be taught in a specific class but as a transversal competence. It has to be based on practical experience; hence the importance of non-formal education in this domain. The Commission calls upon Member States to provide young people with some kind of practical experience during their formal educational pathway. To his mind, the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme, run by DG ENTR, is a very successful project; feedbacks are largely positive and it has allowed more than 1700 exchanges so far. DG ENTR tries to avoid the problem mentioned by Eleni as much as possible.



Mario SOARES

Rethinking Education Rapporteur at the European Economic and Social Committee

Mr SOARES started his intervention highlighting some concerns on Rethinking Education. In particular, he stated that education should aim at making learners active citizens and that the challenges faced by our education and training systems are much wider than those linked to the labour market. To his mind, the major challenge our education and training systems are facing nowadays is the decrease of public spending on both educational and employment policies. He agreed nevertheless that an entrepreneurial mindset is an asset, especially in times of crisis, and that there is a gap to be bridged between the competence the education system provides and those the labour market demands. To make entrepreneurship education a success and meet today's challenges, he pointed out that formal learning should be combined with practical experience and the need for a closer cooperation between schools and the private sector. He underlined the major role that non-formal learning plays and the importance of recognising and validating these learning outcomes with quality standards. He also highlighted that teachers should get proper training on how to teach entrepreneurship skills. Finally, he congratulated the Commission for its strong commitment to tackle youth unemployment.



Discussion

MEP Heinz Becker opened the floor with some remarks. He noted that many young people and teachers do not know about entrepreneurship skills. In his view, that is another reason why non-formal education is so valuable and trust should be developed on the labour market for the recognition and validation of those skills acquired in non-formal settings. Furthermore, Mr Becker highlighted that we should not be afraid to talk about profit. It is necessary, even for social enterprises. The general feeling from the audience was that the definition of the entrepreneurship competence varies according to countries, educational sectors and actors. It is often confused with the concepts of employability and employment. This is why the notion of entrepreneurship it is not always socially accepted, especially when dealing with schools and teachers. Most teachers and educators think that they are not properly trained to teach this specific knowledge and that their study field is often disconnected from it. It is very important to keep them on board as they are the main vectors of change. Therefore it is important to have a deep discussion with the school and teaching community on a broad understanding of entrepreneurship skills without this specific focus on business creation. In a general manner, it is a mistake to focus education and training policies on labour market needs, as it is constantly evolving and we cannot foresee what will be the needs in five or ten years' time.

"History teachers, who do not feel entrepreneurship would fit the landscape of their work, are in fact contributing to develop entrepreneurship competences via the spirit of enquiry and initiatives that are very relevant to the discipline. It could offer them an answer to the criticism they face that their discipline is disconnected to the real world. But they already face many challenges, trying to teach in an active and learner-centred way" - Blandine Smilansky (EUROCLIO)

"It is important to keep their motivation and enthusiasm, to keep them on board (teachers). It is very difficult to educate people to a different perception, it would be easier to change the name, so that teachers are less afraid and learn how to talk to businesses and link with professionals" - Rob Williams (ICC)

"With entrepreneurship education we have to fight on two fronts at the same time, which is unproductive: on one side we want to foster entrepreneurship but the word is misleading and aggressively perceived in schools; and on the other frontline, we want to change the behaviour of teachers and trainers, which also creates rejection. To make the change more efficient, we need a new word, less negatively connoted in education" - Ben Bruyndonckx, Vlaams Agentschap voor Ondernemersvorming



Besides, it is not because people will get more employable that they will actually be employed. It is important not to limit the conception of entrepreneurship to skills as it requires taking into consideration attitudes and perceptions as well. Some participants thus suggested using the concept of “competence” instead of skills, as it includes knowledge, skills and attitudes. Some others suggested including entrepreneurial elements in the wide definition of transversal competences, mainstreaming them into the curricula instead of adding a new subject. A consensual definition of entrepreneurship competences would also enable to better assess them.

The participants also reflected on how to broaden the target group for the acquisition of those competences; the potential of open educational resources (OER) should not be neglected and EU programmes such as Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs need further investment to reach more beneficiaries.

“We should emphasise the difference between employability and job opportunities. The youth today is much more skilled than before but there are less job opportunities. It is wrong to blame it on young unemployed, when Europe is in crisis” - Mario Soares (EESC)

“It is disappointing that the Commission focuses on skills and adaptation to the labour market. When you talk to BusinessEurope, they acknowledge they cannot foresee the skills that will be needed in 10 years. There is a misinterpretation on the term entrepreneurship education, which is not only for business. We have to mainstream those competences in the curricula” - Viviana Galli (OBESSU)

Closing remarks

MEP Heinz K. BECKER (EPP) thanked all the participants and indicated that he would welcome their ideas for amendments. It concluded by saying that, at the moment, we should concentrate pragmatically on employability and communicate on entrepreneurship for it to be widely accepted.

David LOPEZ, EUCIS-LLL President, congratulated policy-makers for their efforts to tackle unemployment. He thanked all the participants for the lively discussion and Mr Becker for hosting it. He concluded that we may be asking too much of education, to fix every wrong of our society. We can start with a definition of education and then discuss about its role. We just do not have to focus on the question of skills between teachers and students; we learned from EfVET that there is a triangle also including the rest of the society.



Key messages

- Agree on and promote a broad understanding of entrepreneurship as a set of transversal competences for various personal and professional purposes;
- Define learning contents and outcomes and mainstream them in all curricula from an early age;
- Make a better use of social entrepreneurship in entrepreneurship education (better acceptance from the education/training world);
- Acknowledge teachers and other learning facilitators as key vectors of change towards quality entrepreneurship education with proper initial and continuing training;
- Recognise formal, non-formal and informal learning environments as equally favourable settings to develop entrepreneurship competences;
- Develop validation schemes to boost self-recognition and further learning;
- Foster an adequate policy framework at national and EU level for a coherent approach to entrepreneurship education, embedded into EU lifelong learning strategies.
- Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs only reached 1700 exchanges in Europe – there is a need for further investment in EU programmes.

