



Promoting entrepreneurship through education

SUMMARY Presented as an individual's ability to turn ideas into actions, entrepreneurship has evolved over time to embrace creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to set-up and run a business.

Entrepreneurship is now considered as a key competence for all which should be promoted at all levels of education (from primary school to university) as well as through lifelong learning.

The European Commission has adopted two framework documents highlighting the importance of entrepreneurship education and training: in November 2012 a new strategy on education and training entitled "Rethinking Education" and, in January 2013, an Entrepreneurship Action Plan. The Commission notably invites Member States to reinforce entrepreneurship education at all levels and to strengthen the links between education and employers.

The European Parliament, which in a 2006 Recommendation had recognised the sense of initiative and entrepreneurship as one of the key competences for lifelong learning, has since then supported entrepreneurship education in several resolutions.

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Glossary

Competence: Ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal or professional development).

Skill: Ability to perform tasks and solve problems.

Knowledge: Outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices related to a field of study or work.

Source: [Terminology of European education and training policy](#), Cedefop.

Context

Entrepreneurship is often perceived as a driver for growth and job creation as well as a means to make economies more competitive and innovative. However, supporting entrepreneurship goes beyond merely helping entrepreneurs or would-be entrepreneurs, and providing administrative and financial conditions conducive to business creation. It also embraces developing and boosting [entrepreneurial spirit](#) throughout society, in particular amongst young people, stimulating their creativity, initiative, and sense of responsibility as well as providing the skills and knowledge needed to set up and run a business. Hence education and training are vital for changing cultures and igniting entrepreneurial mindsets at an early age. The importance that policy-makers give to this issue is also critical.



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Scope of entrepreneurship education

Entrepreneurship education [traditionally](#) focused on teaching potential and existing entrepreneurs specific business skills such as drawing up business plans, cash-flow management, and preparing financial statements. The understanding of what may be included has widened over time, notably within the EU, where it has become a key competence for lifelong learning. The 2006 Commission [Communication](#) on fostering entrepreneurial mindsets through education and learning set out an extended view of entrepreneurship, presenting it as "an individual's ability to turn ideas into action". This view embraces creativity, innovation, risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. The benefits derived from promoting entrepreneurship can include support to individuals in day-to-day life at home and in society, making employees more aware of the context of their work and better able to seize opportunities, and providing a foundation for entrepreneurs establishing a social or commercial activity.

Entrepreneurship can also be presented as [dependent](#) on:

- knowledge, including the ability to identify opportunities for personal, professional and/or business activities;
- skills relating to proactive project management (involving for example the ability to plan, lead and delegate, analyse and communicate), representation, negotiation, and working as an individual and in teams;
- attitude, characterised for example by pro-activeness, independence and innovation in personal and social life, as much as at work, motivation and determination to meet objectives.

This broad [concept](#) of entrepreneurship education and training requires an understanding of how support can best be delivered i.e. the level concerned (from

primary school to university and/or through vocational training); within or outside formal education; for which type of audience (e.g. pupils, students, employed or unemployed people, business students, etc.).

Some [authors](#) have attempted to categorise entrepreneurship education drawing for example a distinction between educating for, about or in entrepreneurship:

- *for entrepreneurship* means addressing present and potential entrepreneurs with a view to providing them with the tools to run a business;
- *about entrepreneurship* consists of delivering a general understanding to a more general audience about entrepreneurship as a phenomenon;
- *in entrepreneurship* aims at making people more entrepreneurial or innovative in their existing business or place of work.

While some authors would argue that this distinction may be blurred and that some objectives overlap, having a pre-conception of the objectives and audiences to be covered helps in defining the teaching methods as well as expected impact/results deriving from entrepreneurship education and training.

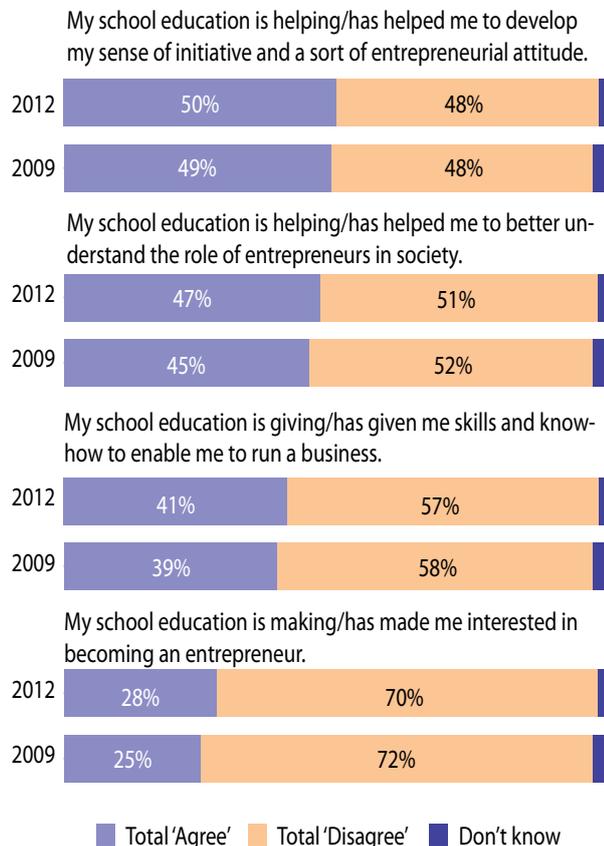
Public opinion and research

According to [research](#), between 15% and 20% of the students who participated in a mini-company programme in secondary education will later set-up their own company, a result which is three to six times that of the general population. Literature, however, points to the difficulty of [demonstrating](#) the influence of training on entrepreneurial activity. International data allowing comparable [measurements](#) are lacking, and do not allow conclusions to be drawn in this regard.

The results of a [Flash Eurobarometer](#) survey carried out in June-August 2012 show that less than a quarter (23%) of Europeans has taken part in a course or activity about entrepreneurship, defined as turning ideas

into action and developing one's own projects. Their assessment of their school education with regard to entrepreneurship (see figure 1) is somewhat mixed.

Figure 1 – Effects of school education on entrepreneurship



Data source : [Flash Eurobarometer 354](#), 2013.

More than two-thirds (70%) do not consider that their school education interested them in becoming an entrepreneur, nor for most (57%) that it gave them the skills or know-how to enable them to run a business. Comparison with the previous survey (2009) shows a relative stability in how Europeans see the influence of their school education in the way they perceive entrepreneurship.

While in 2012, over 32 million Europeans, representing more than 15% of total employment in the EU, were [self-employed](#), the proportion of Europeans [preferring](#) to be self-employed rather than an employee, has decreased over the past few years. In 2012, 37% expressed a preference towards self-employment compared to 45% in 2009.

In the Member States

There are several ways of delivering entrepreneurship education and training for the different objectives pursued, such as promoting self-employment, or creativity at a young age.

According to a [study](#) from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), what works best depends on different factors, notably:

- the educational context, in particular whether learning in school or in non-school training programmes;
- what to teach, in a context where entrepreneurship education and training entails more than the development of specific business skills;
- and where to teach, within business schools or outside, and whether educators and education institutions are equipped to teach entrepreneurship. The study recalls in particular that for most authors "learning by doing", or experiential learning, tends to be more effective than traditional lectures.

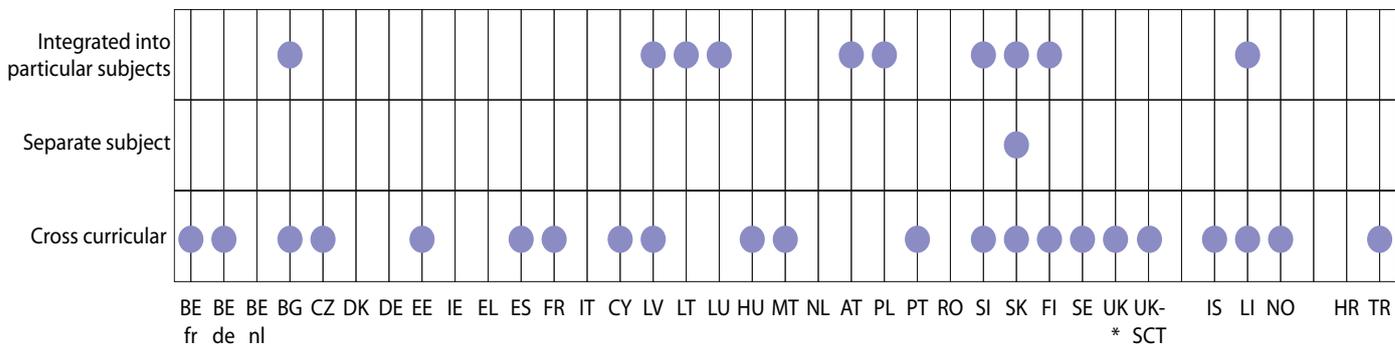
Entrepreneurship in schools

Entrepreneurship education is nowadays being increasingly promoted in most Member States though the approaches followed vary considerably.

According to a Eurydice [study](#) (2012), the following Member States and regions have launched specific strategies for implementing entrepreneurship education in primary and general secondary education: Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Sweden, Wales (UK) and the Flemish Community (Belgium).

In other countries, entrepreneurship education objectives can be part of broader strategies – for example for national lifelong learning, general education or youth, economic development or growth – and be promoted through stand-alone or linked initiatives related to entrepreneurship education.

Figure 2 – Primary education: sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
Approaches to delivering transversal key competences, as specified in national curricula for primary education (ISCED1), 2011/12



Data source: [Eurydice Report](#), Developing Key Competences at school in Europe, 2012

Entrepreneurship can, as well as other key competences such as digital, civic and social competences, be [integrated](#) into general education in different ways:

- following a cross-curricular approach whereby entrepreneurship objectives are considered as transversal and form part of the values and competences to be developed throughout all subjects and curriculum activities;
- be integrated into existing curriculum subjects;
- be introduced as a separate curriculum subject.

Figures 2 and 3 show the approach(es) followed by Member States and EFTA countries.

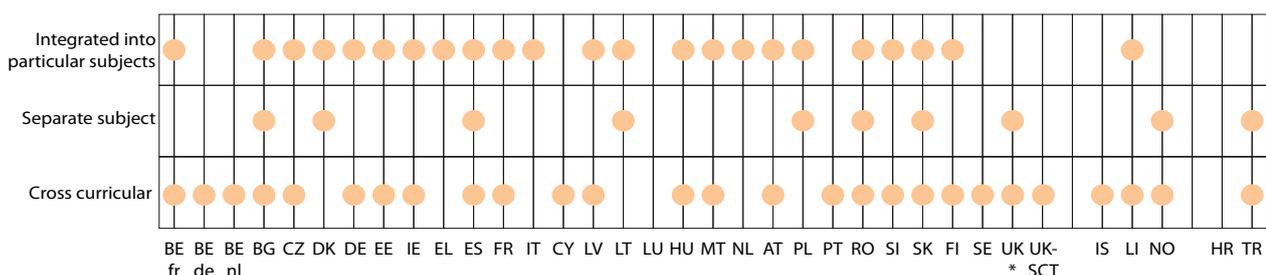
In primary education (figure 2) most countries follow a cross-curricular approach with very few integrating entrepreneurship

into particular subjects, whereas in secondary education (figure 2), the take-up of this latter option is more widespread. When integrated into existing curricular subjects, entrepreneurship is in general addressed at primary level in social sciences. At secondary level the subject areas likely to integrate entrepreneurship are economics, business studies and careers education.

European Union framework

In the early 2000s, spurred by globalisation and the need for a solid base of innovative and creative entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship education gained [momentum](#) in the EU. The 2000 [Lisbon Strategy](#) underlined the importance of creating an environment conducive to starting up and developing businesses. In the context of this strategy, the European [Charter for Small Businesses](#) (2000) identified education and training for

Figure 3 – Secondary education: sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
Approaches to delivering transversal key competences, as specified in national curricula for general secondary education (ISCED2-3), 2011/12



Data source: [Eurydice Report](#), Developing Key Competences at school in Europe, 2012

entrepreneurship as one of ten areas in which action is needed to support small firms.

In 2006, the importance of education and training in order to encourage entrepreneurship took another step with the adoption by the European Commission of the [Communication](#) on "Fostering entrepreneurial mindsets through education and learning". It pointed out in particular that the benefits of entrepreneurship education were not limited to getting more start-ups, innovative ventures or new jobs but could also improve individuals' creativity and self-confidence, whatever their career paths.

Presenting entrepreneurship as a key competence for all, the Communication also recognised that "(...) entrepreneurship competence should be acquired through lifelong learning (...)", and focused on entrepreneurship education from primary to university including secondary level vocational education and technical institutions at tertiary level.

The 2006 [Recommendation](#) of the European Parliament and the Council followed the same approach, recognising a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship as one of the eight key competences for lifelong learning, such as communication in the mother tongue or in foreign languages and digital competence.

The 2009 [Strategic framework](#) for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), whose purpose was to strengthen cooperation between Member States, included as its fourth strategic objective: "Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship at all levels of education and training".

The [Europe 2020](#) Strategy recognised the importance of entrepreneurship education in several of its Flagship initiatives (e.g. "[Innovative Union](#)", "[Youth on the move](#)" as well as the "[Agenda for New Skills and jobs](#)").

Examples of EU programmes & initiatives for entrepreneurship

Financial [support](#) to entrepreneurship education projects was granted through the Commission's [Lifelong learning](#) and Competitiveness and Innovation (CIP) programmes and will in future be provided under the [Erasmus+](#) and [COSME](#) programmes.

[Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs](#), which will be part of the COSME programme from 2014, is an exchange programme between future or new entrepreneurs and experienced entrepreneurs. It enables the former to receive advice and coaching and the latter to learn about new markets and gain new perspectives.

Initiatives to train trainers and equip teachers with the competences necessary to teach entrepreneurship have also taken place. Two European [workshops](#) aiming at disseminating good practices were held in 2012. In June 2013 a [guide](#) to entrepreneurship education for educators was published.

Latest developments

In November 2012, the Commission adopted a new strategy on education and training, entitled "[Rethinking education](#)" in which it calls on Member States to strengthen the provision of transversal skills such as entrepreneurial skills. The strategy also states that, "All young people should benefit from at least one practical entrepreneurial experience before leaving compulsory education". As for the actions planned at EU level, the strategy includes the publication of policy guidance on entrepreneurship education in 2013; the setting-up, jointly with the OECD, of a guidance framework for entrepreneurial education institutions; and the development of tools to assess progress in the acquisition of entrepreneurial competences.

The Entrepreneurship 2020 [Action Plan](#) presented by the Commission in January 2013 places strong emphasis on the contribution of entrepreneurial education to growth and jobs, on the role of higher education institutions in this regard as well as in terms of innovation. Amongst the actions envisaged, the Commission will:

- Develop a pan-European entrepreneurial initiative covering impact assessment, the sharing of knowledge, developing methodologies and peer mentoring between Member States' practitioners;
- Strengthen cooperation with Member States in order to assess the introduction of entrepreneurship education in each country and to support public administrations wishing to learn from peers;
- Promote the recognition and validation of informal or non-formal entrepreneurial learning.

Member States are invited, in particular, to:

- Ensure that "entrepreneurship" is a key competence in curricula across primary, secondary, vocational, higher and adult education before the end of 2015;
- Promote entrepreneurial training for young people and adults via Structural Funds resources, notably the European Social Fund (ESF) and the training possibilities available under the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) as well as entrepreneurial learning modules for young people participating in national Youth Guarantee schemes.

The Action Plan also highlights the importance of communicating positively about the achievements and value of entrepreneurs for society, the opportunities of business creation as a career option, as well as the need to reach out to specific demographic groups (e.g. seniors, women, migrants, the unemployed and young people). Member States are notably invited to establish entrepreneurship education schemes for the unemployed.

European Parliament

The European Parliament (EP) has long been supportive of entrepreneurship education, as shown by the 2006 recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (see above). In a [resolution](#) of 7 February 2013, the EP called on Member States to invest in the promotion of entrepreneurial skills, and insisted that ESF youth-related measures be focused especially on apprenticeships, traineeships and entrepreneurship. In recent [resolutions](#) of 11 September 2013 and 22 [October](#) 2013, the EP also highlighted the importance of general entrepreneurial skills, in particular for young people and called on Member States to give them greater weight in their curricula.

Main references

Eurydice report "[Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe](#)", Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), European Commission, March 2012.

Eurydice report "[Developing Key Competences at School in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities for Policy](#)", Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), European Commission, November 2012.

[A Global Perspective on Entrepreneurship Education and Training](#), Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2010.

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