



**ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AS SELF-EMPLOYMENT TOOL
SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS WITHIN ECVET**

Entrepreneurship in the European Area of
Skills and Qualifications. A study report

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Introduction

The presented report is the first of the results of the intellectual work (IO no1) of the project **Entrepreneurship as Self-employment tool. Skills and qualifications within ECVET**. This Report is the effect of the need's analysis developed by all the partners, which objective was to recollect the best practices of entrepreneurship and innovative educational approaches already in use and Identification of training needs / necessary steps for successful implementation of open educational approaches in their daily practices. The objective of this output is to answer this preliminary key questions to the further project development, and complete the study on entrepreneurial situation within validation and recognition of their competencies. O1 will serve for all the other project activities, especially for the development of the Europass profile, for the identification of the quality framework, for designing tailored roadmaps for the adoption of entrepreneurship education and for orientation during the content-creation phase.

In first part of the report definition of the formal, nor-formal and informal training has been delivered. Then, Partners have analysed training solutions offered in the field of entrepreneurship and classified them according to their formal, nor-formal and informal character. Is it followed by the search for specific examples validation of entrepreneurial competences. The cases are sometimes positive, but also negative, when no solution for the validation of competences is found for a given situation. In next part, research focus is on continuous training offer, and either if it figures or not in the NQF, including the associated level of qualification according to the national scale. Also, each partner has set up a country factsheet on the implementation of ECVET within the scope of entrepreneurial training, considering the necessary conditions for ECVET implementation as studied during the preliminary research and the advancement stage in their countries. This analysis has enabled identification of existing gaps in the validation and recognition of entrepreneurial skills. Report ends with final recommendations on the evaluation and validation of learning outcomes agreed by all project partners. Summary refers first of all to the final conclusions.

Proposal of qualification level within EQF and NQF

Entrepreneurship as a key competence

Building an effective strategy for shaping entrepreneurial competences in the education system from an early age requires adopting such a fairly uniform approach to entrepreneurship, as it should be borne in mind that the recipient of this definition is not so much researchers, but primarily decision-makers in the field of education, authors of core curricula, programs teaching and textbooks and teachers and finally - the students themselves. The definition of entrepreneurship as a key competence has been extended by the Thematic Working Group on entrepreneurship education, a body created by the European Commission¹.

“Entrepreneurship education is about learners developing the skills and mind-set to be able to turn creative ideas into entrepreneurial action. This is a key competence for all learners, supporting personal development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability. It is relevant across the lifelong learning process, in all disciplines of learning and to all forms of education and training (formal, non-formal and informal) which contribute to an entrepreneurial spirit or behaviour, with or without a commercial objective”.

This common European understanding of entrepreneurship as a key competence indicates a dual focus. Firstly, the development of entrepreneurial attitudes, skills and knowledge should enable the individual to turn ideas into action. Secondly, entrepreneurship is not only related to economic activities and business creation, but more widely to all areas of life and society. Innovative and creative action can be taken within a new venture, or within existing organisations, i.e. as 'intrapreneurial activity'.

¹ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, (2016), Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

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As stipulated in the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competencies for lifelong learning, essential knowledge, skills and attributes related to this competence are as follows²:

- Entrepreneurship competence requires knowing that there are different contexts and opportunities for turning ideas into action in personal, social and professional activities, and an understanding of how these arise. Individuals should know and understand approaches to planning and management of projects, which include both processes and resources. They should have an understanding of economics and the social and economic opportunities and challenges facing an employer, organisation or society. They should also be aware of ethical principles and challenges of sustainable development and have self-awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses,
- Entrepreneurial skills are founded on creativity which includes imagination, strategic thinking and problem-solving, and critical and constructive reflection within evolving creative processes and innovation. They include the ability to work both as an individual and collaboratively in teams, to mobilize resources (people and things) and to sustain activity. This includes the ability to make financial decisions relating to cost and value. The ability to effectively communicate and negotiate with others, and to cope with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk as part of making informed decisions is essential,
- An entrepreneurial attitude is characterised by a sense of initiative and agency, proactivity, being forward-looking, courage and perseverance in achieving objectives. It includes a desire to motivate others and value their ideas, empathy and taking care of people and the world, and accepting responsibility taking ethical approaches throughout the process.

The second part of the definition of key competences is the characteristics of the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes associated with the given competence³. There are new references to proactivity (nowadays extremely important), the capacity for empathy, care for other people and the world, as well as assuming responsibility and ethical attitudes. The issues of understanding economic processes, the ability to make financial decisions, effective communication and negotiating with other people, as well as dealing with uncertainty,

² Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competencies for lifelong learning, Brusell 2019.

³ Rachwał T. ed. (2019), Kształtowanie kompetencji przedsiębiorczych, FRSE, Warszawa.

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ambiguity and risk as elements of the process of making informed decisions were also more emphasized.

Adopting a unified position on the definition was important, as research showed significant differences in its practical implementation both between European countries and within them, which resulted from a different understanding and interpretation of entrepreneurship education.

Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do after completion of learning. These statements can be designed and used for educational planning and curriculum development or for different types of accountability such as legal or professional accountability (for the full list of learning outcomes developed by the EntreComp, see the Appendix of the publication, pages 25-37).

As indicated in the new EU Council Recommendation (2018, p. 1, paragraph 4) "currently, competence requirements have changed due to the growing number of jobs being automated, the increasingly important role of technology in all areas of work and life, and the growing importance of competences social, civic and entrepreneurial skills that ensure resilience and adaptability".

Teaching of the Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship teaching is most common at upper secondary level, where a greater variety of approaches are observed. It is often a separate subject and at the same time included in the teaching of other subjects, mainly in the fields of social sciences, economics and management. However, even at this stage of education, entrepreneurship is often taught as an optional subject. This approach is in line with the fact that upper secondary students have more choice than their schoolmates at lower education levels. However, it should be remembered that if entrepreneurship education does not fall within the scope of compulsory subjects and is not part of the cross-curricular path, but only an optional subject, then not all students will be covered.

Guidelines on entrepreneurship education are more often developed at the level of general upper secondary and vocational school than at lower education levels. There are no clear

differences between countries in the methods and forms of education included in the guidelines. Active learning and extracurricular activities are the most popular, while learning through experience is less common. Whereas in most countries' entrepreneurship education is included in curricula, there are often no recommendations for specific teaching methods.

In its 2012 Communication on a new approach to education: *Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes*, the European Commission calls on Member States to provide all students with at least one practical entrepreneurial experience before they complete their compulsory education⁴.

"Practical entrepreneurial experience is understood as an educational experience in which the learner has the opportunity to create ideas, identify good ideas and put them into action. It should be an initiative carried out by students individually or in a small team, which includes learning by doing and leading to a measurable effect. The goal of these opportunities is for learners to develop skills, confidence and the ability to see opportunities, identify solutions and put their ideas into practice.

Examples of practical entrepreneurial experiences differ in their focus, but also in the degree to which they involve changes or adjustments in the educational approach.

Learning outcomes

There is a strong rationale for ensuring that explicit learning outcomes are established for entrepreneurship education. Firstly, it helps to distinguish it as a clear area of teaching and learning. Secondly, it allows pupils to know what is expected of them, which will enable them to develop the required skills. Finally, it helps teachers to structure and organise their teaching and paves the way for formalised assessment. The distribution of different learning outcomes in entrepreneurship in the curriculum is uneven across European countries. Some of them, namely confidence, planning and teamwork, are also broader educational goals that are not just about teaching entrepreneurship and are quite common. Creativity is sometimes presented as a general objective, but clearly formulated learning outcomes associated with entrepreneurship teaching are rarely found. 'Resource management', 'uncertainty and risk management', 'the role of entrepreneurs in society' and 'career opportunities in the

⁴ Eurydice Report (2016), *Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe*, Brussels.

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entrepreneurial sector' are quite detailed and therefore far less widespread. Knowledge of financial issues is the result of education traditionally associated with teaching entrepreneurship, if only because it is more recognizable and measurable. This is one of the most widespread effects of entrepreneurship education at all levels of education. Below one can find description of the basic attitudes, skills and knowledge, as proposed in the Eurydice Report⁵:

Entrepreneurial attitudes: self-confidence

Learning outcomes related to the entrepreneurial attitude of self-confidence are quite widespread across European school curricula. As an element of socialisation, fostering self-confidence is also a general educational objective, not only applicable to entrepreneurship. It can be expressed in a number of other ways, ranging from self-knowledge, to self-awareness, self-esteem, self-affirmation, assertiveness, or a feeling of mastering a skill. To be more specifically related to entrepreneurship, it should be expressed and understood in relation to tasks or actions.

Entrepreneurial attitudes: a sense of initiative

A 'sense of initiative' is at the core of entrepreneurship education as defined in the European recommendation on key competences. Therefore, it is often found in curriculum areas explicitly referring to entrepreneurship education, whether in the curricula of compulsory or optional subjects or in cross-curricular themes. When looking at it from the angle of learning outcomes, it is closely related to problem-solving, as well as to taking responsibility, or it is simply formulated as 'being enterprising' or 'pro-active'.

Entrepreneurial skills: creativity

Creativity, understood as the ability to think in new and imaginative ways, is an essential ingredient and a motor for the idea generation and innovation process involved in any entrepreneurial activity. It can also be understood to mean a creative approach to problem-solving. Unlike the more usual understanding of creativity, it is not understood in this context to be just a personal trait or gift, but as something that can also be learned and developed.

⁵ Ibidem, pp. 81-84.

Creativity in the curriculum is more closely associated with entrepreneurial skills where it is expressed in the sense of developing useful ideas. However, it seems more difficult to find clearly stated learning outcomes linked to creativity.

Entrepreneurial skills: planning

The ability to plan and structure tasks can be seen as a skill that keeps the idea generation and innovation process going. It enables ideas to be turned into actions, taking into account actual circumstances and resources. However, taken out of the context of entrepreneurship education, it can also have a narrower meaning, where it is linked only to organisational changes.

Entrepreneurial skills: financial literacy

Understood as the ability to understand financial statements and budgets, financial literacy relates to skills for managing personal finance as well as providing the basis for managing business operations. It is often part of the learning outcomes related to the narrower definition of entrepreneurship education, focusing on business skills. It appears to be one of the skills that is easier to translate into observable and measurable learning outcomes than other aspects of entrepreneurship education. This may pose a danger for the effective implementation of entrepreneurship as a key competence, as it may be tempting for curriculum authorities to focus on the elements that are easy to teach and assess, to the detriment of other essential skills. A survey run by the Thematic Working Group on Entrepreneurship Education in 2013 showed that financial literacy was the most prominent aspect of the subject covered by participating countries. This confirms a certain bias towards the narrower, business-oriented learning outcomes, which is somewhat contradictory to the general trend in Europe, which points to a broader understanding of entrepreneurship education. However, the focus in delivering financial literacy can either be more theoretical (focusing on financial knowledge) or more practical (focusing on financial skills).

Entrepreneurial skills: managing resources

Managing resources is the ability to assemble and organise resources for a particular purpose, such as a business, or other opportunity. This seems to be quite specific and is therefore less visible in European school curricula as an explicit learning outcome. It is rarely tackled in the

context of pursuing a business idea. The more common understanding of managing resources in curricula seems to be related to the responsible use of (natural) resources and sustainable development, which on its own, does not equate to entrepreneurship education. However, some examples of this learning outcome in the context of entrepreneurship education can be found.

Entrepreneurial skills: managing uncertainty/risk

The ability to cope with uncertainty and risk in the process of implementing and exploiting an idea is a skill commonly associated with entrepreneurs and is another essential ingredient of entrepreneurship education. It is also a difficult one in terms of teaching and learning, as it is not easy to acquire or develop this skill on a theoretical basis. Instead it needs exposure to and experience of uncertain situations, which may be provided through educational projects.

Entrepreneurial skills: teamwork

As with learning outcomes related to self-confidence, teamwork is a broader objective that can be embedded in any area of the curriculum, not only as a learning outcome, but also as a mode of learning. It is important not to confuse these two aspects. In this sense, on its own, it is not specific to entrepreneurship education. But, within context, it is an essential skill, to be developed alongside all the others. It also involves other related skills such as communication, negotiation and decision-making.

Entrepreneurial knowledge: how to assess opportunities

Generally speaking, there is a longer tradition within education systems of teaching and assessing entrepreneurial related knowledge rather than entrepreneurial skills or attitudes. The issue has usually been addressed through the subject of economics or through specific entrepreneurship subjects in secondary and vocational education. As a result, the learning outcomes in this area may be considered easier to embed in curricula and teaching methods than those relating to entrepreneurial skills and attitudes, which require a more innovative and practical teaching approach. Within the European ASTEE project, one of the areas identified as being important is knowing how to identify and assess opportunities, and understanding how the economy functions.

Entrepreneurial knowledge: role of entrepreneurs in society

Another area identified within the ASTEE project is knowledge of the role and function of entrepreneurs in society, including an understanding of ethics in business. This is not the same as understanding what an enterprise is, or the rights and obligations of an entrepreneur. There are very few examples of explicit learning outcomes related to the role of entrepreneurs but where they do exist, as with 'assessing opportunities', they are often attached to the subject of economics or to specific entrepreneurship subjects in secondary and vocational education.

Entrepreneurial knowledge: entrepreneurial career options

Finally, another area of knowledge covers entrepreneurial career options. In terms of learning outcomes, this means understanding that there are different reasons why people start a business, e.g. to make money, to help others or to do something different. This is a first step in enabling students to eventually identify, for themselves, career options in business/social entrepreneurship. Often this is addressed within the area of preparation for the world of work, which on its own, however, is not specific enough for the purposes of this report. Therefore, there are very few examples in European school curricula of explicit learning outcomes related to entrepreneurial career options.

Assessment and Validation of the Competence

An important step in the new policy on education and the labour market has been the adoption of the general principle that the basis for awarding qualifications is that the person demonstrates that he or she has achieved the learning outcomes required for the qualification. In the context of the new qualifications system, we call learning outcomes what, as a result of various types of activities, people know and understand (knowledge), and what they can do (skills), as well as their ability to take on a specific type of responsibility (social competence). As noted above, learning outcomes can be achieved in a variety of ways: at school (formal education), on courses, training, internships and apprenticeships implemented outside the school system (non-formal education), as part of professional work, volunteering and developing passions and interests (informal learning). If entrepreneurship, as a key competence is to be recognised as an important learning experience, assessment is essential.

Moreover, as entrepreneurship is a broad and multi-faceted key competence, it not only requires innovative teaching but also innovative methods of assessment. The findings of the Eurydice, as well as this research report, seem to confirm previous research, showing that entrepreneurial attitudes, skills and knowledge are not specifically assessed. Assessment is usually linked to specific subjects that may or may not include learning outcomes related to entrepreneurship education. It is therefore difficult to track which specific learning outcomes are being assessed. In countries which have a separate entrepreneurship subject, a number of learning outcomes are obviously being assessed as part of the assessment of the subject itself. But when entrepreneurship is taught as a cross-curricular topic, it is difficult to find evidence of the assessment of specific entrepreneurship-related learning outcomes.

Checking knowledge and skills has always been an integral part of formal education, but it is not a common practice in non-formal education. For obvious reasons, formal checking of knowledge and skills, and even more so of social competences, is not linked to informal learning. The exceptions are cases in which the possibility of passing examinations in extramural mode has been created. Adopting the principle that the basis for awarding qualifications are primarily obtained and tested learning outcomes, and not the way in which man obtained these effects, opened new possibilities for building a more flexible system of awarding qualifications. In the system of awarding qualifications, in which the main reference point there are learning outcomes, validation, in other words, plays a very important role – a formalized process of checking that the learning outcomes required for qualifications have been achieved. Giving more weight to learning outcomes than organizing the learning process has made it possible to more clearly identify validation as the final stage in acquiring qualifications. In the modernized qualifications system, validation should be available regardless of whether anyone has used organized forms of education and training. According to the new rules, validation can be spread out over time, i.e. it is not necessary to simultaneously confirm all the learning outcomes required for qualifications. Secondly, validation can take place in different places, e.g. at the employers. Thirdly, various methods selected according to the needs and limitations of those entering validation can be used to check learning outcomes. This should lead to a situation in which a larger group of people

interested in obtaining qualifications will be able to check and confirm the learning outcomes obtained⁶.

Validation requirements in particular should relate to:

- methods used in validation,
- human resources - competences of persons performing validation,
- the method of conducting validation as well as the organizational and material conditions necessary for the proper conduct of validation (e.g. its time frame, technical conditions, premises).

In addition, validation requirements may address other issues, e.g. specify conditions for appealing against the result of validation, principles and conditions for re-entering validation, etc. It is worth emphasizing that the requirements for validation in the description of qualifications should include only those elements without which the result of the validation cannot be reliable under any circumstances.

The quality of validation, i.e. the reliability of its results, can be discussed if:

- the learning outcomes that should be checked are carefully checked,
- the result will be independent of the place, time, methods and people carrying out the validation.

Therefore, the quality of validation depends on adapting its course, methods and conditions in which it is carried out to the specifics of the qualification. It is also necessary to adapt validation to the way a person has achieved learning outcomes. Consequently, the quality of validation means the comparability of validation results carried out by different certifying authorities⁷.

Ensuring the quality of qualifications cannot be of an ad hoc nature, but is intended to form an integral part of the management system of certifying authorities. Ensuring the quality of qualifications is to serve the credibility of qualifications and improve validation.

⁶ Gmaj, I., Grzeszczak, J., Leyk, A. et al. (2016), *Walidacja – nowe możliwości zdobywania kwalifikacji*, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 15.