

4° Entrepreneurship Education High Level Reflection Panel - Rome 15-16 October 2009

- SUMMARY REPORT -

The 4° Entrepreneurship Education High Level Reflection Panel has been jointly organised by the Commission and by the Italian authorities (Ministry of Economic Development and Ministry of Education). The panel brought together senior managers from the national departments of education and enterprise, and some relevant stakeholders.

Participants included representatives from the following countries: **Bulgaria, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia** and **Spain**, with representatives from the **Czech Republic** and **Sweden** participating as observers.

This Panel showed - as previous events already - that in many countries entrepreneurship education is either **part of a national strategy or of a curricular reform**.

In **Malta**, a reform of the curriculum is under way that will increase the presence of entrepreneurship. In **Romania**, there is a national strategy for the development of human resources that includes entrepreneurship education and is supported by the European Social Fund (ESF). In **Spain**, the law introducing entrepreneurship in the school curriculum adopted already in 2006 will start to be implemented this year at local level by the autonomous regions (a report on regional activities will be soon published). In **Portugal**, after a pilot phase where 25 schools had been selected for developing entrepreneurship programmes, information on results has been disseminated and the number of schools participating in the second cycle has substantially increased. The ministry is now considering launching a national strategy. In **Italy** the education system is shifting its focus from subjects to competences, and there is a plan to reform the later years of secondary education. In **Bulgaria**, where entrepreneurship is embedded in all fields of study in vocational education (as in **Spain**), a new education act is being designed with an increased role for entrepreneurship. In **Slovenia** many activities take place in primary and secondary education although they are not embedded in the curriculum. The ministry of economy intends to launch a new initiative together with the ministry of education.

Main challenges identified by participants are: bringing together a wide group of stakeholders for a coherent strategy; getting broad-based support and acceptance from teachers, and providing specific training to them; networking and spreading information to schools; involving businesses in education activities.

Participants stressed that in **setting up a national strategy** it is crucial to include all relevant stakeholders, besides the main responsible ministries, and to decide on the different role of each one of them. Moreover, one of the organisations involved in this concerted strategy should take ownership of the process, guide and coordinate (as it was the case in **Sweden**, where the new national strategy was led by the ministry of education). In this cluster of countries, generally cooperation between different departments and with stakeholders still needs to improve. In **Romania**, increased cooperation is an item in the agenda.

Discussion showed that, the more concrete the implementation of entrepreneurship education gets, the more important it is to get the teachers on board. The representative from the trade union of **teachers** (ETUCE) stressed that a general consensus on a broad definition of entrepreneurship education – as it can be found in the Recommendation on Key Competences – is very important for its implementation, as teachers want to teach children for life not only for the labour market. While it is important to make guidelines and teaching material available to teachers, they should have enough freedom in the implementation. Sometimes curricula are too rigid, teachers are overloaded and exposed to too much control and inspections. This can

make it difficult for them to organise innovative activities and give freedom to their own pupils. In **Slovenia** 20% of the curriculum is open for teachers: this provides an opportunity for entrepreneurship education. In **Portugal**, teachers were offered a platform, with freedom on how to implement it. **Bulgaria** described that they had to find this out the hard way. Following a disagreement between the two ministries, the Ministry of Economy went ahead independently with a more narrow definition in mind, looking only at start-up activities. They recognised after some time that they had no success, because they had no real access to schools and teachers. Thus, Bulgaria now has adopted a broad definition of entrepreneurship education.

The **role of private associations and NGOs** in delivering entrepreneurship education has been highlighted. Especially where a political commitment is missing, privately organised associations can usefully fill the gap. However, it is even more effective to associate them in a coherent strategy. In **Romania**, the Ministry of Education signed an agreement with Junior Achievement Romania. In **Spain**, in Asturias an external organisation (*Valnalon*) has been asked by the regional government to implement entrepreneurship education, which is now part of the regional curriculum: this model is being transferred to other regions of Spain.

The importance of action at the **regional level** has been pointed out, particularly in countries like Italy and Spain. In this context the national level should act as a facilitator, not as a dominator. Some countries (Bulgaria, Italy, Romania and Spain) highlighted the use of the **European Social Fund** (ESF), especially for training teachers. It was recommended that more knowledge and support is available, both at European and at national level, on how to access ESF funds. It is important for all countries to use these funds for entrepreneurship education.

Different problems were identified at different levels of education. Teaching entrepreneurship in secondary education may be in some cases even more difficult than in primary, as teachers are more specialised in teaching specific subjects. In tertiary education the difficulty faced by public authorities in shaping policies lies in the great degree of autonomy of universities. It was highlighted that the most effective way to introduce entrepreneurship education into curricula would be to **combine a cross-curricular approach with a specific subject** on entrepreneurship. In order to make sure that entrepreneurship education reaches all students, participation to these courses should not be just optional.

Ensuring the **involvement of businesses** can be sometimes problematic, but it is essential for successful entrepreneurship education that is close to real life. In **Italy**, the employers association (*Confindustria*) launched a project whereby entrepreneurs became part of school boards in 16 Italian provinces. In **Spain**, at the University of Valencia business owners have been selected to create a group that manages a chair on entrepreneurship education and teaches students. In general, the involvement of businesses needs a strategic and systematic approach. Business people and their associations need to be supported in learning and knowing how to work with education, given that they do not have the time to learn by trial and error. In **Malta**, there is a plan to make more use of business representatives in education.

A main proposal coming from this Panel is to create – both at European and at national level - a **platform for exchanges** (virtual and/or physical) between different stakeholders and also practitioners.

It was recommended to **make full use of existing EU programmes**, especially for training teachers and producing pedagogic material. It was also noted that the Commission could help in translating existing didactic material into different languages.

The role of the Commission is seen especially in **highlighting models of good practice** that can be disseminated and transferred. As part of that general objective, it was also recommended that awards are launched at European level to recognize entrepreneurship education initiatives, with different categories.

As a possible **follow-up** to the four High Level Reflection Panels just completed, it was proposed that the Commission should support and coordinate the work on specific solutions for the issues identified during the Panels, such as, for instance, teacher training. While in the first phase the model of geographical clusters was rather successful, it was proposed that in the future it could be useful to mix the clusters so that participants may benefit from the experience of different countries (for instance the Nordic countries). Nevertheless, the format of a small number of separate groups should be retained in order to ensure a workshop environment in which all delegates can actively participate.