

5. Entrepreneurship Education High Level Reflection Panel Zagreb , 18-19 March 2010

Draft Summary Report

Composition and working format of the panel

The fifth Entrepreneurship Education High Level Reflection Panel was held in Zagreb, 18-19 March. Hosted by the Croatian government (the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports), the panel was jointly organized by the European Commission (DG Enterprise and Industry and DG Education and Culture) and the European Training Foundation. The panel comprised all EU pre-accession countries and a selection of countries from the EU Southern Neighbourhood region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, Israel, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Tunisia and Turkey). All countries participate in European Commission enterprise policy support frameworks and where entrepreneurship education is an integral part of the monitoring arrangements: European Small Business Act (pre-accession region) and Euro-Mediterranean Enterprise Charter (Southern Neighbourhood region).

National delegations comprised senior government staff, policy makers as well as representatives of employers and enterprise associations.

The overall objectives of the panel were:

- to map policies supporting entrepreneurship education in the participating countries, as well as to exchange good practice;
- to identify ways to step up cooperation between actors at national level and to develop more systematic strategies in entrepreneurship education.

The structure of panel proceedings reflected the previous four panels: a) an overview of EU policy in the area of entrepreneurship education, b) plenary discussion sessions, c) break-out thematic working groups and d) show-casing of good practice.

Key issues

a) Policy, coordination and partnership

A round-table focusing on institutional and policy frameworks for entrepreneurship education in the eleven participating countries highlighted a range of approaches being taken by the countries, with varying degrees of engagement by key stakeholders. While some countries have already established or have made policy commitments (e.g. Tunisia, Kosovo, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo UNSCR 1244) there is a pattern in others of evolving and mutually-reinforcing policy interest by education and economy stakeholders (e.g. Albania, Egypt, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia). This will need to be reinforced if the value of early policy synergies and institutional cooperation are to be maximized. Participants recognized that engagement of the private sector and civic interest groups in policy and coordination structures was essential for sustained and effective developments in entrepreneurship education. The ETF's 'Torino Process', whose overall objective was to close the policy gap between education and the economy in partner countries would work in this direction.

The Turkish education authorities adopted a national strategy for entrepreneurship in 2009 addressing all levels of education. Similar lifelong entrepreneurial learning strategies are available in Montenegro, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Tunisia and Croatia. In all countries, ensuring the strategies would be followed up with implementation across all levels of the education system (including non-formal learning) required more institutional and financial support. Nonetheless, while discussions focused on the importance of structured partnership between education and economy ministries and the world of business, the importance of home-grown partnership arrangements was stressed. For example, Israel demonstrated how strong, informal connections between education, enterprises and the NGO sector, were considered sufficient to meet the entrepreneurship education developments in that country.

A partnership-building process in Serbia involving education, economy and youth ministries, underlined the value of civic interest groups and the Chamber of Commerce joining forces to ensure a more comprehensive, cross-stakeholder strategy and support framework for life-long entrepreneurship education. Some countries had established specific structures to underpin cross-stakeholder cooperation. For example, following an inter-ministerial (education and economy) agreement to promote entrepreneurship education, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has established a National Centre for Promotion of Innovation and Entrepreneurial Learning.

The meeting acknowledged that where countries have devolved responsibility for education to regional governments (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina), coordination arrangements at this level also required attention, making for a more complex web of dialogue and cooperation structures.

Finally, participants recognized that institutional culture can be a significant obstacle to cross-institutional cooperation. For partnerships or other cross-stakeholder coordination structures to have real impact, clearly defined roles and responsibilities are required. Further, a more definite leadership role for education ministries (general and higher education) will be imperative to strategic and sustained development of life-long entrepreneurship education.

b) Curriculum and teacher training

While the lion's share of entrepreneurship promotion within the school and university environment is concentrated on entrepreneurship as a subject within the curriculum, there was growing recognition of the 'entrepreneurship key competence'.

Good examples of the subject-oriented approach in primary and secondary education were shared by the delegation from Bosnia and Herzegovina with significant efforts being made in entrepreneurship promotion in vocational education in Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. In Tunisia, a pilot is ongoing for 10-15 year old students in 55 schools across the country. This will be scaled up nationally if the evaluation is positive. Further, a number of countries underlined that entrepreneurship education involved compulsory courses at various levels of education: Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. More innovative approaches to entrepreneurship education promotion shared at the meeting included school-based virtual businesses in Croatia (panel participants benefited from a presentation by pupil entrepreneurs), the Open University in Turkey promoting greater access to courses to develop entrepreneurship skills and a particular drive in Israel to promote awareness and skills of school managers as agents of change.

While some countries are now moving forward with developing entrepreneurship as a key competence across the curriculum this is confined to pilot actions in primary and secondary education (e.g. Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina). In higher education, a good practice of 'across campus' entrepreneurship education demonstrated how both key competence and entrepreneurship education were being promoted at the University of Sfax (Tunisia) and where impact indicators were applied to assess performance. The university also benefits from an entrepreneurship centre to support entrepreneurship developments across the university. This good practice was being promoted by the government to all higher education institutions in the country.

Discussions underlined that there were still many questions as to how the entrepreneurship key competence could be promoted through the teaching and learning process. The panel acknowledged that a significant effort to engage, (re)train and support teachers will be essential to meet the entrepreneurship key competence objective. In this regard, access to good practice and exchange will be important for all countries. A regional coordination platform for the EU pre-accession region (South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning), involving curriculum and teacher training specialists co-working curriculum and teacher development, provided a good example of how political support for multi-country peer cooperation can be established.

c) Information and improved public awareness

A challenge for all countries was a lack of awareness of the manifold aspects of entrepreneurship education. Terminology, what entrepreneurship involved in pedagogic terms as well as target groups were still issues for the wider public to understand. More specifically, the wider concept of the EU definition which went beyond preparing people for business start-ups to include entrepreneurship as a key competence for economic, social and civic life needed attention. Participants called for the development and promotion of public awareness-raising activities for entrepreneurship education as an essential basis for sustained policy commitment to the area.

d) Next steps - learning from others

Given an evolving policy area, and where good practice remains very much uncharted, the panel put forward proposals for a more comprehensive development of entrepreneurship education. Firstly, mechanisms similar to the high-level reflection panels should be held systematically to allow for tracking of developments and objective setting. Secondly, much was to be gained by multi-country cooperation and the collection and sharing of best practice, for instance through the creation of a dedicated platform or database. However, given the heightened policy interest and growing popularity of entrepreneurship education internationally, some delegations warned against the risks of the 'good practice market' advocating the development of an independent, good practice intelligence system, managed by an international body. The objective should be to accredit and quality assure good practice. Thirdly, entrepreneurship education fairs and thematic seminars would allow for broad-brush as well as focused developments on the range of issues which make up a lifelong entrepreneurship education environment. Finally, progress and impact at national and regional level will need to be monitored with particular interest by the panel for incorporating "peer" assessments into any eventual monitoring frameworks.