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IO1 – Primary &
Secondary
Research Report

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1. Introduction

The general understanding of entrepreneurship in Germany is in the first instance that of operating a business or enterprise. A second meaning is the attitude and courage to start a business upon own ideas, knowledge and competencies. The process of founding and developing a business and a finance plan for a new business is not in the centre of the general understanding of entrepreneurship but of course included. The conception and perception of entrepreneurship in Germany changed only slightly over the last two decades.

The number of new enterprises has been going downwards slightly over the recent years. But the share and number of idea-driven growth oriented new businesses is slightly up.

A distinct culture of entrepreneurship only exists in certain areas of society. However, there are developments that point to an opening towards entrepreneurial acting and mindset. The concept presupposes to recognize one's own abilities and desires to initiate processes that create value. This might include courageous decisions that involve the possibility to failure.

2. Youth Entrepreneurship in Germany

In particular young women dare seldomly to take the plunge into self-employment in Germany, in fact almost half as often as men. While just under 14 percent employed men have recently been able to "stand on their own two feet", this was the case for only 7 percent of working women.

Currently there are few signs that Germany could soon change into a haven for entrepreneurs. The number of business start-ups has tended to decline in recent years. The SME researchers from Bonn forecast around 400,000 start-ups and around 380,000 business closures for 2015. This means that the so-called start-up balance is positive, i.e. the bottom line is that the number of companies will remain positive. In view of a total

of around 3.6 million companies, 400,000 start-ups in one year seems a lot. However, this figure should not be overestimated: around 80 percent of all start-ups start as one-man businesses. The most recent start-up record dates back to 2004, when the statistics recorded over 570,000 new companies in Germany.

On the other hand, the falling unemployment rate contributes to a weaker interest in founding new businesses.

Generally young entrepreneurs are overrepresented among new business founders compared to other cohorts. Enterprises are founded particularly by people aged 25-34, 36 percent of all new entrepreneurs in 2016 belonged to that cohort. The youngest group (18-24) of new entrepreneurs represented 18 percent of that group.

There is some support from policy makers, and it has been recognized by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy that it might be reasonable to implement “entrepreneurial spirit into our schools”. However, there is no systematically curricula-based approach integrated in the educational system to impart knowledge, needed for entrepreneurial activities, but some initiatives.

3. Entrepreneurship in the Educational System

The educational system in Germany is basically structured by the federal system of the country. 17 educational administrations existing, one for each state and one on the federal government level. Decisions needed for a national framework are taken by a “standing conference of the ministers of education and cultural Affairs” of all 16 state ministers. That also concerns VET-students.

Traditionally the the dual system of vocational education and training is in the centre of a wider vocational training system in all 16 states. Vocational training in Germany is compared to other countries more clearly separated from academic education. Thus, compared to other European countries, the rate of university students is low, but it rose from 37% in 2005 to 56% in 2018. The vocational training in Germany is broadly diversified in technical colleges, vocational schools, dual system, school-based training.

The treatment of the topic of business start-ups in school and VET schools is often in the hands of individual teachers or instructors in the different areas. It is crucial that there is a legal framework that allows a systematic approach to entrepreneurship.

According to a decision of the “standing conference of the ministers of education and cultural Affairs” states can develop curricula which include career-development and the improvement of the students’ capability development of a business start-up.

In theory and practice of the German education system, the narrow concept of “Business” dominates. The focus is on legal, economic and financial aspects of entrepreneurship, but the entrepreneurial mindset plays hardly any role. This reflects the very instrumental and concrete understanding of entrepreneurship in Germany.

There has been a discussion in Germany whether “entrepreneurship” can or should be taught as a subject. Since the late 1990s it has been established as a minor subject at some universities. But there are view threads of entrepreneurship running through the curriculum in one of the states for any age group in formal education. We find some exceptions in particular specialized fields in which students are prepared to take over an agricultural farm, mostly from their parents or from relatives. It is all about formal competencies and knowledge, not about waking up or triggering an entrepreneurial spirit.

In vocational school practice, entrepreneurship plays a role above all in specialist areas in which family businesses play a major role: Craft, agriculture or viticulture.

4. Primary Research

Our consortium conducted three questionnaires in each of the six countries participating. We addressed Vocational Professionals, VET Students and Entrepreneurs.

In Germany 25 VET Students, 22 Vocational Professionals and 16 Entrepreneurs have taken part in the survey.¹

The core of the questionnaire is the EntreComp conceptual model.² The model has two main dimensions. *Firstly*, the 3 competence areas (Ideas and Opportunities, Resources, Into Action) that directly reflect the characterisation of entrepreneurship as the ability to turn ideas into action that generate value for someone other than oneself; and *secondly* the 15 competences that, make up the building blocks of the entrepreneurship as a competence.

4.1 Entrepreneurial Competencies (Students)

The interviewees were asked by the following introductory sentence to give an assessment on the scale:

The following competencies have been identified as being vital to potential entrepreneurs. Please rank the competencies within each area on a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important.

Ideas and Opportunities	Rank (1 – 5)
Spotting opportunities - Use your imagination to identify/create opportunities	2.6 (2)
Creativity - Develop creative and purposeful ideas	2.7 (3)
Vision - Work towards your vision of the future or an identified goal	2.6 (1)
Valuing ideas - Make the most of ideas and opportunities	2.7 (3)
Ethical and sustainable thinking - Assess the consequences/impact of your actions	2.8 (4)

¹ In IO 1 Document GER_questionnaire_results we provide more details.

² <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/entrecomp-entrepreneurship-competence-framework>

Resources	Rank (1 – 5)
Mobilising resources - Gather and manage the required resources	2.2 (1)
Mobilising others - Inspire, enthuse and get others to share your vision	3.0 (5)
Financial and economic literacy - Develop your financial and economic knowledge	2.7 (4)
Self-awareness and self-efficacy - Believe in yourself and keep developing	2.4 (3)
Motivation and perseverance - Stay focused and overcome difficulties	2.2 (2)

Into Action	Rank (1 – 5)
Learning through experience – Take lessons from your successes and failures	2.2 (1)
Working with others - Team-up, collaborate and network	2.3 (2)
Planning and management - Prioritise, organise and follow-up	2.5 (4)
Taking the initiative - Be pro-active and make things happen	2.5 (3)
Coping with ambiguity, uncertainty and risk - Make decisions and stand by them	2.7 (5)

4.2 Entrepreneurial Competencies (Entrepreneurs)

The interviewees were asked by the following introductory sentence to give an assessment on the scale:

The following competencies have been identified as being vital to potential entrepreneurs. Please rank the competencies within each area on a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important.

Ideas and Opportunities	Rank (1 – 5)
Spotting opportunities - Use your imagination to identify/create opportunities	1.8 (1)
Creativity - Develop creative and purposeful ideas	2.1 (3)
Vision - Work towards your vision of the future or an identified goal	2.0 (2)
Valuing ideas - Make the most of ideas and opportunities	2.5 (4)
Ethical and sustainable thinking - Assess the consequences/impact of your actions	3.0 (5)

Resources	Rank (1 – 5)
Mobilising resources - Gather and manage the required resources	2.0 (2)
Mobilising others - Inspire, enthuse and get others to share your vision	2.2 (3)
Financial and economic literacy - Develop your financial and economic knowledge	2.3 (4)
Self-awareness and self-efficacy - Believe in yourself and keep developing	2.5 (5)
Motivation and perseverance - Stay focused and overcome difficulties	1.9 (1)

Into Action	Rank (1 – 5)
Learning through experience – Take lessons from your successes and failures	2.1 (3)
Working with others - Team-up, collaborate and network	2.3 (4)
Planning and management - Prioritise, organise and follow-up	1.9 (2)
Taking the initiative - Be pro-active and make things happen	1.8 (1)
Coping with ambiguity, uncertainty and risk - Make decisions and stand by them	2.7 (5)

4.3 Entrepreneurial Competencies (Vocational Professionals)

The interviewees were asked by the following introductory sentence to give an assessment on the scale:

The following competencies have been identified as being vital to potential entrepreneurs. Please rank the competencies within each area on a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important.

Ideas and Opportunities	Rank (1 – 5)
Spotting opportunities - Use your imagination to identify/create opportunities	2.4 (3)
Creativity - Develop creative and purposeful ideas	2.2 (1)
Vision - Work towards your vision of the future or an identified goal	2.3 (2)
Valuing ideas - Make the most of ideas and opportunities	2.4 (4)
Ethical and sustainable thinking - Assess the consequences/impact of your actions	3.0 (5)

Resources	Rank (1 – 5)
Mobilising resources - Gather and manage the required resources	2.1 (1)
Mobilising others - Inspire, enthuse and get others to share your vision	2.7 (5)
Financial and economic literacy - Develop your financial and economic knowledge	2.2 (2)
Self-awareness and self-efficacy - Believe in yourself and keep developing	2.4 (3)
Motivation and perseverance - Stay focused and overcome difficulties	2.7 (4)

Into Action	Rank (1 – 5)
Learning through experience – Take lessons from your successes and failures	2.3 (2)
Working with others - Team-up, collaborate and network	2.8 (4)
Planning and management - Prioritise, organise and follow-up	2.4 (3)
Taking the initiative - Be pro-active and make things happen	2.2 (1)
Coping with ambiguity, uncertainty and risk - Make decisions and stand by them	2.8 (5)

5. Conclusion

Due to the lack of a general and systematic approach of entrepreneurship education within the framework of vocational training/education, much depends on the initiative of individual actors.

With regard to economic education, the focus of vocational training in Germany is on teaching business management skills. In particular aspects that are directly applicable in practice are taught: the legal foundations and accounting, which are important for the establishment of companies and businesses.

What is insufficiently implemented in the educational system is the necessary entrepreneurial mindset. The results of the survey also point to this. The questions of the basic attitude of entrepreneurship are in the foreground for all groups surveyed; the practical skills necessary for entrepreneurs can be learned in other traditional ways.

The fact that entrepreneurship in Germany is still strongly oriented towards family businesses also has cultural and habitual effects: many vocational school students who do not have an entrepreneurial family background do not even consider becoming entrepreneurs.

While practical skills are taught comparatively well in the German vocational educational system, knowledge about the opportunities offered by entrepreneurship should be made better known among vocational students. However, the dissemination of an entrepreneurial attitude or mindset appears to be most significant task.

The European Union's Entre Comp Frameworks can make an important contribution and have a major impact here. The teaching activities emanating from this project and the application-related toolkits are suitable for being taken up in the German vocational education and training system. An entrepreneurial mindset can probably be better implemented decentrally than through uniform curricula.

Ressources

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