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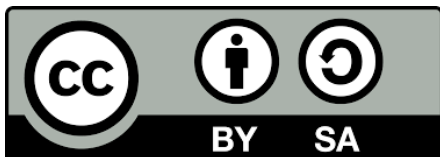
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Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership for VET

IO1 – Primary & Secondary Research Report



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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into actions (European Commission, 2009). The past years, entrepreneurship and innovation have become top policy priorities in the national agenda of many countries and the EU in general, in their effort to stimulate economic growth and fight unemployment. The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan consist the blueprint for action to unleash Europe's entrepreneurial potential.

At the centre of this effort, education for entrepreneurship can be particularly effective in order to provide the students with the relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes and also to contribute in the development of an entrepreneurial culture. Specifically, entrepreneurship education can be beneficial in initial vocational training, as students are close to join the work force and self-employment may be a valuable option for them. For this reason, the European Entrepreneurship Competence (EntreComp) Framework proposes a shared definition of entrepreneurship as a competence. The framework develops 15 competences along an 8-level progression model and proposes a comprehensive list of 442 learning outcomes (Bacigapulo et.al, 2016)

In the above context, the ENTRE@VET project pioneers in designing, implementing and evaluating a career guidance educational tool kit based on the EntreComp Framework. The goal is to support career advisors to strengthen their profiles and in doing so to upgrade their methods and practices. As a result, this will contribute to the improvement of the career orientation towards entrepreneurial competencies aiming for VET students.

The aim of this report is to provide a summary of the results of the primary and secondary research conducted, in order to investigate the current scene regarding entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education in Cyprus.



2. Youth Entrepreneurship in Cyprus

2.1 State of the Art and Policy

After Cyprus economy faced a severe economic crisis and as a result high rates of unemployment, the focus of the Cyprus government was turned towards enhancing competitiveness of local products and services through the induction of new technologies, stimulation of innovation and creative thinking (Korelli et.al, 2014).

In this context, a government-led strategy - *the National Policy Statement for the Enhancement of Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Cyprus* developed in 2015 with the aim to strengthen country's entrepreneurial ecosystem and to grow the entrepreneurial spirit. Specifically, special attention was placed on youth and women, aiming to enhance their entrepreneurial skills and also to help build an entrepreneurial culture in Cyprus (OECD, 2018). As part of this strategy, an important step was also the participation of the University of Cyprus to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), in order to monitor the impact of the strategy and provide data on the current situation in terms of entrepreneurship in Cyprus.

Additionally, in conjunction to the 2015 National Policy, another major initiative is the *RESTART 2016-2020* programme by the Research Promotion Foundation (RPF), the main research funding agency in Cyprus. This programme aims to enhance the development of the national entrepreneurial ecosystem through focusing on three pillars: Research, Technological Development and Innovation.

Similarly, the effort of Cyprus government to boost entrepreneurial skills acquisition is also reflected in the National Youth Strategy which was created in 2017 and is in effect until the year 2022, targeting individuals aged 14-35 years old. Special attention is also given to the empowerment of youth entrepreneurship in the country through various grant schemes.



Overall, Cyprus has seen a significant shift in its focus on entrepreneurship in the last few years.

2.2 Educational System

The educational system in Cyprus is divided into pre-primary education (ages 3-6), primary education (ages 6-12), secondary education (ages 12-18) and higher education (ages 18+). VET is initially available at upper secondary education through technical schools, including evening technical schools.

Technical schools offer two types of three-year programme (theoretical and practical) and students require to choose their specialisation in their first year. The first two years of both programmes are mainly school-based, focusing on general education subjects and technological workshops. Additionally, practical training at enterprises is offered at the end of Year 1 & 2 – two weeks for the theoretical stream, 4 weeks for the practical stream. The main difference of the two is on the final year, whereas students from the practical stream programme should attend training at a workplace one day per week. The Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education also offers formal education programmes through the evening technical schools operating in two places in Cyprus. Moreover, the New Modern Apprenticeship (NMA) provides an alternative pathway for education, training and development of young people who drop out from the formal education system and aim to meet the needs of the labour market (Cedefop, 2016; MOEC, 2017).

In terms of entrepreneurial education, at the moment entrepreneurship is not offered in the curriculum as a specific module, but the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) strongly support the importance of skills such as critical thinking, analysis, creativity and problem-solving to name a few. The first steps towards the systematic introduction of entrepreneurship education in the classroom were taken through the development of new curricula that emphasised the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in a cross-curricular approach, as efforts have been made to incorporate elements of entrepreneurship as part of other subjects, such as science and economics (Cedefop, 2016; MOEC, 2017). In



addition, the Ministry of Education with the support of the Pedagogical Institute promotes entrepreneurial activities and competitions at school to raise awareness on entrepreneurship and critical thinking targeting both students and teachers. Despite those efforts, national experts stress the need for further improvement on entrepreneurial education, as an 'educational gap' appears to exist in this area (GEM, 2018).

2.3 Job Orientation in VET-Schools

The main body delivering guidance and counselling support to VET students is the Counselling and Career Education Services (CCES) of the MoEC. The Counselling and career education service of the MoEC provides students in public secondary general and technical schools with specialized assistance in developing their personal awareness of their interests, needs, abilities, and skills so that they can take suitable decisions about their personal lives, education and careers. Moreover, a compulsory careers and social education course is offered at the third grade of lower secondary level. The counsellors are placed in schools and at the central and regional offices of the MoEC.

As part of the National Policy Statement for the Enhancement of Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Cyprus, counsellors attended various seminars regarding the importance of promoting entrepreneurship through the educational system and also they have been informed about the benefits of such initiatives. The idea behind those seminars was to encourage counsellors to incorporate those aspects in their practises in order to promote entrepreneurship as a career option for students (Ministry of Labour Welfare and Social Insurance, 2017).

Additionally, counselling services outside the formal educational system are also available and some examples are the Euroguidance Centre of Cyprus and the National Youth Organisation. The Euroguidance Centre is under the Ministry of Labour Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI) and provides information about private and public education and training opportunities that exist in Cyprus and in Europe in general. Furthermore, the National Youth Organisation (ONEK), provides guidance and



counselling through its 'Youth Information Centres' (KEPLI), targeting mainly young people up to 30 years old.

Lastly, a National Agency for Lifelong Guidance has been established in 2012 by the Council of Ministers with the aim to upgrade all guidance and counselling services in Cyprus. Its mission is to act as a coordinating mechanism for guidance services provided in Cyprus and as an advisory body to government policy-makers in the field of lifelong guidance (Tsaousi, 2019).

2.4 Entrepreneurship in VET-Schools

As mentioned earlier, although Entrepreneurship education is not included in the National Curriculum of VET as a separate subject at the moment, a number of various initiatives addressing entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurship in the educational system at Cyprus have been implemented with the support of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC). Those initiatives are usually a combine effort of governmental and non-governmental bodies to promote such skills and orienting students and youth towards entrepreneurship. Below is a list with a few examples of such programmes:



Cyprus Start-Up Bootcamp for Young Entrepreneurs,

«CONNECTION» - This two-day event is organised by the Pedagogical Institution of Cyprus, in collaboration with the

MoEC, the Performance Enterprise Accelerator and Knowledge Innovation Centre (PEAK) and the Innovation Centre of Microsoft (MIC). The event aims to enhance the entrepreneurial skills for students and teachers that took part at the event and also to promote innovative ideas in the fields of business management, creative arts and ICT and Science. At the end of the event, a prize will be given to the team with the most innovative idea.



(http://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2493%3A----cyprus-start-up-bootcamp-for-young-entrepreneurs-lconnectionr&catid=34%3A2010-06-02-08-27-34&Itemid=65&lang=el)



JA «Company Programme» - The Company Programme from the Junior Achievement Cyprus aims to provide secondary school students with the knowledge on how to develop their own business from a conceptual idea to a fully functioning enterprise. Usually the end-products are innovative and offer solutions to local, national or global problems. Once they complete their student-company, the teams enter a competition where they present their products. Through the whole process students are supported by teachers who received training in entrepreneurial education and also from business mentors within the industry.

(<https://jacyprus.org/programmes/#company>)



«Ideodromio» - Another competition organised by the MoEC and the Centre for Entrepreneurial Development, Alliance and Research (CEDAR), aims to promote entrepreneurship in secondary education. As part of the programme, students

have the opportunity to enhance their entrepreneurial skills and also to express their creativity on producing innovative products.

<http://www.cedar.org.cy/ideodromio-2017-2018/>



«Entrepreneurship Development Programme»- As part of the National Action Plan for Youth Employment, the Youth Board of Cyprus through the «Entrepreneurship Development Programme» aims to enhance young people’s entrepreneurial



skills and education. After the completion of the seminars, each participant will also have the opportunity to receive personalized counselling from experienced business mentors.

<https://onek.org.cy/en/home-page/programs-and-service/counseling-services/entrepreneurship-development-programme/>



JA «Innovation Camp» - The JA «Innovation Camp» is another initiative by Junior Achievement Cyprus, which engages both Greek-Cypriot and

Turkish-Cypriot high school students. As part of the programme, students are divided at random into teams. All teams are presented with a hypothetical challenge and the goal is to try and find a creative and innovative business solution to this problem. As a result, students require to put in action their entrepreneurial skills to reach a solution. At the end of the competition, a panel will select the top solutions and announce the winner.

<https://jacyprus.org/programmes/#company>

2.5 Entrepreneurship and becoming an Entrepreneur

This section aims to identify possible trends and patterns about VET sector entrepreneurship by examining the activity and the profile of entrepreneurs in Cyprus.

To begin with, it appears that overall there is a positive perception about entrepreneurship as a career choice among Cypriots however; a large percentage of them also expressed the fear of failure related to entrepreneurial activity (GEM, 2018).

Based on the Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) Index which measures individuals who are involved in setting up or managing a new business (less than 42 months), in 2017/18 7.3% of the population were classified as TEA entrepreneurs, compared to the 12% in 2016/17 (. According to the GEM Report (2018), this drop can be attributed to high youth unemployment rates and limited career choices; hence becoming an entrepreneur was mainly driven out of necessity for those individuals.

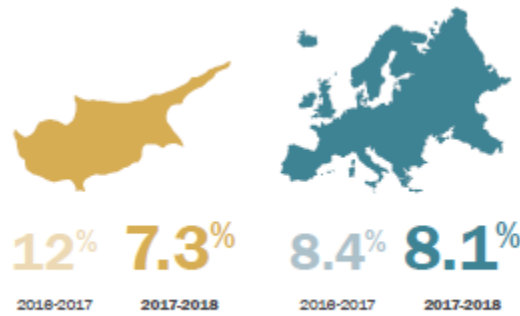


Figure 1: Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) Index (GEM, 2018)

In terms of the profile of entrepreneurs in Cyprus, men are more likely to be involved in entrepreneurial activity and most of them are between 25-44 years old. Thus, a gender gap appeared to exist between male and female entrepreneurs. Regarding their educational background, the majority of them received higher education (undergraduate and post-graduate degrees) and most of the TEA (45.4%) is recorded in Wholesale and Retail sectors (GEM, 2018).

In regards to VET graduates, the employment rate in 2017/18 was the lowest noted in EU (52% vs 76.6%) (European Commission Report, 2018). On the one hand, this might be due to the negative perception that Vocational education suffers compared to general education. Unfortunately, a large number of people in Cyprus appear to underestimate vocational education, and there is a belief that students with low grades are directed toward this path (Korelli, 2018). On the other hand, taking into consideration that most entrepreneurs in the GEM survey attended higher education, it is not clear whether secondary education contributed to the development of their entrepreneurial skills or this was mainly developed through the higher education received later. Overall, it seems that further improvement in secondary technical and vocational education in Cyprus is required, in order to promote a culture of entrepreneurship and ultimately improve society's perceptions about vocational education as well.



3. Primary Research

In order to investigate the current scene in each partner country, the consortium additionally conducted 3 questionnaires, addressing Vocational Professionals, VET Students and Entrepreneurs. For the purpose of this research, 60 participants in total took part in this survey; from those 25 were entrepreneurs, 25 students and 10 vocational professionals. For more detailed analysis of the results refer to the Survey Analysis document.

3.1 Vocational Professionals

The survey was completed by 10 Vocational Professionals both male and female and from various age groups, educational backgrounds and areas of interests. The vast majority of the participants indicated that the concept of entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial skills had not been introduced to their vocational students, but they expressed their willingness to incorporate more aspects of entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial activities into their work, mainly through compulsory lessons, extra-curriculum activities and through potential EU programmes.

Additionally, almost half of the professionals had some experience as entrepreneurs, which they gained through working in the private sector and summer jobs during their studies. Similarly, the same number of participants suggested that they received some training regarding entrepreneurship in the form of EU sponsored programmes and also seminars sponsored by the government.

The Vocational Professionals who took part in the survey identified **the ability to spot opportunities, to mobilize resources** and **to learn through experience** as the key competences required to be a successful entrepreneur (Table 1). All the participants that



took part in the survey agreed that it would be beneficial for their students if they had the opportunity to be mentored by an Entrepreneur.

Table 1: Key Competencies required for a Successful Entrepreneur – Vocational Professionals

Ideas and Opportunities	Rank (1 – 5)
Spotting opportunities - Use your imagination to identify/create opportunities	2.4
Creativity - Develop creative and purposeful ideas	2.6
Vision - Work towards your vision of the future or an identified goal	3.2
Valuing ideas - Make the most of ideas and opportunities	2.6
Ethical and sustainable thinking - Assess the consequences/impact of your actions	2.9

Resources	Rank (1 – 5)
Mobilising resources - Gather and manage the required resources	2
Mobilising others - Inspire, enthuse and get others to share your vision	2.6
Financial and economic literacy - Develop your financial and economic knowledge	2.9
Self-awareness and self-efficacy - Believe in yourself and keep developing	3.3
Motivation and perseverance - Stay focused and overcome difficulties	2.9

Into Action	Rank (1 – 5)
Learning through experience – Take lessons from your successes and failures	2.1
Working with others - Team-up, collaborate and network	2.2
Planning and management - Prioritise, organise and follow-up	3.1
Taking the initiative - Be pro-active and make things happen	3
Coping with ambiguity, uncertainty and risk - Make decisions and stand by them	3.4



3.2 Entrepreneurs

The survey was completed by 25 Vocational Entrepreneurs both male and female and from various age groups and areas of expertise.

In terms of the education they received, the majority of the entrepreneurs who took the survey stated that they had studied some vocational subjects during their studies, but almost half of them did not have the opportunity to learn about the concept of entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial skills during their education. Additionally, the entrepreneurs who were presented with the concept of entrepreneurship stated that this was mainly through compulsory lessons. Almost all the entrepreneurs who took part in the survey expressed that they would like to have entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial activities incorporated into their education, mainly through the form of compulsory lessons, EU programmes and work-based training/ internship. Moreover, the opinions of the respondents regarding the effect of education on their entrepreneurial skills appeared to be divided and this might be an indicator that there is still room for further improvement.

Regarding the key competencies required by entrepreneurs as identified by the participants, is **the ability to spot opportunities, mobilising resources and having financial and economy literacy** and also to be **able to learn through experience** (Table 2).

A large number of the entrepreneurs that participated in the survey said that they would be interested in mentoring young individuals with aspirations to become entrepreneurs,



and defined entrepreneurship as the ability to turn ideas into actions, to locate opportunities in the market and to have faith on what you are doing.

Table 2: Key Competencies required for a Successful Entrepreneur – Entrepreneurs

Ideas and Opportunities	Rank (1 – 5)
Spotting opportunities - Use your imagination to identify/create opportunities	1.6
Creativity - Develop creative and purposeful ideas	1.9
Vision - Work towards your vision of the future or an identified goal	2.3
Valuing ideas - Make the most of ideas and opportunities	2.6
Ethical and sustainable thinking - Assess the consequences/impact of your actions	3.3

Resources	Rank (1 – 5)
Mobilising resources - Gather and manage the required resources	2
Mobilising others - Inspire, enthuse and get others to share your vision	2.3
Financial and economic literacy - Develop your financial and economic knowledge	2
Self-awareness and self-efficacy - Believe in yourself and keep developing	2.6
Motivation and perseverance - Stay focused and overcome difficulties	2.7

Into Action	Rank (1 – 5)
Learning through experience – Take lessons from your successes and failures	1.5
Working with others - Team-up, collaborate and network	2
Planning and management - Prioritise, organise and follow-up	2.9
Taking the initiative - Be pro-active and make things happen	2.6



Coping with ambiguity, uncertainty and risk - Make decisions and stand by them	3.4
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3.3 Students

The survey was completed by 25 students both male and female and from various age groups, educational backgrounds and areas of interest.

In terms of the education they received, the majority of the students who took part in the survey argued that they were presented with the concept of entrepreneurship but this was mainly through work-based training/ internship, thus this might indicate a gap in the curriculum at schools for these types of skills. However, the majority of the participants expressed their willingness to learn more about entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial activities during their studies, and chose compulsory lessons as their preferred way to achieve it.

Additionally, a large number of the participants expressed their willingness to become entrepreneurs mainly through creating a start-up company and collaborating with others. In regards to the key competencies as identified by the students is to **be able to spot opportunities, to possess financial and economic literacy** and **to be able to learn through experience** (Table 3). A large number of the students that took the survey said that they would be interested to be mentored by an entrepreneur during their first steps



and defined entrepreneurship as being able to create your own company and also to be able to make profit out of your ideas.

Table 3: Key Competencies required for a Successful Entrepreneur – Students

Ideas and Opportunities	Rank (1 – 5)
Spotting opportunities - Use your imagination to identify/create opportunities	1.8
Creativity - Develop creative and purposeful ideas	2.2
Vision - Work towards your vision of the future or an identified goal	2.6
Valuing ideas - Make the most of ideas and opportunities	3.2
Ethical and sustainable thinking - Assess the consequences/impact of your actions	3.8

Resources	Rank (1 – 5)
Mobilising resources - Gather and manage the required resources	2.5
Mobilising others - Inspire, enthuse and get others to share your vision	2.4
Financial and economic literacy - Develop your financial and economic knowledge	2.3
Self-awareness and self-efficacy - Believe in yourself and keep developing	3
Motivation and perseverance - Stay focused and overcome difficulties	3.6

Into Action	Rank (1 – 5)
Learning through experience – Take lessons from your successes and failures	2
Working with others - Team-up, collaborate and network	2.4
Planning and management - Prioritise, organise and follow-up	3
Taking the initiative - Be pro-active and make things happen	3.1
Coping with ambiguity, uncertainty and risk - Make decisions and stand by them	3.4



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4. Conclusion

To sum up, the aim of this report was to investigate the current scene regarding entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education in Cyprus through a primary and secondary research.

Based on the evidence collected, it appears that Cyprus has seen a significant shift in its focus on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial education in the last few years and those initiatives are a combine effort of both governmental and non-governmental bodies. However, some gaps still appear to exist, especially in regards to the promotion of entrepreneurship in secondary technical and vocational education in Cyprus. Nevertheless, respondents' attitude towards the induction of entrepreneurial skills in VET education appears overall positive. Specifically, vocational professionals expressed their willingness to incorporate more aspects of entrepreneurship into their work. This is also supported by the entrepreneurs, whilst students also expressed their willingness to learn more about entrepreneurship during their studies.

In this context, the ENTRE@VET project through the improvement of the career orientation towards entrepreneurial competencies aiming for VET students can contribute to this goal and further enhance the fast-growing entrepreneurial culture in Cyprus.



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