

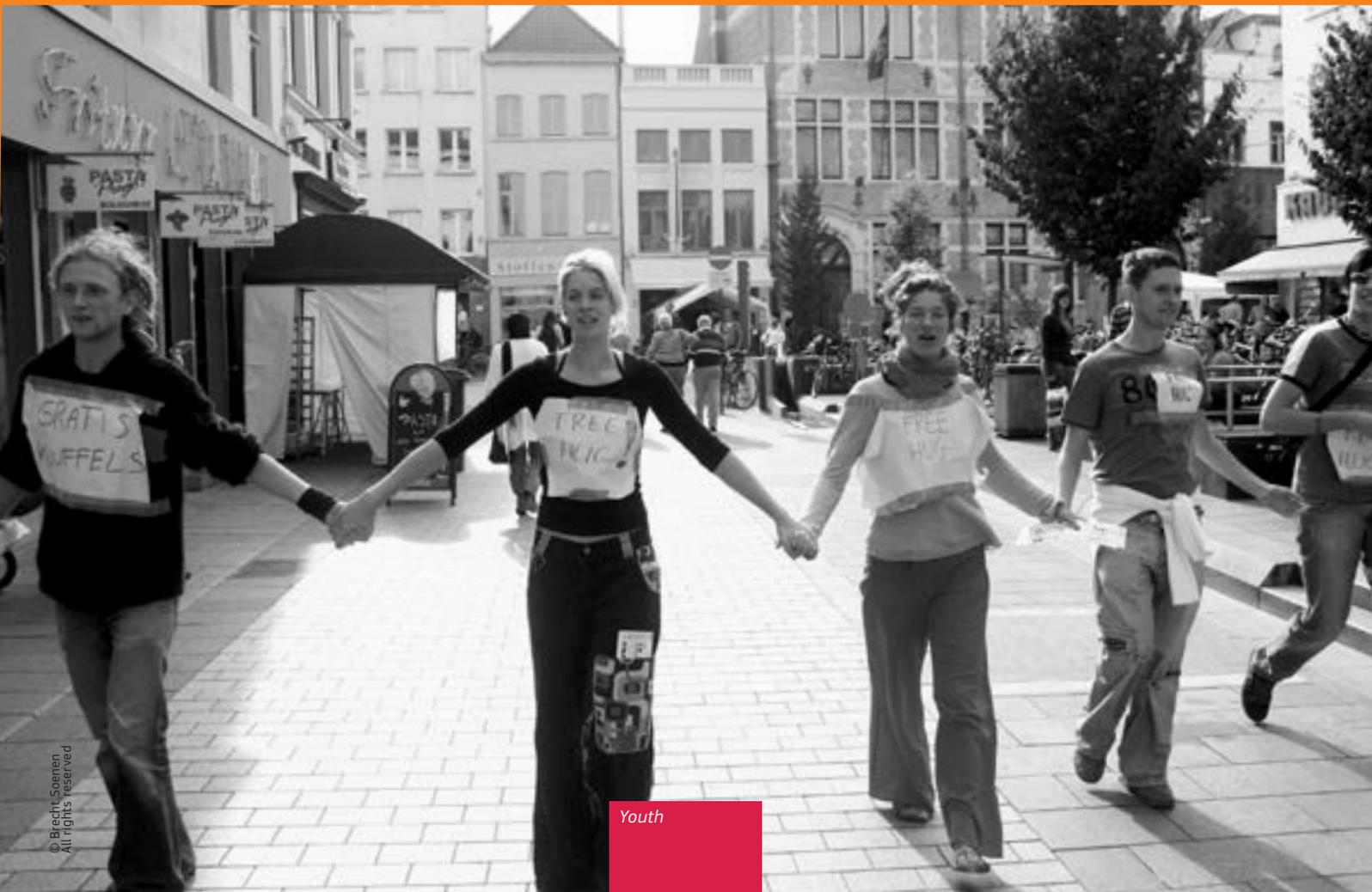


European
Commission

Taking the future into their own hands

Youth work and entrepreneurial learning

Executive summary



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Taking the future into their own hands — Youth work and entrepreneurial learning

The EU and its Member States have been promoting entrepreneurial competences among young people as a pathway to taking an active part in society. The role of youth work in fostering entrepreneurial learning has been underexposed up until today. This report and its annexes present the findings of a major study mapping, describing and analysing the contribution that youth work makes to supporting young people in achieving competences that will help them to fulfil personal aspirations and become active citizens in Europe. The study is based on an extensive collection of data about youth work and entrepreneurial learning in all EU Member States, summarised in 28 country reports, an inventory of 114 good practices and 12 case study reports. It confirms that youth work has an important contribution to make, but that improvements should be made in respect to the policy framework, as well as concerning partnerships at national, regional and local level. The report delivers concrete recommendations for policymakers, as well as for the formal education sector and for youth work organisations, on how to increase the impact of young people's entrepreneurial learning.

Final report available at: <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/41958>

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Taking the future into their own hands

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Executive summary of the study report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE STUDY REPORT

Introduction

In the challenging times that most EU Member States are experiencing in the aftermath of the financial crisis, young people are at particular risk of being left at the margins of society. In 2016 approximately 1 in 10 young people in the EU Member States was neither in employment nor in education or training. Public institutions have a responsibility to respond to this challenge, and consequently the European Union and national governments have launched considerable efforts to promote entrepreneurship among young people. The policy rationale behind this is that if young people can be empowered to take initiative and seize opportunities, they may stand a better chance of successful participation in the labour market and in society as active citizens, as well as managing their lives in an increasingly complex world.

But how does society reach out to young people who are not part of it? How can young people plug in and become active citizens if they are neither in employment nor in education or training? And even if young people do pursue an education, what are their options when they find that their qualifications are not in demand in the labour market? In short, how can society strengthen the ability of young people to make an active contribution, to tackle the severe challenges, to take their future into their own hands — to shape an inclusive and sustainable Europe?

One response to these questions comes from youth work. Youth work offers a forum for activities where young people can participate regardless of their employment or education and training status. There are several indications that youth work helps develop entrepreneurial competences in young people as an important non-formal and informal learning platform and a pathway to active citizenship.

Context of the study

The European Commission commissioned a consortium consisting of the Danish Technological Institute (DK), The Young Foundation (UK), Plataforma para a Educação do Empreendedorismo em Portugal (PT) and 3s Unternehmensberatung GmbH (AT) to carry out a study on how youth work can contribute even more to the well-being and prosperity of society by embracing the concept of entrepreneurship and developing its ability to deliver entrepreneurial learning. In short, the overall purpose of the study was to:

... explore how youth work and non-formal learning can help to foster entrepreneurship and so complement initiatives undertaken in other sectors such as formal education and training, enterprises and employment.

The study involved desk research and interviews to map the policy frameworks and the situation with respect to entrepreneurial learning in youth work across the EU. The mapping is documented in country reports. Further desk research of youth work practices on entrepreneurial learning in Europe and in Australia, Canada and the United States resulted in the identification and description of 114 examples of good practice examples. Among these, 12 were selected for interview-based on-site case studies, documented in a case study report. Finally, a stakeholder seminar was arranged in December 2016 to discuss preliminary findings and thus contribute to the conclusions following these findings.

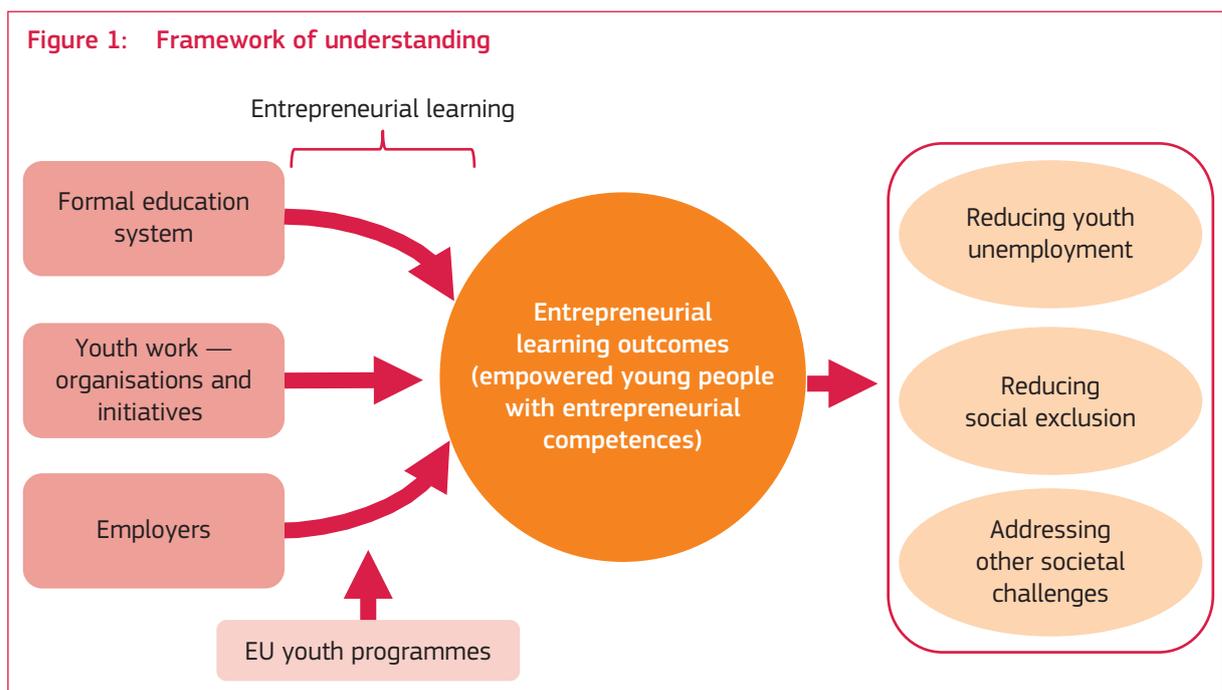
Who is the study report for?

The study report formulates recommendations for further actions for policymakers and programme leaders within the cross-section between youth and education at the EU and national levels, along with recommendations for education and training providers, including youth work, and their cross-sectoral cooperation.

What is in the study report?

The common thread in the study and the report is 11 specific study objectives — each playing a crucial role in reaching an understanding of the sectors, actors, initiatives, methods and processes making up the complex matrix of how the entrepreneurial learning of young people may take place — with a main focus on youth work.

The way that each of the study objectives are interlinked with the others is described in a framework of understanding (Figure 1).



The framework of understanding illustrates how young people may obtain entrepreneurial competences in a variety of settings, including the formal education system, in the labour market and in youth work. When learning is successful in equipping young people with entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes, enabling them to act upon opportunities and ideas and turn them into value (youth entrepreneurship), this is hypothesised to contribute to combating youth unemployment and social exclusion and addressing other societal challenges.

Against this background, the overall purpose of the study has been to explore the role that youth work plays — and can potentially play — in fostering entrepreneurial learning in young people, by itself and in collaboration with other stakeholders. The study has approached this topic from different perspectives. It has looked into how policymakers can support the development of entrepreneurial learning opportunities for young people; it has analysed the current state of involvement of youth work organisations in providing entrepreneurial learning; it has looked into the knowledge, skills and attitudes of youth workers vis-à-vis entrepreneurial learning; it has described the opportunities for validation and recognition of entrepreneurial competences; it has identified opportunities for synergies between entrepreneurial learning and combating societal challenges; and finally, it has briefly considered the role of the current EU programmes in supporting youth work as a provider of entrepreneurial learning in collaboration with other stakeholders.

The study distinguishes between a narrow and a broad approach to entrepreneurship, the former indicating a business perspective, while the latter emphasises competences relevant for turning ideas into action and active citizenship. Also of importance is the distinction between entrepreneurial learning, which denotes all activities fostering entrepreneurial competences in the broad sense, and entrepreneurship education, which denotes entrepreneurial learning taking place in a formal education setting.

What are the main study findings?

The study pulls together the findings to provide conclusions with the objective of giving input to recommendations for continued work in the field. The study concludes that:

- current policy frameworks lack focus on the contribution of youth work to entrepreneurial learning, and terminology continues to be an issue;
- youth workers are not sufficiently aware of their own contribution to entrepreneurial learning;
- non-formal and informal learning approaches in youth work are well suited to fostering entrepreneurial competences — and the most successful initiatives are those that employ these approaches in partnership with other stakeholders;
- youth work initiatives addressing societal challenges are well suited to fostering entrepreneurial learning, but could be further strengthened by extending partnerships;
- entrepreneurial competences achieved in youth work are rarely validated and recognised in spite of the existence of tools for validation;
- EU programmes contribute to promoting entrepreneurial learning — but the programmes are deemed inaccessible by many stakeholders.

Policy frameworks lack focus on the contribution of youth work to entrepreneurial learning

The study finds that all EU Member States have strategic frameworks and/or policies in place speaking to the promotion of entrepreneurship. These strategies mostly address entrepreneurship education and are often targeted at a specific level of education. The study also finds widespread acknowledgment by researchers that youth work fosters entrepreneurial learning. In spite of this, youth work organisations (when they acknowledge their role in this respect) tend to see entrepreneurial competences as a by-product or a spin-off of (more important) activities. When considering policy frameworks, terminology continues to be an issue. In particular, all terms that include ‘entrepreneur’ (entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial competences, entrepreneurial learning) are prone to be misconstrued. Even though about half of the EU Member States have officially adopted a broad understanding of entrepreneurial competences similar or identical to that presented in the European Key Competence Framework (and further developed and detailed by the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework — EntreComp), a narrow and business-oriented understanding of entrepreneurship dominates public discourse, including among youth workers. The study finds, however, that a more explicit and integrated focus on entrepreneurial learning appears to be emerging among youth organisations and youth workers.

Youth workers are not sufficiently aware of their contribution to entrepreneurial learning

The study finds that the diversity of youth workers with respect to age, employment status (being volunteers or professional youth workers) and qualifications (level as well as field of study) means that it is not meaningful to seek to identify generic competence needs of youth workers for delivering entrepreneurship education. The study clearly demonstrates that, at the level of youth workers, there is a lack of understanding of the difference between entrepreneurship in the broad sense and in the narrow sense, and that this is the source of a quite pronounced reluctance to engage in anything to do with entrepreneurship. Thus, the study finds that initiatives and activities that can lead to increased understanding of the importance of entrepreneurial competences, and what these competences entail, would be a relevant starting point for the development of youth workers’ ability to contribute to fostering these competences in young people.

Learning approaches in youth work are well suited to fostering entrepreneurial competences — and the most successful initiatives are those that employ these approaches in partnership with other stakeholders

Based on the inventory of good practices and the case studies, the study identifies learning methods and approaches employed in the 12 initiatives that are well suited to developing the entrepreneurial competence areas described in EntreComp. Furthermore, the partnership approaches employed by the initiatives are analysed. Whereas partnerships between youth work and other stakeholders in general appear to be somewhat underdeveloped, all the successful initiatives identified in this study involve extensive and well-developed partnerships with a diverse range of actors. Municipal authorities, NGOs (including other youth work organisations) and local employers/businesses appear to be by far the most important partners for youth organisations, reflecting well the local nature of the initiatives. Thus, the study findings appear to confirm that collaboration between youth work and other stakeholders is a vital component in enhancing the entrepreneurial learning of young people.

Youth work addressing societal challenges combines well with entrepreneurial learning

The study finds that a significant share of youth work initiatives explicitly address societal challenges. The study looks into concrete examples of initiatives dealing with youth unemployment, social exclusion and environmental issues. The analysis indicates that such initiatives have a strong local dimension, but that the scalability and transferability of many of these good practices is high — several initiatives have in fact been transferred to other parts of a country or even abroad. In many cases, however, there appears to be scope for extending partnerships and collaboration in these initiatives. In particular, this type of initiative rarely involves the formal education system.

Entrepreneurial competences achieved in youth work are rarely validated and recognised in spite of the existence of tools for validation

Here, the results suggest that only a few EU Member States have detailed approaches to monitoring the progress and impact of entrepreneurship education. The country research indicates that Youthpass and ASTEE are the most prominent tools used for assessing outcomes of entrepreneurial learning. The low uptake of validation methods and tools can be, at least in part, ascribed to reluctance in some parts of the youth sector towards measuring, assessing and validating skills and competences. The argument that has been put forward is that youth work activities have value in and of themselves — not as a means to externally described objectives. Lack of trust in the assessment and validation of skills obtained through youth work in other parts of society (the formal education system and the world of work) could be another explanatory factor in some Member States.

EU programmes contribute to promoting entrepreneurial learning — but the programmes are deemed inaccessible by many stakeholders

The study finds that Erasmus+ is the most important EU programme supporting youth entrepreneurship, but that the use of the programme for this purpose varies considerably across the EU. The study results indicate that there is still limited knowledge about Erasmus+ in the youth work community, and that many youth organisations consider the administrative burden associated with application and documentation too onerous. While the European Social Fund (ESF) also supports several initiatives in the field of youth work, assessing their impact on entrepreneurial learning would require further research, since the operational priorities for the ESF are set at national or sometimes even regional level in the Member States.

What are the recommendations?

Recommendations for policymakers and programme leaders

In order to maximise the potential of youth work to contribute to entrepreneurial learning and thus to enable young people to take an active role in society, the findings in this report suggest the following.

At EU level

- The broad approach to entrepreneurship and the concept of entrepreneurial competences should be promoted and made visible, not only to policy stakeholders, but more widely, to youth workers and young people themselves. As a first step, the visibility of EntreComp should be promoted intensively over the next few years.
- A targeted effort should be made to increase the visibility of Erasmus+ among youth work organisations.
- The formal application and monitoring requirements of Erasmus+ should be relaxed for youth work organisations below a certain size.
- The funding criteria in the Erasmus+ programmes should focus more on sustainability, for example by requiring that a specified budget share be set aside for organisational anchoring of project results.
- The EU could be the provider of good learning practices and approaches to entrepreneurial learning, for example targeted peer learning activities.
- Funding for scaling up and spreading good practices in the cross-section of entrepreneurial learning and youth work could be provided by the EU.

At all levels

- Strategies for entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial learning should be trans-sectoral and include all levels of the formal educational system, as well as youth work.
- Youth organisations should focus on making entrepreneurial learning opportunities more accessible to young people with a wide range of backgrounds and abilities, including marginalised and disadvantaged young people. This will help to ensure that social exclusion and inequality are reduced rather than exacerbated through entrepreneurial learning in youth work.
- Entrepreneurial learning through youth work needs to be implemented in ways that are appropriate to the individual Member State context and needs, meaning that the societal challenges addressed are determined locally.
- National, local and regional programmes should allow more room for experimentation and relax bureaucratic requirements (e.g. delimitations of target groups for active labour market policies) to support innovative solutions, in particular in the field of social entrepreneurship.
- In the design of future initiatives supporting entrepreneurial learning, policymakers should consider utilising the media and communication channels used by young people. Mobile technologies and social media can be of use in all phases of an initiative, not only when disseminating information about the initiative, but also in application, funding, monitoring and evaluation.
- Policymakers must respect that not all youth work activities can or should have a measurable learning outcome.

Recommendations for education and training providers

- Education providers should seek more partnerships and concrete collaborations with youth work organisations and initiatives, because the non-formal learning taking part in youth work complements the formal learning taking place in the education system.
- Education and training providers should seek more information on all the learning materials and good practices relating to entrepreneurship education that are already available.

Recommendations for youth work organisations

In order to maximise the resources available to youth work and increase the impact of the entrepreneurial learning in youth work, the findings suggest the following.

- Youth work organisations at EU level should initiate activities to increase the attention paid by their member organisations to the importance of the entrepreneurial learning taking place in youth work. This could include making entrepreneurial learning a key topic of a transnational youth work event.
- Youth work organisations at national, regional and local levels should seek broader partnerships with educational institutions and with other NGOs and businesses. Such partnerships can expand the resources available to youth work activities supporting entrepreneurial learning.
- Entrepreneurial learning through youth work needs to be made explicit by youth workers to maximise the learning outcomes in terms of entrepreneurial competences that enable young people to take the future into their own hands.

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