



**Embedding entrepreneurship
competence in vocational
education and training
in Europe**

28 September 2023
Online conference

#KeyCompetences
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Background paper for session

11.10 – 12.10 Interactive parallel sessions: navigating the paradoxes and solutions

3. The implementation paradox: broad goals versus narrow actions

The implementation paradox urges us to consider the gap between the intention to deliver the entrepreneurship competence as a broad transversal skill (rather than just for starting up a business) and how it is implemented in practice through narrow actions (mainly mini companies and virtual firms). Can these actions develop entrepreneurial skills in VET learners naturally, or is this just wishful thinking?

The broad definition of entrepreneurship found in curricular documents and policies is often at odds with the narrow implementation at VET provider level. The portfolios of curricular and extracurricular activities and initiatives gathered during the field research show a clear inclination towards activities and initiatives where business creation and management take centre stage. The looming presence of mini companies, simulated firms, business planning and pitching activities revealed a disconnect between the broad intentions and narrow implementation.

Our research suggests that social and constructivist learning is the underpinning principle in most of the teaching and learning activities. Yet, teachers tend to work in isolation, not in teams, and there are no clear links between teaching methods and learning activities on the one hand, and the development of specific entrepreneurial competences on the other. Moreover, teachers and trainers frequently lack direct entrepreneurial experience.

Assessment of entrepreneurship competence represents a big challenge for VET teachers. The first obstacle is the lack of a clear specification of general and specific learning outcomes, so that VET teachers, learners and interested third parties can all make reasonably objective judgements. Competence models are increasingly considered a tool for conceptualising the systematic process of entrepreneurship competence development, but empirical proof of its impact is still missing (Lillävali & Täks, 2017), and field research reveals that the use of EntreComp or other competence frameworks in the planning, delivery and assessment of entrepreneurship competence in VET is still rather low.

All definitions of entrepreneurship competence include a component focused on equipping VET learners with the knowledge and skills needed to start and run a business venture, but the type and level of support for VET learners and graduates willing to turn their ideas into a real business varies across countries. Examples of in-house VET business incubators were primarily found in Spain and Finland. This service is normally open to VET learners, alumni and, in some cases, residents of the local community. Users benefit from a physical space and personalised support to bring their business ideas to fruition. VET providers are in an exceptional position to detect entrepreneurial talent early and support the initial development of Ideas, but management teams and teachers coordinating this service are also conscious of

their limitations, trying to keep a close relationship with external institutions providing start-up support.

Key discussion points:

- Do mini-companies and virtual firms support or rather hinder the adoption of broader approaches to entrepreneurship competence development in VET?
- How can we extend entrepreneurship education in the field beyond just business creation?
- What are the signature pedagogies for developing entrepreneurial competence in VET, and how do they interact with different types of learner?
- Is the assessment of entrepreneurial competence truly important?
- How can we unlock the potential of work-based learning for developing entrepreneurship competence?

References (in addition to [Cedefop research papers 2022-23](#))

Lilleväli, U.; Täks, M. (2017). *Competence Models as a Tool for Conceptualizing the Systematic Process of Entrepreneurship Competence Development*. Education Research International, vol. 2017