

*Furthering Innovative Entrepreneurial Regions of Europe  
(FIERE)  
Executive summary*



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The FIERE (Furthering Innovative Regions of Europe) Project actively supports the concept that within regional economies public organisations, societies, clubs and not-for-profit organisations could be more entrepreneurial and innovative in the way they organise their entities and deliver services to their clients. Enterprise and social entrepreneurs have many similar traits and qualities however interventions through education, training and learning can help them and others working within their organisations to become even more innovative, creative, and entrepreneurial. FIERE aims to support local communities and regional economies by specifically focusing on the development of entrepreneurial and innovative skills and attributes of policy makers, managers, administrators, enterprise development officers, community leaders and developers, founders of community and social enterprises, and organisers/managers of local community entities.

It is a significant challenge to develop an education programme that caters for all aspects of the enhancement of innovative and entrepreneurial skill-sets. However, the key activities the consortium partners will address includes;

- (i) The identification of local, community and regional entities to engage with,
- (ii) To development of survey content that will be used to identify the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) of local, community and regional entities vis-à-vis education and training with regard to entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity; and
- (iii) To provide an input into the development of a training and/or education programme for those managing, supporting, employed in, and/or volunteering in local, community and regional entities.

Johannisson (1991) proposed a conceptual classification for entrepreneurship education which should focus on why entrepreneurs act (values, motivation), what entrepreneurs need to do (knowledge), how entrepreneurs will do it (abilities, skills), who do they need to know (social skills, networks) and when is it appropriate to act (experience and intuition). Entrepreneurship education depends on the stage of the entrepreneurial process as the learner

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will have different needs during the various stages of development and progression from entrepreneurial intent onwards (Henry et al. 2005). Understanding this difference or the type or objective of the audience when it comes to entrepreneurship education should very much dictate the approach and content of the education programme. Gorman, Hanlon, and King (1997) highlighted the importance of sufficient matching between student, curriculum and the pedagogical approach in order to ensure that the learning is effective and applicable.

Entrepreneurship curriculums often take two main approaches which are centred on *learning about* entrepreneurship and *learning for* entrepreneurship. Learning about entrepreneurship is mostly taught in a conventional manner via lectures, coursework and exams while learning for entrepreneurship aims to provide skills and knowledge to perform or prepare students to behave as entrepreneurs (Foster and Lin, 2003). In reviewing literature the main categories that entrepreneurship education and training (Jamieson, 1984, Henry et al, 2005) should focus on are;

1. Education *about* Enterprise: awareness, education, basic aspects of starting and running a business all based on theory.
2. Education *for* Enterprise: Supporting new or potential entrepreneurs with practical skills.
3. Education *in* Enterprise: training

There is a growing body of literature and opinion on entrepreneurship education. What is clear is that the approach depends on the perspective, values and goals of the individual and the environment both professionally and culturally. In terms of FIERE and the combination of European partners and the expected nature of the learners it would be important to evaluate the level of prior knowledge and understanding and how this may have an impact on the acquisition of knowledge during the education programme. Due to the international European nature of the program it may be necessary to incorporate an evaluation of the impact of culture on learning and the perception, belief and opinion of students/participants of entrepreneurship and enterprise education (Foster and Lin, 2003). Understanding the basis of each learner's background, experience and goals will help indicate what the curriculum should contain and the learning deliverables and outcomes. Based on the extensive literature

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review, Table 1 provides an overview of the potential course content, participant selection/criteria and learning environment that may be considered by the FIERE consortium when designing and implementing an entrepreneurship education and training programme for social entrepreneurs, leaders/employees of (and volunteers in) local and community organisations, clubs and societies, and public servants.

**Table 1 Potential Course Content, Participant Selection/criteria and Learning Environment**

<b>Potential Course Content</b>	<b>Student Selection / Criteria</b>	<b>Learning Environment</b>
<p>The importance of networking and social networks; and the necessity for individuals to be socially embedded in order to position themselves to avail of opportunities (Sundin and Tillmar, 2008) should be addressed.</p> <p>The programme needs to be specially designed to meet the needs of learners and to enhance their skills. Consider performing a learning perception, personality and skills audit prior to course commencement.</p> <p>A strong focus on motivation and the entrepreneurial spirit as a general subject (Taatala, 2010).</p> <p>Opportunity Recognition: The ability to discover and develop business [societal] opportunities is often considered to be among the most important abilities of successful entrepreneurs (Ardichvili, Cardozo, and Ray, 2003; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000).</p> <p>A content approach that encourages participants to bring problems or ideas that they have to the course so that the course is used as a means for them to solve or develop those problems/ideas – just like an accelerator or support programmes for entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>A re-education phase. Participants need to be confronted with their own preconceived notions of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs, and the entrepreneurial process. They also need to be encouraged to be different, to be creative and to express their individuality (Carayannis, Evans and Hanson, 2003).</p> <p>The training should have a strong and clear focus to increase the number of people who are sufficiently knowledgeable about small business to consider it, at some stage in the future as a career option (Jamieson, 1984), [for themselves possibly, but most importantly that they are able to articulate this to others].</p> <p>A screening of participants should be performed prior to their enrolment on the course in order to identify previous experience, knowledge and motivation. Spear (2006) in his case study of social entrepreneurship noted that background such as experience in family business or personal history of small business experience was beneficial for learning and comprehension and thus the effectiveness of the course.</p> <p>Much of the learning that takes place within an entrepreneurial context is experiential. This implies that the complex process by which entrepreneurs learn from past experiences is of great importance to consider if we are to increase our understanding of entrepreneurial learning. This supports identifying prior learning or the experience level of potential participants. Thus the importance of learning by doing or by experience within the programme</p> <p>Students selected need to be in a position of power or influence within the organisation so that they have the ability to influence or encourage organisational change.</p> <p>Participants should be “local, or community, or</p>	<p>Ensure learning is conducted in an environment that allows for creativity, innovation and independent thinking. Participants should feel “safe and secure” (Carayannis, Evans and Hanson, 2003). This would require small class sizes and competent, knowledgeable facilitators.</p> <p>Importance of regional context as regional networks can help secure voluntary resources, such as experienced business people and successful entrepreneurs who are motivated and willing to contribute as mentors, advisors and teachers.</p> <p>Eliminate structural and practical barriers to flexibility and prompt actions for innovation, collaboration and cooperation by providing tools and incentives for entrepreneurial projects, and developing an entrepreneurial climate (Younhee, 2010)</p> <p>Organizational structure of programme should be more fluid than mechanic, allowing better communication and cooperation between levels of power; power structure should become flexible and less hierarchical (Younhee, 2010)</p>

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	regional champions” with a strong desire to support economic, or social, or community development, improvement and sustainability.	
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In terms of the not-for-profit or the voluntary sector, teaching entrepreneurship becomes more complicated because it is not the creation of an entrepreneur but the creation of entrepreneurial spirit that is the desired result. Therefore the key learning deliverable should be the increase of knowledge and confidence of individuals. Cox (1996) mooted that confidence and self-efficacy is vital to creating and enhancing any feelings of entrepreneurial spirit as well as being able to access one’s own entrepreneurial skills (Henry, et al. 2005). Thus any entrepreneurship education programme or curriculum for social entrepreneurs, voluntary organisations or public servants must be heavily based on awakening and strengthening these skills.

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