



Webinar: Entrepreneurial Competences in Higher Education Curricula

Background Note

23/04/2025

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Thematic strand 1: Entrepreneurial skills and mindsets in education Background Note

The [Community for Educational Innovation \(CEI\)](#) webinars bring together educators, researchers, policymakers, industry leaders, and representatives from civil society to exchange knowledge, share best practices, and engage in discussions on innovation in education. CEI webinars promote the strategic development of skills and competences essential for student success across various sectors, aligning with the objectives of the recent European Commission's communication on the [Union of Skills](#) to enhance the EU's competitiveness through the advancement of its education and training systems.

This note describes the background, focus and key questions that will guide the presentations and discussions during the [webinar on "Entrepreneurial Competences in Higher Education Curricula"](#), which will take place on 23 April 2025.

1. The growing importance of entrepreneurial competences

The increasing importance of entrepreneurial competences in the contemporary labour market and society has led to a growing demand for integrating entrepreneurship education into higher education curricula. These competences, encompassing skills such as opportunity recognition, resource mobilisation, creativity, and risk management, are crucial for **business creation and fostering innovation, leadership, and adaptability across diverse sectors**. As a result, entrepreneurship education has evolved from being a supplementary aspect of business studies to a fundamental component across disciplines in higher education.

Entrepreneurship education is increasingly being recognised as a cross-disciplinary necessity, reflected in several policy initiatives and frameworks at the European level. The European Commission's Communication on the Union of Skills acknowledges the centrality of entrepreneurial competences in addressing the evolving challenges of the modern workforce, emphasising the role of higher education in fostering these competences (European Commission, 2025). Furthermore, the EntreComp framework, developed by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, provides a comprehensive structure for defining and embedding entrepreneurial competences across educational contexts, encompassing areas such as creativity, financial literacy, and team-building skills (JRC, 2018).

Across the EU, there has been a gradual shift in higher education institutions (HEIs) towards including entrepreneurship in a more integrated and systemic manner.

However, this integration remains uneven, with some HEIs and faculties embracing entrepreneurship education more comprehensively than others. A report by the OECD (2022) highlights that while a growing number of HEIs are adopting entrepreneurial mindsets, the degree of implementation varies significantly across countries and institutions. The spread of entrepreneurial education has moved beyond business faculties, with engineering, arts, and social sciences now increasingly involved (OECD, 2022).

2. Gaps in entrepreneurship education

Despite the growing integration of entrepreneurial competences into higher education curricula, several gaps persist. First, there is often **a lack of a clear, consistent, and cohesive approach to entrepreneurship education across disciplines**. As pointed out by UNESCO UNEVOC (2020), entrepreneurship is often treated as an isolated field rather than a set of competences to be embedded throughout all disciplines. This fragmented approach can hinder the development of a comprehensive entrepreneurial mindset among students.

Second, a key gap is the **insufficient emphasis on experiential learning**. Entrepreneurship is inherently practical, requiring students to engage with real-world challenges. However, many HEIs continue to rely heavily on theoretical instruction, neglecting hands-on activities such as business simulations, start-up incubators, and entrepreneurial projects. The OECD (2020) suggests that more effective entrepreneurship education requires a stronger focus on experiential learning and mentoring, as well as partnerships with industry and start-up ecosystems.

Third, while there is an increasing recognition of the need for digital and global entrepreneurship skills, many HEIs have yet **to fully adapt their curricula to these new demands**. The Digital Firefly Project (2022) highlights the importance of teaching entrepreneurial skills in a digital, online, and blended learning context, a shift that has become even more urgent in the post-pandemic era, ensuring students are equipped with the digital tools and knowledge necessary to thrive in an increasingly global and digital business environment.

3. The role of higher education institutions in entrepreneurship

HEIs play a critical role in **fostering an entrepreneurial culture**. By embedding entrepreneurial competences into their curricula, HEIs can equip students not only with the skills required to launch their own businesses but also with the broader entrepreneurial mindset needed to drive innovation and contribute to the economy in a variety of sectors. The OECD's (2022) findings suggest that HEIs with a strong focus on entrepreneurship education can help create an entrepreneurial ecosystem, where students are not only encouraged to think like entrepreneurs but

are also provided with the resources, networks, and support systems to act on their ideas.

Moreover, HEIs can serve as catalysts for social and economic transformation by addressing complex societal challenges through entrepreneurship education. The integration of entrepreneurial competences can help students develop problem-solving skills that are essential for tackling pressing issues such as sustainability, digital transformation, and social inclusion (European Commission, 2025). In this regard, HEIs should be seen as agents of change, fostering creativity, innovation, and responsible entrepreneurship.

4. The benefits of entrepreneurship education for society

Entrepreneurship education offers significant benefits for society as a whole. It is well-documented that entrepreneurial activity drives **economic growth, job creation, and innovation**. Entrepreneurship has been recognised as one of the eight key competences for lifelong learning defined at European level (Council of the European Union, 2018). The integration of entrepreneurship into the university's curriculum and collaboration with industrial partners have been key factors in promoting start-up viability and a competitive economy (Partington, 2024). Additionally, entrepreneurial education fosters social entrepreneurship, which is essential for addressing societal challenges, such as environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and public health (Cedefop, 2023).

Entrepreneurship education also helps develop a more resilient workforce. By teaching students to identify opportunities, take calculated risks, and adapt to changing conditions, HEIs contribute to the creation of a workforce that is better prepared to navigate the uncertainties of the modern economy. This aligns with the European Commission's vision for a more adaptable, resilient, and future-ready workforce, capable of responding to the challenges of digitalisation, automation, and the green transition (European Commission, 2025).

5. The benefits of entrepreneurship education for students

Entrepreneurship education provides students with a valuable set of competences that enhance their personal and professional development. Through entrepreneurship education, students gain essential **life skills**, such as creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and financial literacy. These competences are transferable and valuable in various career paths, not just for aspiring entrepreneurs. Moreover, entrepreneurship education helps foster a sense of ownership and agency, empowering students to take control of their future and contribute to society in meaningful ways (Sieger et al., 2024).

Entrepreneurship education also enhances **employability**. In today's labour market, employers increasingly seek candidates with entrepreneurial skills, such as

the ability to innovate, collaborate, and lead projects. As the OECD (2020) notes, these skills are essential for success in a wide range of professions, from engineering to the arts, and are particularly valued in industries undergoing rapid transformation, such as technology and digital services.

6. Embedding entrepreneurship in the curricula

Integrating entrepreneurship education into higher education curricula is a critical step towards **building a future-ready, innovative, and resilient workforce**. While significant progress has been made, challenges remain in ensuring that entrepreneurial competences are effectively embedded across all disciplines. By adopting a holistic, cross-disciplinary approach and by integrating both theoretical and experiential learning, HEIs can better prepare students for the demands of the modern economy.

Institutions are adopting holistic, cross-disciplinary approaches to embed entrepreneurship education in higher education curricula effectively. This can be achieved by integrating entrepreneurial competences across all faculties, not just business schools. The Joint Research Centre's EntreComp Playbook (2020) suggests that entrepreneurship should be part of teaching and learning, with faculties collaborating to deliver integrated learning experiences that combine both theoretical and practical aspects.

Furthermore, HEIs should offer a mix of curricular and extracurricular activities that support entrepreneurial learning. This could include entrepreneurial internships, student-led start-up initiatives, and innovation labs, which allow students to apply their skills in real-world contexts (OECD, 2022). Collaboration with industry and entrepreneurial ecosystems is also crucial, as it helps bridge the gap between academia and the business sector, ensuring that students receive relevant, up-to-date training.

7. Focus and key questions for the webinar

In this webinar, the CEI team seeks to facilitate knowledge exchange on **how higher education can support the development of entrepreneurial competencies through the curriculum**. Key questions guiding the discussion will be:

- What effective approaches do higher education institutions use for integrating entrepreneurial competences in their curricula?
- How can institutions ensure their entrepreneurship curricula remain updated and adaptable to the rapidly changing global and digital economy?
- How can entrepreneurship education be designed to offer the flexibility needed to accommodate students' diverse motivations and disciplinary

backgrounds, while also responding to the unique characteristics and needs of local entrepreneurial ecosystems?

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