



# Peer-learning in entrepreneurship education and in women's entrepreneurship

Executive summary





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Contract EASME/COSME/2017/021

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This report results from a series of workshops as well as related online communities and surveys of participants supported by the European Commission (EC) under contract EASME/COSME/2017/021, Peer-learning activities in entrepreneurship education and in women entrepreneurship. It summarises discussions engaging representatives of governments, schools, higher education institutions, businesses, and civil society from countries of the EC's COSME programme. Findings from literature complement workshop results. The authors are Stefan Lilischkis (empirica), Minna Melleri, Jarle Tømmerbakke (JA Europe) as well as Christine Volkmann and Marc Grünhagen (Bergische Universität Wuppertal).

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## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA)

Unit I-O2.2 SMP / COSME Pillar

E-mail: [EISMEA-SMP-COSME-ENQUIRIES@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EISMEA-SMP-COSME-ENQUIRIES@ec.europa.eu)

Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship, and SMEs

Unit A 2

E-mail: [GROW-A2@ec.europa.eu](mailto:GROW-A2@ec.europa.eu)

European Commission

B-1049 Brussels

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# Abstract

This Executive Summary is a final output of the project Peer-Learning Activities in Entrepreneurship Education and in Women's Entrepreneurship, implemented 2018 to 2021. The project organised six highly interactive workshops with experts from all over Europe. Three workshops focused on EE, three on WE. Altogether, the project involved over 300 experts. The recommendations in this Summary are derived from the workshops as well as related online communities and surveys of participants. Literature reviews complemented personal experience with empirical insights. The report recommends the following key actions to foster EE and WE in Europe.

## **Entrepreneurship education:**

- Develop EE competence of leaders and teachers in education institutions.
- Encourage cooperation of EE stakeholders about policies and curricula.
- Communicate what EE is and what benefits it brings.
- Measure and compare EE practice and impact in pan-European research.
- Share EE knowledge and experience to enhance teaching and learning.

## **Women's entrepreneurship:**

- Raise acknowledgement and awareness about the importance of WE.
- Improve access to finance for female entrepreneurs.
- Ensure life-long entrepreneurial learning especially for women.
- Build a pan-European umbrella organisation and network for WE.
- Collect and analyse data about women's entrepreneurship.

Moreover, mechanisms such as the European Semester, the Next Generation EU Recovery fund, and European funding instruments can support EE and WE take-up.

## **Acknowledgements**

The authors of this Executive Summary express their heartfelt gratitude to all representatives from governments, schools and higher education institutions, businesses and civil society who contributed to the EE-WE project through participating in the workshops and online communities, responding to surveys, and sharing their insights in communication with the team.

# Objectives, tasks, and target groups of the EE-WE project

## **Objective: increase coordination and strategy development**

This Executive Summary is a final output of the project Peer-Learning Activities in Entrepreneurship Education and in Women's Entrepreneurship (<http://www.ee-we.eu>, herein abbreviated "EE-WE project"). The European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) funded the project from July 2018 to June 2021.

The project's overall objective was to "help **increase coordination** between different actors as well as the exchange of experiences between countries, and to facilitate the setting up or improvement of strategies to promote entrepreneurship" in the areas of EE and WE.

The project built on **previous works** from and for the European Commission: Above all the "Oslo Agenda for entrepreneurship education in Europe" (2006) and also the EE HUB policy recommendations (2017). Some recommendations are not new – but still pressing, and the project put them into the current economic and social context.

## **Main task: interactive peer-learning workshops**

The project's main task was organising highly interactive workshops with experts from countries that participate in the European Commission's COSME programme.<sup>1</sup> Three workshops were about EE: In March 2019 in Budapest, in November 2019 in Tallinn, and in March 2021 online. Further three workshops dealt with WE: In May 2019 in Prague as well as in November 2020 and in March 2021 online. Altogether, the project involved more than 300 experts.

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<sup>1</sup> COSME covers 41 countries: the EU Member States, the enlargement countries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Northern Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey; the East-ern Neighbourhood countries Armenia, Moldova and

## **Further tasks: online communities, surveys, and literature review**

The project derived recommendations from the workshops as well as from online communities and participants' surveys around them. The team also conducted literature reviews to complement personal experience with theoretical and empirical insights.

## **Target groups: regional, national, and international decision makers**

An overarching finding of this project was that driving EE and WE requires concerted actions of different stakeholders: Governments, education institutions, civil society organisations, enterprises, and their associations – on local, regional, national and European level. Hence, the target group of this Executive Summary is decision makers in these types of organisations and also any European interested in EE and WE.

## **EE particularly for women**

Both EE and WE have in common that they do not yet gain the attention and acknowledgement they deserve – and should be fostered to tap into the full potential of creativity and innovativeness in Europe. Moreover, the two streams merge when it comes to entrepreneurial education for women. There are two separate Guides that elaborate on the recommendations that came out of the project, one dedicated to EE and one for WE.

## **Content of this Executive Summary**

This Executive Summary is structured by the project's tasks: Key actions developed in and after the workshops, insights from online communities, results of participants' surveys, and findings from literature research.

Ukraine as well as Iceland. See [https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/other\\_eu\\_prog/cosme/legal/3rd-country-participation\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/other_eu_prog/cosme/legal/3rd-country-participation_en.pdf).

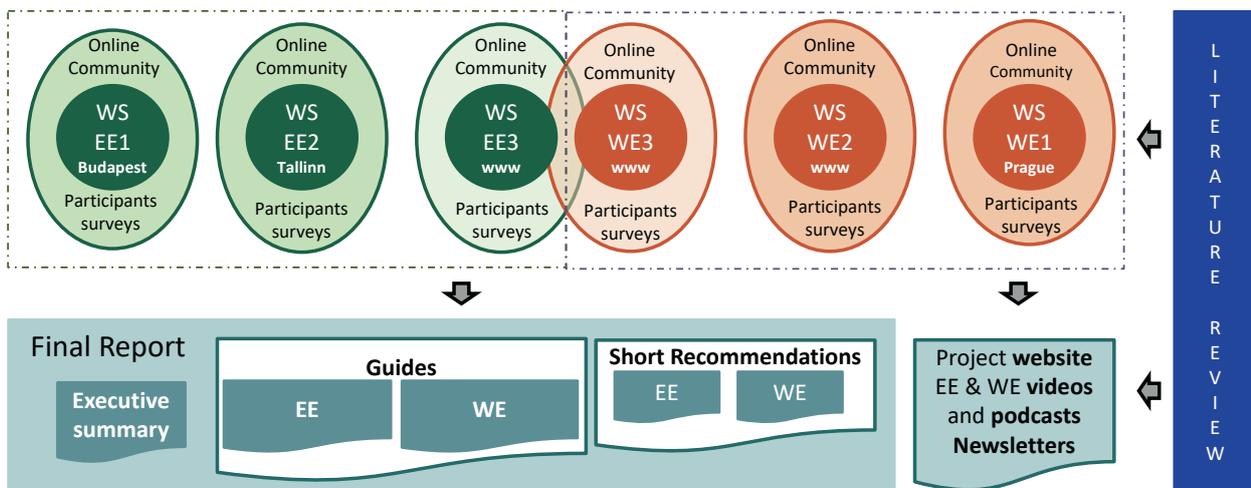
# Overview about the EE-WE project's tasks and publications

## Graphical overview about the project

A graphical overview can illustrate the story of the EE-WE project. The exhibit shows the six workshops, three for each stream, as project's main activities. Before and after the project, online communities and surveys of participants took place. The project team used results from the workshops to produce

the final publications: the Executive Summary as well as two Guides and two short Recommendation papers, one each for EE and one for WE. Moreover, the team produced videos and podcasts as well as newsletters. Literature reviews throughout the project fed into the workshops as well as the final publications.

Exhibit: Main activities and output of the EE-WE project

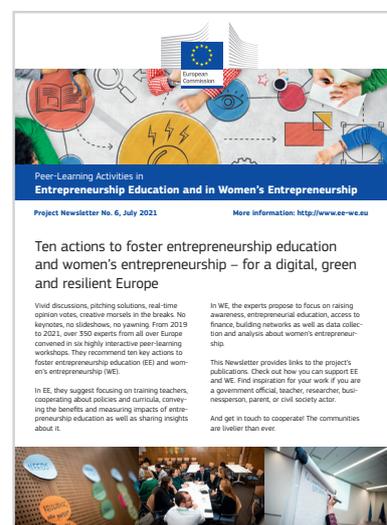
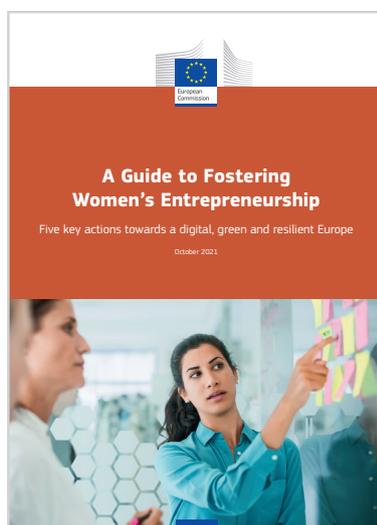
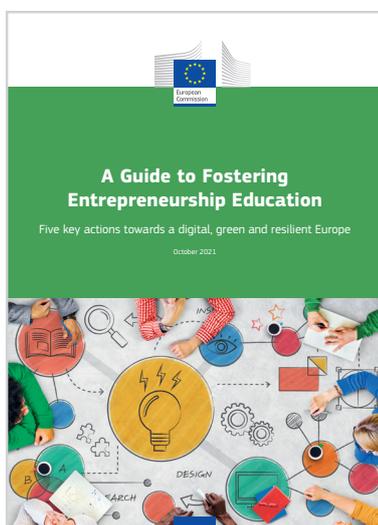


Source: EE-WE project team

## Publications from the project

The project's final publications also include extended Guides for fostering EE and WE as well as short Recommendation papers for EE and WE. Furthermore, there is a newsletter

with links to all publications including videos and podcasts. Find all publications related to this project at <http://www.ee-we.eu>.



# Key actions to foster entrepreneurship education in Europe

EE is essentially about problem-solving and the four Cs: communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. The workshops showed that EE can unleash the potential of Europeans to build a green, digital, and more resilient society. The workshop participants worked out actions to foster EE in Europe. They identified **five areas** to become active: training educators, stakeholders' cooperation, awareness raising, EE research as well as sharing EE knowledge. These areas mutually reinforce each other.

Moreover, **European mechanisms** can support EE take-up: the European Semester, the Next Generation EU Recovery fund, and Euro-

pean funding instruments such as the European Social Fund.

The European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (**EntreComp**) was a reference point throughout the project. EntreComp includes 15 competences in three areas that describe what it means to be entrepreneurial: "Ideas and opportunities", "Resources" and "into action".

In the future, the communities of practitioners and researchers around EntreComp as well as digital and environmental competences could move closer together to tackle the digital and green transitions.

- 1 Develop EE competence of leaders and teachers in education institutions:**  
Increased uptake of EE depends on the degree to which entrepreneurship competences of teaching staff and leaders at schools and in higher education are developed through both initial and continuous teacher training. In addition, a pan-European peer-to-peer network of EE teachers could reinforce training.
- 2 Encourage cooperation of EE stakeholders about policies and curricula:**  
Scaling up EE requires collaboration between multiple stakeholders at local, national and European level. Governmental bodies, education institutions, businesses, and civil society actors could link up to develop strategies, policy agendas, and EE curricula. A strong European platform for EE would be helpful.
- 3 Communicate what EE is and what benefits it brings:**  
Show how EE builds the necessary competences for the future success of students at all ages. Education institutions, parents, government officials and the wider community need to better understand what EE is and what its benefits are: EE is about learning how to turn ideas into reality for the benefit of society.
- 4 Measure and compare EE practice and impact in pan-European research:**  
Collecting and analysing data about EE shall support evidence-based policy-making. It will allow EE to contribute to key policy agendas: the Green Deal, a digital Europe, the European Skills Agenda, and the social economy.
- 5 Share EE knowledge and experience to enhance teaching and learning:**  
EE stakeholders could increase their efforts to share insights on how to improve EE teaching and learning. They could build local communities of practice as well as national and international networks. They can draw from each other's knowledge, methods and content, including innovative digital approaches such as artificial intelligence.

# Key actions to foster women's entrepreneurship in Europe

The workshops clearly showed that Europe needs to acknowledge the social and economic importance of women entrepreneurs. Women's entrepreneurship (WE) is an underutilised source of sustainable growth, job creation, and social well-being. Statistics show that women are underrepresented in entrepreneurship in many respects. With the challenges of the digital and green transition as well as recovery from the pandemic, WE should be reinforced as a viable career option – not only for young females.

The workshop participants suggested to focus on five themes that decision makers should target: awareness raising, access to finance, entrepreneurial learning, collecting data, and an umbrella organisation. Similar to EE, the five actions reinforce each other mutually. For example, promoting entrepreneurship as a career path requires role models, sufficient funding, and networks. Moreover, just as for EE, European mechanisms can also help foster WE.

## **1 Raise awareness about WE and acknowledge the importance of women entrepreneurs:**

A European-wide media campaign could promote women's entrepreneurship. Grass root organisations could guide the campaign. A task force of women entrepreneur champions formed by representatives from all European countries would drive the campaign by sharing good practice and real-life stories. Inclusiveness and gender equality could be at the centre of all promotional and legislative activities.

## **2 Ensure life-long entrepreneurial learning, especially for women:**

Experiencing entrepreneurial education early at school creates the conditions for developing entrepreneurial competences, choosing entrepreneurship as a career path and adopting an entrepreneurial mindset. Schools and universities could implement compulsory entrepreneurship education with a gender-sensitive approach. Life-long learning opportunities and training centres could be put in place for different age groups.

## **3 Improve access to finance for women entrepreneurs:**

Setting up a women's entrepreneurship funding platform that offers finance, technical assistance and networks would help women entrepreneurs start and grow their ventures. Equally important is that financial literacy could become an integral part of the school curricula and a cornerstone for women's entrepreneurship focused educational programmes, such as financial management and investment readiness.

## **4 Build a pan-European umbrella organisation and community for WE:**

Building a strong European woman's entrepreneurship network depends largely on the grass root organisations. An overarching umbrella organisation can provide guidance and support for cooperation. The members could make WEgate or a similar organisation a middle link between grassroots organisations and policy makers at EU and national levels and complement services offered by existing organisations. Stakeholders should continue to advance WE as a policy priority on EU level.

## **5 Collect and analyse data about women's entrepreneurship:**

There is a need for comparable, gender disaggregated women's entrepreneurship data at the European and national levels to allow for analysis and evidence-based decisions. Initially, there could be a stock-taking of what data is available and what data is needed followed by a refinement of official data collection and the launching of targeted empirical studies.

# Online communities

## Objectives and format

Online communities accompanied each workshop. European Schoolnet hosted the communities in their European Schoolnet Academy (<https://www.europeanschoolnetacademy.eu/>). The purpose was to provide workshop participants with an additional opportunity to meet with each other and exchange ideas. The online interaction further aimed to enlarge the communities of stakeholders with experts who could not join the actual workshops.

The project team split the online communities into **three distinct phases**: before, during, and after the workshop.

The **pre-workshop** community phase aimed to set the scene for the topics and type of interaction in the workshops by the following means:

- Offering occasions for informal interaction to build a sense of group belonging.
- Providing information about the workshop's core topics.
- Providing live opportunities to build knowledge together.

Initially, the community was also intended as a tool for collaboration **during the workshops**. However, the first two workshops showed that the dynamic nature of the face-to-face events did not allow for additional online interaction.

The **post-workshop** community phase had a greater focus on the following:

- Allowing more time for reflection and discussions based on workshop activities, including exchange of good practices.

- Elaborating on further outputs from the workshop.

The project team incorporated a variety of tools and formats to provide a dynamic and user-friendly experience. For instance, participants could engage in mind-mapping activities, polls, live sessions (webinars), and forum threads. Tools such as Mentimeter and Padlet were also used to bridge discussions between the online community space and the physical workshop.

## Lessons learned

The team constantly adapted community animation approaches to reach better engagement of participants. The lessons learned were as follows.

A **clear flow** where the community actions and workshop design complement each other is of crucial importance. The community should prepare participants in order to achieve quality discussions during the actual workshop where all participants join with a minimum shared understanding of the workshop objectives and the topics it tackles.

Participants value **information sharing**, especially if they have exclusive access to information, knowledge and contacts.

A combination of live (webinar-like) events and asynchronous activities has a bigger impact in terms of engagement. **Live sessions** help participants to focus their attention on certain topics which they can follow up in the community.

**Guiding participants** throughout the community's lifecycle is important. Reminders and new content alerts prove to be effective in maintaining engagement.

# Key actions to foster women's entrepreneurship in Europe

## Findings from online surveys among workshop participants

Before and after each workshop, the project conducted an online survey of participants. The purpose of the surveys was to gain insights about the current state of EE and WE in Europe as well as to assess the participants' expectations and benefits of the event. Since the composition of respondents differed between the surveys, it is not meaningful to compare results between them. The following selected findings focus on the most recent surveys in March 2021. In a concluding survey of all participants in May 2021, the majority of experts from both streams replied that they intensified cooperation with other experts due to the workshops.

## Surveys before and after the EE workshops

49 registrants of the third EE workshop responded. They were asked to assess EE in their country or region. The findings show positive trends but also challenges:

- 67% of respondents agreed strongly or somewhat that they are **improving** regarding the implementation of EE in their country or region.
- 53% agreed that their government has a **well-established EE strategy**, while 23% agreed that the government provides long-term funding for EE.
- 41% agreed that their country or region **monitors and evaluates EE** strategies and goals.
- 53% said that their country or region combines EE with **digital education**; of these, 3% agreed strongly. The share of respondents who said that they combine EE with education for the **green transition** was 32%.
- 16% said that new teachers are well educated about EE in their initial training. 43% replied that **continued professional training** is an important driver of EE.
- 92% answered that they know the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (**EntreComp**). 58% said they also follow EntreComp in implementing EE.

## Surveys before and after the WE workshops

47 registrants of the third WE workshop responded to the survey before the event. The findings showed mostly challenges for WE. Key findings included the following:

- Only 23% agreed that WE is well established in their country. Furthermore, only 5% agreed that support for WE is currently sufficient in their country.
- Respondents considered almost all suggested **challenges** for WE to be a key or moderate challenge: above all finding finance (97%), but also a lack of ICT skills (89%) and entrepreneurship training opportunities (83%), social prejudices and gender-role expectations (88%), a lack of motivation to start and run a business (86%) as well as small and ineffective entrepreneurial networks (72%).
- Most respondents considered **governmental strategies**, cooperation, and funding for WE to be insufficient in their country.
- 19% of respondents agreed that their government **monitors** its WE support programmes. Only 11% agreed that there is sufficient statistical data about WE.
- There was wide agreement among respondents that **European cooperation and support is important**. A relative majority knew EntreComp but few said they use it. Two thirds said they are actively involved in European platforms to support WE.

## Research agendas

The project team, above all the University of Wuppertal, searched for literature about current trends in EE and WE. Findings fed into workshop preparations and developing policy recommendations. The literature review was comprised of different types of literature, from reports for the European Commission via academic journals to internet sources. Specifically, the team conducted research about the European Semester and European funding instruments. Many important questions of EE and WE are still open and require research. The literature review identified research gaps and current issues which research agendas for EE and WE could target. The text boxes below outline such agendas. The following page includes key suggested readings.

### Key points of a research agenda for entrepreneurship education

Many important questions about EE remain unanswered and require research. Entrepreneurship teachers must educate with proven knowledge, methods, and tools for the sake of achieving the desired learning outcomes. Policy makers in ministries and educational agencies need a solid evidence base to draft curricula for entrepreneurship education, for both schools and higher education. Furthermore, entrepreneurship education still faces reservations from many different stakeholders. Hence, the current key research questions are as follows:

- How should EE be implemented in initial **teacher training** and in continuous professional development?
- What **methods** and tools of EE and of measuring students' performance work well in different contexts? How can we develop innovative tools to reach the large proportion of students not participating in EE? What is the value of digital tools like MOOCs?
- What are the **benefits and impacts** of entrepreneurship education? How can these benefits and impacts be measured soundly?

Interdisciplinary research including for example pedagogy, psychology, sociology and informatics is needed. Answering these questions is particularly important to foster digital and green entrepreneurship. Researchers can tackle them in many different ways on different geographical levels. Such research and using its findings can contribute to solving the societal issues of our times.

### Key points of a research agenda for women's entrepreneurship

First, **statistical data** on women entrepreneurs is largely missing. Some data is available on entrepreneurship in general but more specific data broken down by gender is not available in many countries. At the start, stock-taking would help:

- **Priorities:** What data on WE would be most helpful for decision makers?
- **Methods:** How can the missing data be collected best? What data could be collected through official reporting from enterprises; what data could be collected using surveys?
- **Mechanisms:** Are there existing EU frameworks in which new data could be collected?

Second, **empirical research and analysis** is needed to provide more information on the differences between female and male entrepreneurs as well as on how to promote WE best:

- **Education:** How can education at school and in higher education motivate girls and women to think and act entrepreneurially and to aspire for a career as an entrepreneur? What are the characteristics of a related gender-sensitive educational approach?
- **Finance:** How can investors be motivated to invest in women-led start-ups and companies? What are the benefits and impacts of specific financial instruments for women?
- **Awareness:** How can public awareness about women's entrepreneurship be raised best?
- **Networks:** How can organisations work, connect and be supported effectively?

## Readings for entrepreneurship education

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## Sources for the European Semester and European funding instruments

The European Commission provides detailed explanations and documentations of the Semester on its website: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/framework/eus-economic-governance-explained\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/framework/eus-economic-governance-explained_en).

Details are also available for funding instruments, e.g. the European Social Fund: <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/>

