

Employability notes

26 September 2019

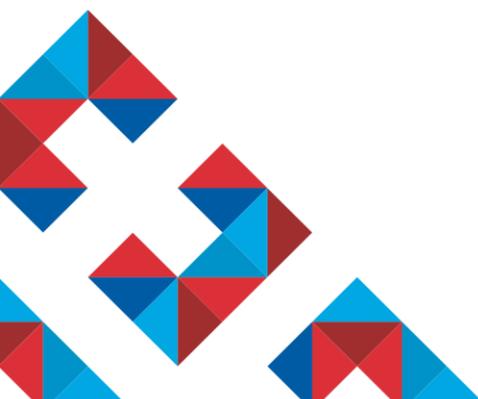
Introduction

On 26 September 2019, we welcomed attendees to the Learning Networks Employability event in Birmingham. Facilitated by Sonia Shaker, the workshop focused on employment and entrepreneurship.

The workshop began with attendees participating in discussions focused on entrepreneurship. First identifying 10 successful entrepreneurs, they then listed the most important skills entrepreneurs need. From this, attendees discussed:

- How are entrepreneurs measured – by their financial success or innovation?
- Can we teach entrepreneurial skills, or should we define them as characteristics/attributes?
- How do we define an entrepreneurial mindset?

They also identified the following as entrepreneurial qualities: leadership; risk taking; innovation; creativity; resilience; perseverance; passion; flexibility; self-assurance; confidence; vision.



European Solidarity Corps UK and Youth@Work Initiative updates

Daniel King led the [European Solidarity Corps UK](#) update, specifically focusing on the Occupational Strand of the programme. He explained to attendees how this strand of funding enables organisations to create traineeships or job opportunities for young people.

Traineeships and jobs offer young people an opportunity to gain experience and make a start in the labour market, whilst addressing important societal challenges. With this strand, the programme offers the potential for projects that relate to entrepreneurship and employment.

Sara Southam led the [Youth@Work Initiative](#) update, a strategic partnership on youth employability and entrepreneurship. The initiative is a partnership between 11 Erasmus+ National Agencies and four SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres. Its aim is to improve the support of youth employability and entrepreneurship by working collaboratively.

Attendees were introduced to the [EntreComp, the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework](#); one of the Youth@Work Initiative's outputs. This framework describes entrepreneurship as a lifelong competence, identifying the elements that make someone entrepreneurial and describes them to establish a common reference for initiatives dealing with entrepreneurial learning. It is split into three competence areas (Ideas & Opportunities, Resources, Into Action), and from these, split further into 15 competences and 60 thematic trends.

Taking a closer look at the framework, attendees discussed the EntreComp-related skills and attributes they have, rating three competences individually by those they felt very skilled in and those less skilled in. Through this, attendees explored how the framework shows entrepreneurship as a continual and flexible developmental process.



Case studies

Neil Finnie from [Corkscrew Ltd](#), shared insights from his organisation's projects. The first, called 'Sparkling Emotional Intelligence & Employability through Entrepreneurship', sent full-time BTEC learners to Barcelona and Dublin, two of Europe's most entrepreneurial cities for two weeks. The programme blended practical training with relevant work placements within local start-up organisations. While the training focused developing innovative start-up ideas, the work aspect enabled learners to work on real-world business projects for hosts in co-working spaces.

Following the project's success, this led to the organisation's second project, 'Future-Proofing Critical Skills Through Entrepreneurship'. Neil explained how, while young people were intelligent, they lacked the life skills and soft skills employers were looking for. The organisation decided to use entrepreneurship as a tool for preparing and up-skilling learners. During the placements, students are encouraged to adopt 'corkscrew thinking' and 'magpie' ideas to solve creative challenges.

Heather Hedley and Heather Houston from [Belfast Metropolitan College](#) spoke about their project 'ICE with GRIT'. This project identifies the barriers and challenges young people face when developing innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship (ICE), and engage them with growth, resilience, independence and tolerance (GRIT). Students from the Netherlands and Northern Ireland had the opportunity to share and learn from each other's experiences, through shared education, cultural and short-term placements with the social enterprise sector.

In addition, the college decided to adopt a holistic approach which puts the learner at the centre of their education, giving them a voice and the need to think for themselves. Students were able to take something different from the experience, from budget or conflict management to overcoming homesickness. The college also partnered with local charities and social enterprises, with participants doing 30 hours of voluntary work to give back to their community.



Trevor Burgess from [Rinova Ltd](#) shared insights from their Key Action 2 project, 'Bridging the GAP'. It focused on VET provision for the enterprise skills that creative young people need to enter and thrive in Europe's creative economy. The organisation supports skilled participants who face employment barriers by building their confidence and creating networks to help them enter creative industries.

Attendees also heard from Gursimran Vim, who previously did an Erasmus+ placement with [Praxis Europe](#). She did her work experience at a printing shop in Spain, and learnt how to use the machinery to produce t-shirts, as well as the technology and safety. This sparked her business idea that aligned with her interest in fashion, as well recognising any copyright or safety issues.

Gursimran also participated in an entrepreneurship exchange to Ukraine, meeting other t-shirt printers and learning about the different approaches to the same business, as well as a youth training programme in Turkey. Returning to the UK, Gursimran is now looking to start her own business. Listen to more of Gursimran's story on our [Facebook Live video](#).

For more information about the Employability network, [please visit the website](#).