



# **Webinar: Entrepreneurial skills and competences throughout life**

## **Background Note**

26/06/2025

# Webinar: Entrepreneurial skills and competences throughout life

## Thematic strand 1: Entrepreneurial skills and mindsets in education

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 document describes the background, focus and key questions that will guide the presentations and discussions during the webinar on "Entrepreneurial skills and competences throughout life", which will take place on 26 June 2025.

### 1. Defining entrepreneurial competences

**Entrepreneurial competence is the capacity to "act upon opportunities and ideas and transform them into value for others. The value that is created can be financial, cultural, or social" (FFE-YE, 2012).** The EntreComp framework identified 15 competences grouped into three areas – "ideas and opportunities", "resources", and "into action" – each involving knowledge, skills and attitudes. EntreComp also offers an eight-level progression model guiding learning outcomes across contexts (Bacigalupo et al., 2016).

**The Council recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning identified entrepreneurship as one of eight essential competences,** describing it as founded on creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, taking initiative, perseverance and teamwork.

Recent academic research further clarifies the distinction between skills, capabilities and competences. Pennetta, Anglani and Mathews (2024) proposed the Entrepreneurial Ability Model, where skills are specific abilities learned to perform tasks, capabilities are the application of those skills in context, and competences refer to how effectively one applies them to achieve results. This model also reinforces the idea that **entrepreneurship is learnable and can be developed over time through intentional education and practice.**

**Entrepreneurial competences are understood as transversal, life-wide abilities – not restricted to business ownership but applicable in social innovation, civic projects or organisational initiatives** (UNESCO, 2021). UNESCO (2021) emphasised that entrepreneurial education is about turning creative ideas into action and is



relevant for all learners, across the lifespan and across disciplines, whether or not commercial goals are involved.

## 2. Entrepreneurial skills across the life course

A life-course perspective recognises that **entrepreneurial competences develop cumulatively across childhood, youth, adulthood and older age**, with each stage offering unique learning opportunities (Jardim, 2021; Obschonka & Zarea, 2023).

**In early childhood and primary education**, foundational attitudes and behaviours such as creativity, curiosity, initiative, and teamwork can be introduced through playful, project-based learning (Sawang, 2021). The *Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning* encourages providing at least one entrepreneurial experience during school, such as running a school marketplace or managing a small project. Research shows that introducing entrepreneurship early enhances self-confidence and helps children develop problem-solving skills (Sawang, 2021).

**In adolescence and secondary education**, entrepreneurship education becomes more structured and intentional. Learners develop more advanced competences, including opportunity recognition, basic business planning, risk assessment and leadership (Jardim, 2021). Obschonka and Zarea (2023) stressed that adolescence is a sensitive period where personal traits and competences can be shaped to influence later economic and career outcomes.

**In vocational education and training (VET) and higher education**, entrepreneurial competences are taught through applied and experiential learning. Learners engage in venture projects, incubators, and innovation challenges that build strategic and operational skills, such as market analysis, networking, financial management and prototyping (McCallum, 2019; Morita et al., 2024).

**In adult and continuous learning**, entrepreneurial competences support reskilling, upskilling and adaptability to career changes. Lifelong learning initiatives, often co-funded by European programmes, provide short courses, workshops and online training in entrepreneurship for adults navigating job transitions or starting new ventures (Sawang, 2021). These programmes extend entrepreneurial competences beyond formal education, recognising their relevance in social entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship and community initiatives (UNESCO, 2021).

**For older adults**, entrepreneurship offers pathways for active ageing and intergenerational collaboration. European policy increasingly supports senior entrepreneurship initiatives, recognising the value of accumulated experience and lifelong learning (Pennetta et al., 2024). Programmes linking younger and older entrepreneurs foster mutual learning, combining the digital fluency of youth with the industry knowledge of seniors.

### 3. Integrating entrepreneurial competences into education systems

Integrating entrepreneurial competences into formal education systems requires coordinated efforts across curricula, pedagogies, teacher development and partnerships.

**Curriculum reform** is essential. Many education systems have updated curricula to embed entrepreneurship as a cross-cutting theme or standalone module, particularly in secondary education and VET. Frameworks like EntreComp provide learning outcomes that can guide the inclusion of entrepreneurial skills in national standards (Bacigalupo et al., 2016).

**Teacher training and leadership** are crucial enablers. Studies show that many educators feel underprepared to teach entrepreneurship and may be risk-averse (European Education Policy Network, 2021). Building teachers' entrepreneurial competences, through initial and in-service training, equips them to use active pedagogies and create supportive learning environments (European Education Policy Network, 2021). Leadership also matters; school heads promoting innovation and experimentation help normalise entrepreneurial learning across subjects.

**Pedagogical innovation** is key. Entrepreneurial learning thrives through experiential, collaborative and multidisciplinary approaches, such as problem-based learning, design thinking and real-world simulations (Sawang, 2021). Incorporating digital tools further enriches learning, enabling virtual incubation projects, online pitch competitions or digital prototyping (Sawang, 2021). Beyond classroom instruction, the *Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning* calls for every learner to have practical entrepreneurial experiences, such as real-world projects or student-run enterprises.

**Partnerships with businesses, communities and non-formal education providers** enhance authenticity and resources. Initiatives like the UNESCO Learning Cities demonstrate how urban ecosystems can support entrepreneurship education by providing mentoring, innovation spaces and funding (UNESCO, 2021). The *Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning* encourages cross-sector collaboration, ensuring continuity of learning across educational transitions and life stages.

**Validation and recognition of entrepreneurial competences** – including those acquired outside formal education – are gaining importance. The European Commission promotes mechanisms like digital badges or portfolio assessments to acknowledge competences gained through youth work, volunteering or community projects (Council of the European Union, 2018).

### 4. Impacts of entrepreneurial education on personal and professional development



Entrepreneurial education generates wide-ranging personal and professional benefits.

On the **personal level**, learners gain self-efficacy, confidence, creativity, adaptability and resilience. These transversal skills support their broader life competence, including their ability to handle change and setbacks (Pennetta et al., 2024). Participation in entrepreneurial activities increases motivation, engagement and autonomy, fostering a proactive learning-to-learn attitude (Jardim, 2021). Exposure to entrepreneurial role models and hands-on projects expands learners' aspirations and sense of agency (UNESCO, 2021).

On the **professional level**, entrepreneurial competences enhance employability, whether individuals pursue self-employment or traditional employment. Studies show that entrepreneurial learning increases entrepreneurial intentions and actual business creation (Santos & Liñán, 2024). Graduates of entrepreneurship programmes are more likely to identify and act on opportunities, innovate within organisations, and contribute to workplace dynamism (Morita et al., 2024).

At the **societal level**, widespread entrepreneurial competences contribute to economic renewal, job creation and innovation. Entrepreneurial citizens are better positioned to respond to structural changes, such as the green transition and digitalisation (European Parliament, 2022). Research confirms that economies with strong entrepreneurial skills ecosystems show higher innovation, resilience and adaptability (Obschonka & Zarea, 2023).

## 5. Future directions of entrepreneurial education throughout life

Looking ahead, several trends will shape the future of entrepreneurial competences across Europe, which include:

**Digital entrepreneurship** is increasingly important. Curricula and training will need to address digital business models, e-commerce, AI, and platform-based innovation, ensuring learners can harness technology for value creation (Pennetta et al., 2024).

**Sustainability and social entrepreneurship** are rising priorities. Programmes should equip learners to address societal and environmental challenges, aligning entrepreneurial learning with the Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2021).

**Inclusivity and access** must remain central. Policymakers should expand tailored initiatives for underrepresented groups, including women, migrants, seniors and rural populations, ensuring that entrepreneurial learning opportunities are accessible and relevant to diverse learners (European Parliament, 2022).

**Ecosystem development** will be key. Cross-sector collaboration among schools, businesses, community organisations, universities and governments can build

robust entrepreneurial learning ecosystems, extending opportunities beyond the classroom (UNESCO, 2021).

Finally, **continuous learning and micro-credentialing** will enable individuals to upskill and reskill in entrepreneurial competences throughout their lives. Modular learning pathways, recognition systems and flexible learning formats will support lifelong entrepreneurial development (Morita et al., 2024).

## 6. Focus and key questions for the webinar

The webinar on **Entrepreneurial skills and competences throughout life** will explore how entrepreneurial mindsets and capabilities can be cultivated from diverse education perspectives. It will examine how education providers equip individuals with the skills to identify opportunities, create value, and adapt to an ever-evolving global landscape.

Key questions guiding the discussion will be:

- What are the long-term impacts that entrepreneurial education could generate?
- What barriers hinder the inclusion of entrepreneurial competences in education and training, and how can policymakers and practitioners address these challenges?
- How can we foster a continuous entrepreneurial mindset in adults who have not been exposed to entrepreneurship education earlier in life?

These questions will shape the webinar's exploration of good practices, challenges and future directions, providing actionable insights for improving and scaling entrepreneurial learning across Europe.

## References

Bacigalupo, M., Kampylis, P., Punie, Y., & Van den Brande, G. (2016). *EntreComp: The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework*. Luxembourg: Publication Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2791/593884>

Council of the European Union. (2018). Council recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning, 2018/C 189/01. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG)

European Education Policy Network. (2021). *Entrepreneurial skills and competences in learning, teaching and school leadership in the digital age*. European Education Policy Network. [https://educationpolicynetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Deliverable-2\\_3\\_Entrepreneurship\\_final-for-publication.pdf](https://educationpolicynetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Deliverable-2_3_Entrepreneurship_final-for-publication.pdf)

- European Parliament. (2022). *Entrepreneurial literacy and skills: Definition and indicators*. European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/703363/IPOL\\_STU%282022%29703363\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/703363/IPOL_STU%282022%29703363_EN.pdf)
- The Danish Foundation for Entrepreneurship – Young Enterprise (FFE-YE). (2012). *Impact of Entrepreneurship Education in Denmark – 2011*. In L. Vestergaard, K. Moberg & C. Jørgensen (Eds.). Odense: The Danish Foundation for Entrepreneurship – Young Enterprise.
- Jardim, J. (2021). Entrepreneurial skills to be successful in the global and digital world: Proposal for a frame of reference for entrepreneurial education. *Education Sciences*, 11(7), 356. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11070356>
- McCallum, E. (2019). *Entrepreneurial learning in TVET: Discussion paper*. UNESCO UNEVOC. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373113>
- Morita, M. R., Vieira, A. M., & Perez, G. (2024). Entrepreneurial skills taught in higher education institutions: A systematic review. SSRN. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4992564>
- Obschonka, M., & Zarea, F. (2023). *Development of entrepreneurial skills in adolescence and impact on economic transformation: A systematic review*. United Nations Industrial Development Organisation – UNIDO. [https://downloads.unido.org/ot/32/18/32182550/WP\\_03\\_2023.pdf](https://downloads.unido.org/ot/32/18/32182550/WP_03_2023.pdf)
- Pennetta, S., Anglani, F., & Mathews, S. (2024). Navigating through entrepreneurial skills, competencies and capabilities: A systematic literature review and the development of the entrepreneurial ability model. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 16(4), 1144–1182. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-09-2022-0257>
- Santos, F. J., & Liñán, F. (2024). Revisiting EntreComp through a systematic literature review of entrepreneurial competences. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 29(3), 215–240. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1472811724000818>
- Sawang, S. (Ed.). (2021). *Entrepreneurship education: A lifelong learning approach*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48802-4>
- UNESCO. (2021). *Entrepreneurship education for learning cities*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379536>