

UNDER MY WING

SUPPORTING GRADUATE ENTREPRENEURS

RESEARCH EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DELIVERABLE 3.03

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Written and compiled by: Irene Antoniou, SYNTHESIS
Edited by: Jennifer Land, Meath Partnership

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1. Introduction

This report presents the Research Executive Summary that was prepared within the framework of the Under My Wing project. The Executive Summary presents an overview of the project as well as the main findings of the individual research reports based upon desk based research and target group research undertaken by each project partner. The English version of the Executive Summary was prepared by Synthesis and proof-read by Meath Partnership, and was then sent out to the remaining partners for translation. Synthesis translated the Executive Summary to Greek, ttg to German, SLK to Lithuanian and IFI to Spanish.

This Report presents the findings of research undertaken by the Project Consortium in order to ensure that the Under My Wing project implements a best practice approach in entrepreneurship, business development, pedagogic induction and e-learning portal design, to ensure that development work undertaken by partners produces resources that add value to target group members by addressing identified gaps in education provision and specific needs of all target groups.

Phase 1 of the research process comprises desk-based research and target group research conducted by all implementing partners to identify:

- specific topics to be addressed by the entrepreneurship curriculum
- required learning outcomes for entrepreneurship curriculum modules
- specific modules to be addressed by the business development curriculum
- required learning outcomes for business development curriculum modules
- existing models of partnership between the world of education and world of work

Phase 2 of the research process focused on identifying:

- best practice approaches to e-learning portal design
- appropriate pedagogic practice
- existing entrepreneurship and business development curricula available and gaps in existing provision

In all phases of the research process particular attention was placed on the specific requirements and preferences of both male and female graduates.

1.1 Aim of Under My Wing

The aim of UMW is *“to support the career progression of graduates from non-business related disciplines as entrepreneurs”*.

In achieving this aim, the project consortium will design and provide a continuum of support to unemployed/underemployed graduates that draw on the specific strengths of different actors throughout the education and business sectors.

The objectives of UMW are to:

1. Address the high levels of unemployment and underemployment evident among graduates in participating countries
2. Support economic growth by fostering creative mind-sets, initiative and self-confidence; the growth of an entrepreneurial spirit; and create localised hubs of entrepreneurial activity
3. Ensure that all relevant stakeholder contribute to the design, development and delivery of the bespoke educational process proposed
4. Promote entrepreneurship as a viable and sustainable option for graduates and impending graduates
5. Encourage graduates to think globally to meet the needs and harness the potential of a globalised economy
6. Ensure equality of opportunity for graduates regardless of gender or ethnicity

At the heart of the UMW project is the acknowledgement that individual competences, including personality traits, creativity, motivation and powers of persuasion are critical drivers of business success amongst young people, particularly our target group of underemployed or unemployed graduates.

2. Key Research Findings

The primary target groups of the UMW project are: (a) unemployed and underemployed graduates; (b) micro-enterprise owners and entrepreneurs; and (c) VET and adult education providers. As these target groups are the main stakeholders it was essential that appropriate interaction with each of these groups be established from the outset. To achieve this each implementing partner convened three individual Local Development sub-groups.

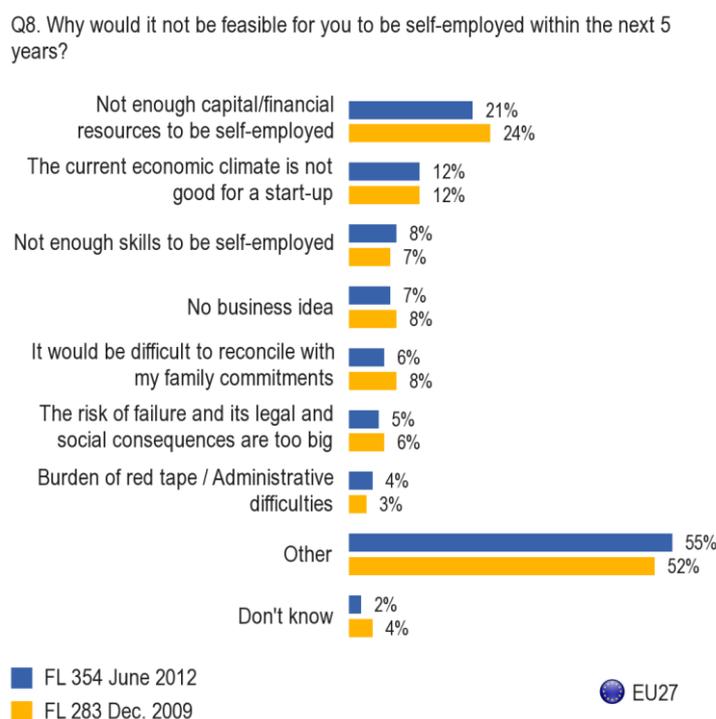
2.1 An overview of Entrepreneurial Education in the Partner Countries

In each partner country, there was a noticeable shift in business orientation within the realm of entrepreneurial education. In Ireland higher education institutions deliver specific modules in entrepreneurship and there is an increased focus on entrepreneurial education in many degree level programmes. In Ireland, there are also supports available to nascent entrepreneurs at local, regional and national level, although many businesses continue to fail due in part to a lack of awareness of the supports available. In Lithuania, on the other hand, entrepreneurial education is integrated into the education system and some study programmes exist in universities also. In Malta, there is a strong entrepreneurial spirit and many courses focussing on entrepreneurship are available. As regards Cyprus, the perception of entrepreneurship is still negative; however, some initiatives were offered recently supporting people who are interested in developing their own enterprise. Last but not least, entrepreneurial education is neither uniformly nor centrally organised in Germany, to start an enterprise no special “entrepreneurial” certificate is needed. Only for craft businesses, where you need to have a masterly letter to open your business.

It is also important to mention across all partner countries that even if some trials or development initiatives are present in the areas of entrepreneurial education, there is a consistent lack of any policy framework in place to underpin and support these initiatives.

2.2 Insight from key Stakeholders – Target Group Research

In all partners countries interviews took place with Graduates, VET and Adult Educators and Micro-enterprise and Business Owners through focus group sessions. Most of the respondents highlighted that the main barrier facing nascent entrepreneurs was a fear of taking risk, lack of skills and lack of funding. The same concerns seem to be found in the Euro Barometer Survey on Entrepreneurship published by the European Commission. The graph below shows the concerns of people who fear becoming self – employed within the next five years:



A summary of the key points arising from the Focus Groups are detailed below:

Graduates	VET & Adult Educators	Microenterprise/ Business owners
<p>What are the employment issues you face?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unemployment 	<p>What are the local issues/barriers to entrepreneurial training in your country?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different unconnected 	<p>What are the issues you have faced to start your company?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fear of failure Financial issues particularly having

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills mismatch • Current economic climate 	<p>programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of entrepreneurial culture • Too much theory not enough practical skills 	<p>sufficient funds for personal/family financial commitments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation
<p>What are the local issues/barriers to becoming an entrepreneur?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of failure • Lack of funding • Lack of skills • Bureaucracy 	<p>What type of training support do learners in your country prefer to receive?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combination – technical and practical • Mixed, seminars, workshops, one to one etc. 	<p>What are the issues you face today?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance • Staffing • Economic crisis
<p>What type of support would you like to receive?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial • Business skills (whole range mentioned) • Planning • Expert on-going support 	<p>What are the pedagogical issues on entrepreneurial training in your country?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very theoretical • Fail to address soft skills and personal qualities 	<p>How do you market your goods/or services?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local advertising • Internet/social media • Networking • Word of mouth • Offers – current and potential new customers
<p>What are the “personal” barriers to becoming an entrepreneur?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of risk taking • Fear of failure • Financial risk • Weak skills 	<p>What learning environment would you consider appropriate for the delivery of entrepreneurial training?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory • Technical content • Opportunity for experience and practice • Master classes from experts • On-line/virtual learning environment • Business networking opportunities 	<p>What type of support have you been receiving?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber, Local Authorities and industry networks • Bank and private financing • Family and Peers
<p>What form of training would you prefer?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed offer – face to face, workshops, seminars, online • Opportunity to network 	<p>What suggestions do you have for the success of the UMW in terms of:</p> <p>a. Appropriateness of learning environments - Combination of all</p>	<p>What form of training would you prefer?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must fit around existing time commitments associated with

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual consultation • Mentoring 	<p>mentioned above</p> <p>b. Structure and relevance of learning content – Experience-based methods</p> <p>c. Accessibility of learning platforms - Blended learning</p>	<p>running a business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short and focussed • Blended learning • Practical approach • Case studies/tips from experts
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Analysis of Desk-based Research

3.1 Pedagogic Best Practice Research

The intention of the pedagogic best practice research was to determine which pedagogic practice is most suited for the delivery of the Under My Wing Curriculum to the concerned target group. According to the results of the research, the best approach that can be used in this context is work-place learning or learning in authentic situations. This learning style is based on the constructivist theory, placing a strong emphasis on self-regulation and organisation of the learning process, as an individual's knowledge construction is best achieved if the learner controls the process themselves. The quality and results of each person's learning depends, to a great extent, on the individual and their individual learning situation, previous knowledge, interest and motivation. Due to the fact that the primary target group of Under My Wing is Graduates; constructivism is deemed to be the best suited approach for this project.

3.2 Research on Entrepreneurship and Business Development Curriculums

In the context of education as we know it, e-learning is still a relatively new concept. Blended learning can provide a win-win situation for students and tutors alike by leveraging the best aspects of both face-to-face and online instruction for the students' benefit. The advantage of using a blended approach is that instead of using classroom time for the presentation of material you can use that time to engage students, clarify their questions and help them apply what they have viewed or listened to online, and support them to work with each other in team problem-solving scenarios.

One of the benefits of the blended learning model proposed is the opportunity it provides for students to repeat the lessons over again; this would be greatly enhanced by the provision of different versions of the learning content on all media platforms including PC, laptop, tablet, iPod, smartphone and other relevant mobile devices. It was agreed that the system would work best if a student could access the proposed content in the following ways:

- the “full-fat” version of the lecture on their computer, laptop or tablet – an audio-visual lecture accompanied by a synchronised PowerPoint presentation
- the “low-fat” version of the lecture on their iPod, smartphone or other mobile device– a simple audio recording

By using the blended learning model, specific modules will be developed to address the needs of the target group.

3.3. Research on E-learning Portal Design

Research into the most appropriate e-learning system for the Under My Wing Project would suggest that the e-learning platform should include features which help learners to share their learning process with others and to be able to discuss tasks with other learners and with their teachers or tutors. To support this kind of training the e-learning portal will be developed to deliver the curriculum through a mixture of embedded video with synchronized PowerPoint presentations, audio and PowerPoint for mobile devices and related materials. The platform should also have the ability to track the learner’s online learning, a feature which is compatible with other kinds of platforms and so can be used on a range of devices.

It is envisaged that the platform will run on a web server and be designed to adapt to a variety of different browser environments and resolutions for both computers and tablet devices. The core technologies suggested are Open-Source and include PHP, MySQL Database, Apache, Web service and RED5 Media Server

The learning curriculum will have a list of courses available with search options, including categories, levels, languages, keywords, locations and writer features. The Course Editor will follow a four step process for entering the required meta-information, creating and uploading the content, defining the social interaction available for each course and finally creating a Course Exam.

The Under My Wing platform should be designed to fit the learner’s needs and wishes through a constructivism theory approach in order to allow both the teachers to create courses with helpful tools and the learners to study and discuss course outputs and tasks with the tutors and other students.

3. Conclusion

Upon reflection and analysis of the results of the research and consultation phase of the project, it became apparent that a hybrid curriculum comprising elements of both Entrepreneurship modules and Business Development modules was required by the Graduate Entrepreneurs to be delivered using a blended learning approach. It was agreed that the Under My Wing would comprise seven modules, which are as follows:

1. Becoming an Entrepreneur

2. Starting Your Business
3. Access to Finance and Financial Management
4. Sales and Marketing
5. Practical Business Management – Employment/HRM-Software Tools
6. Business Communication, Networking & Business Cultures
7. Business Immersion and Mentoring Programme

Through this curriculum it is expected that the Under My Wing Project will reach its primary objective which is to address the high levels of unemployment and underemployment evident among graduates in participating countries and to support economic growth by fostering creative mind-sets, initiative, self-confidence and the growth of an entrepreneurial spirit.