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*“Be Competent in Entrepreneurship”:*

**Knowledge Alliances for Developing Entrepreneurship Competencies for the  
Benefit of Higher Education and Business**



## Implementation of the training programme for SME managers

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# 1. Introduction

This report describes and establishes the main learning outcomes of the training programmes held with SMEs about internationalization and EC development. The first goal of the workshops was to enhance the participants' understanding of the role of EC in the process of internationalisation of small and medium businesses. The second goal was to share information of the most actual knowledge on internationalisation of business and offer the participants' tools and practical tips to implement in the future.

The training programme implementations were organised in every country during adapting the main guidelines proposed for this training:

- Theoretical aspects related with business internationalisation,
- Motives and strategies for internationalisation,
- Competence diagnosis related with internationalisation of SME.

The report is based on the deliverable D5.4. (WP5).

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## 2. Implementation processes of the training programme by country

Based on the initial guidelines to develop the SME training, each country has customised the syllabus according to the specific aspects of each country and the possible expectations of the SME managers. The courses were held on different dates and the experience from the countries that have applied this training was used to improve the course in other countries.

The workshops were made with the particular concern of making a bridge between the theoretical aspects, the results of EMPIG (study with the interviews with managers) and the practical aspects related with the promotion of internationalisation approaches and the development of competences needed to support the internationalisation processes, namely the building on international networks, the adaptation to foreign cultures and the need to self-organisation of managers.

Some workshops adopted face-to-face formats (traditional in-person format) while others preferred the online option or webinar. The workshops use expositive and interrogative methods in order to give information but also promote a critical reflection about the SME managers' vivid experience.

In the following section we summarise each country's experience by mentioning the dates, number of participants, and the feedback both of participants and trainers.

## 3. Workshops

**Table 1.** Basic data

<b>Countries:</b> Poland, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Portugal
<b>Organizers:</b> University of Lodz, TalTech, Tampere University, University of Sannio, Iscte-IUL
<b>Dates of the workshop:</b> From April 2022 to December 2022
<b>Number of workshops in all countries:</b> 11
<b>Forms of Workshops:</b> Traditional (in-person), online, or webinar
<b>Number of participants in all countries:</b> ca. 450
<b>Profile of participants:</b> SMEs managers, start-ups; potential SME managers, students start-ups
<b>Agenda of the workshop:</b> according to D5.1. -D5.3.

### 3.1. Feedback from participants (summary)

Entrepreneurs believe that training in entrepreneurial competences is much needed, they notice a lack of these competences among young candidates and employees. Study programmes are oriented towards acquiring more technical knowledge and not soft competences, including entrepreneurial competences.

Participants were eager to discuss if competencies can be taught and how it is best to achieve among adult learners, including in the working environment. The question was if and how much employers can support the entrepreneurship competence among their employees incl. competencies needful for internationalisation of businesses.

The SME managers greatly appreciated the entrepreneurial competencies model. In particular they found interesting the discussion on the link between entrepreneurial competencies and internationalisation, which nowadays is essential to be competitive in the market.

According to participants, the training should take the form of short workshops, combining theory with practical tasks. It is easier to learn and remember anything when the message is based on local examples (case studies). The participants saw the training as really important and beneficial for them to continue. The training was also filled with practical examples which was clearly a good solution to illustrate the theories and perspectives through practical examples.

In general we may conclude that the methodology and guidelines were useful and interesting for the participants.

### **3.2. Feedback from the trainers (summary)**

According to the trainers, the topic of the workshop is very relevant and valid. Entrepreneurs were interested in it and were keen to discuss the topic. The theoretical part requires a great deal of focus and skilful delivery of substantive content.

The use of many examples and case-histories of local companies helped a lot to get the audience involved and engaged. During the workshop it was noticed that managers were very concerned with the actual geopolitical context, and on the discussion of specific proposals about the management of their employees. The discussion tends to focus more on pragmatic aspects than on more strategic aspects. They want to share experiences about practical solutions. By far the greatest attention of the participants was drawn to the results of the EMPIG study and the relationship between entrepreneurial competences and business internationalisation.

In summary, the main setup of the workshop is good at giving participants an overview of different strategies they could use to enter foreign markets. To make the workshop more effective, more discussions on personal goals could be added to the programme together with time allocated on how the participants could use the proposed strategies to fulfil their goals.

## 4. Reflection & conclusions about SMEs' trainings

The experience of the above workshops could be summarised in terms of the trainers feedback and participants feedback:

1) Trainers have highlighted that the theoretical approach is not so well received by the participants and they rather prefer a more pragmatic approach. They found it very useful to relate local cases, and practical examples to engage the audience in the discussion. The use of interactive tools, namely the online courses could improve the quality of discussion, also the splitting of big groups into smaller ones allowed to promote more critical thought and experience exchange.

2) According to participants, seminars and workshops combining the topics of entrepreneurial competence and internationalisation are very useful. In general, entrepreneurs believe that training in entrepreneurial competences is much needed. They notice a lack of these competences among young candidates and employees. They can be helpful both at the stage of the decision to expand into foreign markets by start-up entrepreneurs and by companies with more experience. It is of primary importance that training is filled with practical examples which clearly illustrate the theories and perspectives through practical examples.

3) The contents of the training stimulated discussions and offered me new theoretical perspectives for developing and organising business activities. During the workshop, managers received a mix of theoretical and practical knowledge on ECs and business internationalisation in relation to generational change and the phenomenon of born globals. These were illustrated with real cases from different countries.

4) In our opinion, the knowledge provided during the workshops and training is particularly valuable for young entrepreneurs who are entering foreign markets. It will help them improve their entrepreneurial competences and plan the development of their business through internationalisation. The workshop programme created as part of the project can form the basis for a more sophisticated training programme to be implemented at universities in the future.

**To sum up**, drawing on the contents and experience of other work packages, the objective of the WP5 was to develop a new training programme that would better address the demands of today's business environment, with an overarching aim to develop entrepreneurial competences among SME managers in relation to internationalisation of businesses.

The developed training programme for SME managers was used to train ca. 450 potential managers and managers in existing companies in all 5 countries. The workshops were made with the particular concern of making a bridge between the theoretical aspects, the results of EMPIG (study with the interviews with managers) and the practical aspects related with the promotion of internationalisation approaches and the development of competences needed to support the internationalisation processes.

The feedback we received after conducting the workshop was very positive in all countries. What was particularly appreciated was adding to the discussion on entrepreneurial competences in internationalisation context the topic of born globals and their specifics was valued but also condensed knowledge received was appreciated as it paved a way to knowledge and skills to be pursued individually in further steps.

**In our opinion, the programme being the result of WP5 is ready to be implemented as a training for managers and start-uppers but also used in higher education (within entrepreneurial education and for potential entrepreneurs).**